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**THE PROPER ETERNITY OF
THE DIVINE DECREES,
and of the
MEDIATORIAL OFFICE OF
JESUS CHRIST**

By John Brine, September 19, 1754

(**Note:** The regular article of Stanley Phillips will be omitted in this issue to provide space for the following article by John Brine. This is a rare work, and the only copy we have seen to date. Rather than it be lost forever from our people, we will print it in full.

John Brine was an Old Baptist of England, and contemporary with John Gill. Gill's writings better pleased the people; and John Brine, like many of us, was accused of being antinomian. He was a great defender of the doctrines of Christ as understood by our people..)

"The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His Way, before his Works of old. I was set up, from Everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the Earth was." Proverbs viii. 22, 23.

These are the Words of Wisdom, which speak throughout the Chapter: different apprehensions have been entertained concerning this divine Speaker, viz. What, or who is meant by Wisdom. I think there are clear reasons to conclude, that by Wisdom, a Person, or intelligent Agent is intended: For, Wisdom all along speaks under personal characters, and personal

ACTS are attributed unto this Speaker. As searching, or finding out. *“I Wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.”* Also ACTS of love and affection: *“I love them that love me.”* and acts of joy and delight: *“Then was I by Him, as one brought up with Him, I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him: rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and My delights were with the sons of men.”* All which are personal acts, and, therefore, this divine Speaker, is a Person, or an understanding agent; and the things which are predicated of this Speaker, are so grand and sublime, that they cannot be applicable to any person than Christ, who is the Wisdom, as well as the Power of God.

Understanding the words of our blessed Redeemer, without commenting upon what precedes, I shall immediately proceed to the explication of them.

And it will be proper to shew, what is designed by the Way of the Lord; what the Beginning of His way imports; what is implied in the Act of possessing Christ; what Works of God are intended, before which He possessed our Saviour, and why they are said to be of old; what the setting up of Wisdom designs: when this was done, *from Everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.*

I. I would shew what is designed by the Way of the Lord. The Way of God sometimes intends His wise and

holy dispensations towards the world, and towards His Church in Providence, which are the accomplishment of His Decrees concerning both, with respect unto their temporal estate. This is a sense wherein it is frequently to be understood: and His way is to be taken for His gracious Purposes and Counsels, which were formed in His infinite and eternal Mind, concerning Christ, and His Church is designed by it in these words: *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”*

It is of pardoning grace and mercy, that the Lord there speaks: *“For He will abundantly pardon.”* We are too apt to limit the Holy One of Israel, in His acts of pardoning kindness and mercy. And it is His intention, in these words to assure us, that His purposes of Grace, Mercy, and Pardon, infinitely exceeds those conceptions which we are apt to entertain thereof. I apprehend, that in this sense, the divine way is to be understood, in the text: Or, that God’s thoughts and purposes of love, and grace concerning Christ and His members are meant by His way. Further I am to shew,

II. What the beginning of His way imports. If we understand it of duration: That must either commence, or not commence, have limit, or not have limit. The term beginning is put for duration, which had not commencement, in these words; *“God*

hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth." This divine act of Election was eternal: "*According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world.*" (Eph. 1:5) From the beginning, and before the foundation of the world mean the same. And, there never was an instant, wherein the Church was not the object of a gracious choice unto salvation, or the enjoyment of eternal life.

A learned writer hath been pleased to distinguish upon eternity, *a parte ante*, or that duration, which was before the existence of the world, or things created, and speaks of a *first*, and an *after date* therein. The *first date respects*, he says, *God's existence*, which was eternal, and had no beginning: the *after date* refers unto His Decrees, or acts within Himself relating unto Christ and the Church, which he affirms had *beginning*: He sums up what he had before more largely expressed, and pleaded for, in this assertion, *viz. God Himself was before the conceptions and thoughts which lie entertained of his works: be- sure in order of nature; but how long before, the thing neither speaks nor the word declares.* Let us press this grape a little, that we may be able to form a judgment of the nature of its juice. The plain import of this assertion is, God was before He had infinite Thought and Consciousness; but how long before, is impossible to be known, because neither the Thing speaks, nor the Word declares it. This is a *very*

unsafe, a very offensive, and a most absurd way of speaking. If God ever was without infinite thought and consciousness. He was not, lie then could not be God. For, a Being without thought and consciousness can't be God. To be quite free with you upon this subject: The assertion is so extremely absurd, that it excites my astonishment. The Divine Decrees are of the same date with the existence of God. His Being is not of one date, and His Purposes of another, a later date. Besides, to suppose, that there was an *everlasting*, or a duration, before the existence of a creature, that really had a beginning, or commencement, is to imagine, that there was a duration, which was neither *eternal*, nor *temporary*; but something between both, which is an highly absurd imagination. Duration is, either immeasurable and without any limit: Or, it is measurable and hath a limit. If duration past is immeasurable, it is eternal, and could not have any beginning. If it is measurable, it is not eternal, but temporary, and must have had commencement. *There can be no medium between eternity and lime.* A duration which begins, is measurable and limited, whether it is measured and divided into the parts whereof it consist, or not, by the motion of body, or otherwise. Measurable and limited it is, and there must be some *instant* at which we must necessarily stop, when we contemplate a past duration, which had beginning. If, therefore, the Divine Decrees are *later* than the existence of God, or had beginning, they must, as to duration, have been infinitely short of

the existence of God. So that, according to the doctrine contained in this most absurd assertion, there must have been an infinite duration, wherein, God was without conception and thoughts of His works: that is to say, without infinite thought and consciousness; and therefore, for an infinite duration, He was not God.

For, if His conceptions and thoughts really had beginning, they must begin after Himself had existed, in a duration infinite: because such a duration must have been before a measurable duration could begin, and, consequently, though God, in his existence is eternal, His love to Christ, and the Church, and his Decrees about them, are not eternal; but only temporary. Which is no more true, than it is, that the Almighty Creator, once, was not God.

A certain writer pours contempt upon some, whose works have praised, and will long praise them, in the Gates of the Church, that have endeavoured, to prove Christ's eternal existence, or proper Deity from this place. His contemptuous words concerning them, are these: *I wonder not, that Arianism prevails as it doth, amongst us, at this day, when such poor, blind, ignorant wretches, undertake to defend the Doctrine of the Redeemer's Godhead; for sure I am, that going to the eighth of Proverbs to prove it, is for ever to give up the cause into the hands of the Arians.* This contemptuous language the author prevailed with himself to use, concerning some worthy persons,

as any perhaps, in the Church of God was blessed with in the former Century.

His great confidence and contempt will not deter me from asserting, that in this *Chapter*, clear proof is given, in abundance, and above all exception, unto the important Doctrine of the eternal existence, and proper Deity of our precious Redeemer. I shall proceed so far, as to say, that, if that Doctrine is not capable of proof from this context; proof of it cannot be brought from any part whatever, of sacred Writ. The terms and phrases, used therein, expressing the Eternity of His Existence, are so full, strong, and explicit, (sic) that none more so can be produced. But this writer was led into a mistake, by what the learned author, I before referred unto, had advanced, concerning the import of the term everlasting, as it is used, in relation to God's Decrees, and Acts within Himself, as some other persons have also been, which is not a little to be lamented.

Upon the whole, if beginning is understood of duration, Eternity must be intended: Or that immeasurable duration, which was before the Creation of the world, and had no commencement. But, it may be observed, that in the original, it is not in the "beginning", as we translate; but *the Lord possessed me, the Beginning of His way*: And the *original* word signifies the First, or Chief. By which two things are suggested:

1. That Christ is the First and Chief, in the Decrees of God, as they are all calculated for His glory, above Angels and men. The supreme end of God in His Purposes and Operations, is the Glory of His own infinite Perfections, Wisdom, Power, Goodness, &c. For He made, and decreed to make all things for Himself. His next, subordinate end, which He eternally had in view, was the Glory of Christ, in the Character of Mediator, as an effect of his infinite Love unto His Person. Hence the Apostle speaking of Christ in His mediatorial capacity, or of His Person, as constituted of the divine and human natures, says: "*All things were created by and for Him.*" They were made by Him, as an efficient Cause, and they were also made for Him, as a final Cause.

Again, 2. When it is said, that Christ is the First, or Chief of God's ways, it implies, that there is a more glorious display of His Perfections in Him, than in any of, or all His other works taken together. All Divine works are excellent and worthy of their infinitely good and great Author. The works of Creation point out unto us the infinite Wisdom, unlimited Power, and Benevolence of the Creator. "*For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.*" But, there is a far more illustrious and superior display of the Wisdom, Goodness, Holiness, Truth, and Justice of God, in the constitution of the Person of Christ, and in the

amazing designs, which are thereby accomplished. And, therefore, with great propriety, He may be said, as Mediator, to be the Chief of His ways. I proceed to shew:

III. What is implied in the Act of possessing Christ. The *original* word signifies to have or possess by price, or by labour, and sometimes by birth. In this sense Eve uses it. When she had conceived and bore Cain, she said: "*I have gotten* (the same word) *a man from the Lord.*" In this sense it may be understood here, for there is not that wanting in the context, which gives countenance unto it. Wisdom, or Christ, says of Himself, "*Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth.*" The latter writer, unto whom I before referred, on the subject of the filiation of Christ, hath these remarkable words: *I am positive, that Christ as the eternal God* (i.e, as a Divine Person) *was never begotten, since it is impossible for me to conceive the begetter and the begotten to be of equal date.*

Why is he so confident that Christ, as a Divine Person, was never begotten? He was so, because He was not able to conceive how He could be of the same date with Him, by whom He was begotten. Shall we *poor worms*, whose understandings are finite and limited, take upon us, boldly to pronounce, that, that cannot be in Deity, which we are unable to form adequate ideas of, or explain how it is? We must forget our own nature, and the nature of God also, if we do. We

must forget our own nature, that it is limited and finite, and for that reason, incapable of comprehending that which is infinite. And, we must forget the nature of God, viz, that it is infinite, and therefore, unto us incomprehensible. That, therefore, may be Deity, which we are sure cannot be in finite and limited beings. And, that which involves a contradiction, in beings finite and limited, may not, in that Being, which is infinite. For instance, in the human nature, it implies a manifest contradiction to conceive, that He who is begotten, is of the same date with Him that begot Him. But, it by no means follows, that it is a contradiction to conceive, that a Divine Person, who is begotten, is of the same date with the Divine Begetter. This writer, notwithstanding his confidence in this matter, might have been asked, as puzzling questions concerning Eternity, as any he could propose relating unto this *mysterious* subject. But, I suppose, he would scarcely have denied, that there is a duration, which had not beginning, and which will never end, though he might have found it impossible for him to resolve some difficult questions concerning it.

It is beyond contradiction, that Christ is the Son of God. He is His Son, therefore, either in a *proper* sense, or only in an *improper* and *metaphorical* one. That He is the Son of God, in a proper sense, may be concluded from His asserting, that God was His own Father: "*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work:*" The

Jews inferred, and very rightly, from this assertion, and not from His affirming Himself to be the Messiah, that He *made himself equal with God*. Therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill Him, not only because He had broken the Sabbath, but said also, that God was His (*idiown*, or proper) Father, making Himself equal with God. He is so a Son, as to be of the same nature with God, whose Son He is. For which reason, He is called God's own, or *proper* Son. God "*spared not His own,*" or proper, Son. God can't be His *proper* Father, if He begat Him not; nor can He be God's *proper* Son, unless He was begotten of Him. But He is God's *begotten*, and *only begotten Son*: "*for God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.*"

Some have thought, and some think, that Christ is called the Son of God, because He is invested with Office. But, that is to confound the very different characters, of a Son and a Servant, and it necessarily makes them the same. As invested with the Office of Mediator, He is God's Servant: "*Behold my Servant, whom I uphold.*" Now if it is true, that He is God's Son, as invested with the mediatorial Office, He is no otherwise a Son, than as He is a Servant, and these very different characters, of Son and Servant, can contain and convey no different, but in all respects, the same Idea, which there is no reason to think. Besides, Christ was a Son antecedent unto His Investiture with the Mediatorial Office, which He could

not possibly be, if His being in that Office was the *formal reason*, or cause of His Sonship. That He was a Son before His Investiture with Office is, I think, abundantly clear from these words of the inspired writer: "*For the law maketh men high priests which hath infirmity; but the Word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.*"

If Christ bears the character of Son, on account of His being the High Priest, or Mediator of the Church, He could not be a Son, before His Investiture with that Office; but it is most clear that He was: "*For the Word of the Oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son,*" or constituteth *the Son*. What doth it make or constituted Him? It made or constituted Him HIGH PRIEST, or Mediator: and, therefore, He was a Son before He was made High Priest, or Mediator. This is so clear and illustrious a testimony unto the Truth of the Sonship of Christ, as a Divine Person, that I am persuaded; it will be impossible for the wit of man, by any *arts*, or *shifts*, to cloud it, and enervate its force. Farther, Christ as a Son, was not under obligation to obey and suffer. This is clearly suggested in these words: "*Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered.*" The opinion of His being a Son, as invested with Office, must compel us to conclude this to be the sense of those words: Though He was a Son, and as such under obligation to obey and suffer, yet learned He obedience, by the things

that He suffered. But who can think this to be the import of the Divine Writer? Surely none. As Mediator, He was under obligation to obey and suffer: As a Son, He was not, and therefore, His Mediatorial Office is not intended by His sonship; but His filial relation unto God, as a Divine Person.

Again, the Father possessed Him of all those Treasures of Grace and Glory, which He intended the Church should receive here, and enjoy hereafter. And, there is that in the context, which favors this sense also: "*That I may cause them that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures.*" Christ is capable of making good His promise: For, "*it hath pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell.*" "*He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*" And that grace, according unto which we are saved and called, was given us in Christ: "*Who hath saved us and called us, with an holy calling, not according to our works; but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ before the world began.*" All those precious benefits, which the Church of God partakes of, in this world, and all the bliss and glory, which she will possess in the heavenly state, were deposited, and laid up for her in the hands of her ever-blessed and glorious Head. In whose keeping they are eternally secure. Farther,

IV. God possessed Christ "*before His works of old.*"

1. The works which are intended, are the works of Creation; and this I think there can be no doubt: Because Wisdom, immediately after the text, proceeds to give an elegant description of the creation: *“When there were no depths. I was brought forth: when there were no fountains abounding with water: before the mountains were settled, before the Hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the Earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: When He set a compass upon the face of the depth. When He established the clouds above: When He strengthened the fountains of the deep: When He gave to the sea his Decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth.”* These are wonderful works designed, wherein Divine Wisdom and Power are manifested. Creation is proper to God. Omnipotence only could give existence unto body, out of non-existing matter: Which it did. For, *“Things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear.”* And infinite Wisdom and Power alone could form the beautiful fabric of the universe, out of that *rude mass* of matter, unto which existence was first given: *“The earth was without form, and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”* Creation therefore, is a Work Divine, and peculiar to God. And He challenges it, as His own. *“Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that*

bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by their names, by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power, not one faileth.” (Isa. 40:26)

2. These works were wrought of *old*. Many ages had then run out since the creation of the world, and, therefore, they are said to be of old. And as things created invariably keep those laws, through all successive ages of time, unto which they were subjected, in their creation, it is an evidence, that they were formed by infinite Wisdom, and are preserved and upheld in that beautiful Order, wherein they were at first fixed by Immense Power. And,

3. Christ was possessed of the Father before a creating Act was put forth: Or before being was given to any creature, and, consequently. in Eternity: Or in that infinite, immeasurable duration, which was before time commenced. The Beginning of God’s Way, therefore, cannot possibly mean a finite and limited duration. If proper Eternity is not expressed by these phrases, it will be impossible to produce any from Scriptures, which expresses it. But the next general thing in the Text demands my attention.

V. Christ was set up: *“I was set up”*. The original word, signifies *“pouring forth,”* or *“anointing,”* and as oil was poured? forth upon a person who was invested with office: Or, as a person was anointed with oil when

appointed unto office, Christ's appointment unto and Investiture with the Mediatorial Office, is intended by this phrase. The latter writer, some of whose words I took notice of before, entertaining the notion of the pre-existence of the soul of Christ, labours to prove it from this place. He objects unto the application of the phrase to Christ, as a divine Person, in this very *nonsensical* manner: *Now this cannot have the least relation to his Godhead, because we cannot say that was poured out.* No, nor can we say, that His soul was poured out, when He was appointed unto Office. The Person anointed to Office is not poured out, but oil IS poured forth upon Him, or He is anointed therewith. He adds: *These words may likewise denote His Unction; and so it may be read, "I was anointed from everlasting."* In this sense it cannot be applied to His Divinity. The phrase being understood in its true sense, it will quickly appear, that it may be very well applied to the Person of Christ, as designed unto a Union with the human nature. For, it intends designation to Office. And the divine Person of Christ, as He was to become incarnate, was invested with the Mediatorial Office: which was done in the Everlasting Covenant, that was entered into by the Divine Persons.

Of that Covenant, and the parties therein contracting, he speaks thus: *I am not writing about the counsels and purposes of God in Himself, but of His covenanting and contracting with a Person to fulfil and execute these*

counsels and purposes, and of the Person's willingness, that was covenanted and contracted with to undertake such a work. — I freely confess, that the Platform of Salvation was laid in the eternal Mind; and that the whole Scheme of our happiness was drawn in Eternity, infinitely above all date; but yet the contract between the Father and Christ was not so, unless the Man Christ be infinitely eternal, (it is absurd to think that eternity is finite) or else an infinite Being must contract with Himself. This is the sum of what this goodly author, had to object to the Eternity of the Covenant of Grace, and unto its being an agreement between the divine Persons. The whole of his discourse will be removed out of the way without the least difficulty.

For, though the divine Being did not contract with Itself, the divine Persons, existing distinctly in the divine Essence, entered into Covenant with each other.

As the eternal *Three*, Father, Son, and Spirit, are personally distinct, though *essentially* one, they *each act distinctly*, in the divine Essence: Or the divine Wisdom and Will, which are essentially the same, acts *distinctly* in each divine Person, by reason of their *distinct* personal subsistence in the divine nature.

Thus the divine Wisdom and Will, acting *distinctly* in the *distinct* Person of the Father designed and resolved upon the Incarnation of the Son, and

His accomplishing our redemption, in our nature, as personally united unto Himself, by doing and suffering all that Law and Justice required, unto that important end. And this was the Father's proposal unto the Son, to undertake that great and arduous work. And thus also:

The divine Wisdom and Will, acting *distinctly* in the Person of the Son, who subsists *distinctly* from the Father in the divine Essence, approved of this design, or concurred with the Father therein; which approbation and concurrence, was the Son's engagement to fulfil the Will and Counsel of the Father, relating unto that wonderful affair, and it brought him under an obligation, to do and suffer in our nature, when taken into personal union with Himself, the whole of what Law and Justice required, in order to our salvation.

Again, the divine Wisdom and Will acting *distinctly* in the ever-blessed Spirit, who is a Person *distinct* from the Father and the Son, He approved of the gracious design, of the salvation of the elect: And, as the divine Wisdom and Will, in the Person of the Father and the Person of the Son, willed that He should glorify Christ, and sanctify the Church; He agreed, and consented unto the Will of the Father, and the Will of the Son. Thus He took upon Himself the work and office of glorifying Christ, and *sanctifying the Church*, which is that part that He bears in the oeconomy (sic) of our salvation. And, therefore,

as the Son became obliged unto the Father, as He was to be incarnate, to redeem His people and members: So the Holy Spirit became obliged unto both the Father and the Son to glorify Christ and sanctify the Church.

And, I humbly apprehend, that it is with *especial* relation unto this, that the Holy Spirit is so frequently styled the "Spirit of God," and the "Spirit of His Son," or of Christ; that for this reason also, He is said to be sent both by the Father and Son. By His engagement He came under obligation, (in the Covenant) both unto the Father and the Son, to perform His part, in the business of our salvation. And, this is the foundation of His being sent by the Father, and of His being sent by the Son. Right arises from hence, unto both to send Him: And, accordingly, He is sent by both. He comes at the pleasure of the Father: "*Whom the Father will send in My name.*" "*God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.*" He likewise comes at the will of the Son: "*If I depart I will send Him unto you,*" says Christ, concerning the Holy Spirit, under the character of *Comforter*.

These *distinct* and *mutual* actings of the divine Persons, between themselves, are the Covenant of Grace, wherein the method of our salvation was *fixed*, and that gracious design *effectually* secured.

And, therefore, this author hath only discovered his *weakness*, in saying, that the *contract between the Father*

and Christ was not infinitely beyond all date, unless the Man Christ be infinitely Eternal, (as he nonsensically speaks, for there is no finite Eternity) or else an infinite Being must contract with Himself. The infinite, distinct Persons, in Deity, contracted, or entered into mutual engagements between Themselves, in this federal Transaction. This was not the contract of the divine nature with Itself; but it was the contract of the divine Father, the eternal Son, and the blessed Spirit, who are *personally distinct*, though *essentially one*. Nor, can the *distinct* actings of the divine Wisdom and Will, which are *essentially* the same, be denied, without the denial of the *distinct* Personality of the Father, Son, and Spirit. If they are *distinct* Persons, without all question they act *distinctly*: Or the divine Wisdom and Will act *distinctly, in each of the eternal Three*, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Besides, to imagine, with the author, that the human soul of Christ existed when the Covenant of Grace was entered into, and that it was a contracting Party, in that Covenant, absolutely destroys the eternity of it, which he is obliged to grant. Hence it undeniably follows, that *once* there was no Covenant of Grace: *Once* Christ was not the Mediator and Head of the Church, if what he says is correct. It was in that covenant, that lie was constituted such: If therefore, that Covenant *once* was not, it must be allowed that *once* Christ was not the Mediator and Head of the Elect of God: and, consequently, *once*, His

Delights were NOT with the sons of men. This is that blessed divinity, which this writer recommends unto the embracement of Christians: But it ought to be eternally abhorred, as that which saps the very foundation of all their faith and hope.

Farther, the notion of the pre-existence of the soul of Christ, or of its existing before the creation of the world, is repugnant to Scripture. That opinion is as certainly false, as it is true that "*in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" If there was before creation a limited duration, that duration must have had commencement, and was measurable, though not measured and divided into its parts, by any regular motion of body, as I have before observed. And, that *instant*, at which we must necessarily stop, in our conceptions concerning it, *was the beginning*, and not that *instant*, wherein God's act of creation was put forth. And, therefore, if this notion is true, what *Moses* affirms must be false, and God did not in the beginning create the heavens and the earth, but after the beginning; and how long after, it seems, is not knowable, perhaps millions of ages. Into such absurdities will some men run, in order to support their *misconceptions* of things, or a *darling* opinion, which they have happened to embraced.

Once more, for I have not yet done with this *vain* conceit. To suppose, as this writer does, that the soul of Christ was a contracting Party in the

Covenant of Grace, and not His divine Person, is to detract from His glory as a divine Person, and is advancing His human soul unto such dignity, as is by no means its due. May the good Lord eternally preserve me, from lessening the Glory of a precious Jesus, in His human nature, which ought ever to be dear to my soul! I humbly hope, that I shall never express any thing, detracting from His honour, in His human nature. My heart can't possibly bear the *killing* thought: and, yet, with *intrepidity* I say, that it was a Glory *peculiar* to Christ, in His divine Person, to contract with the other divine Persons, the Father and the Holy Spirit, and that it was an honour infinitely too great for the human soul of Christ, to become a contracting Party in the Covenant of Grace. The Parties contracting were equal, as it was *condecant and fit*, that so they should be.

Indeed, the Will of Christ as Man, upon His subsisting, in His human nature, freely and fully consented, unto all the articles agreed on in the Covenant, relating unto both His obedience and sufferings: but it was His engagement, as a divine Person, which brought His human nature under obligation to obey and suffer, as it hath its subsistence therein. And it was fit, that the infinitely superior constituent part of Christ, in His complex character, should undertake for his inferior constituent part as Mediator. So that it was not necessary, that His human nature should subsist, in either part of it, His soul no more than His

body, at his undertaking the work of Redemption, in the Covenant of Grace.

In the setting up of Christ, or His designation unto the Mediatorial Office, various particulars may be observed. As,

1. The divine Father purposed and proposed to Him, that in "*the fulness of time*" He should assume our nature, into union with Himself. The divine Wisdom and Will, acting distinctly in the Person of the Father, as is above explained, moved this to Him. This was a *Fore-ordination* of Him to become Man, "*before the foundation of the world.*" (Eph. 1:4; Acts 2:23; & 4:28)

2. Christ consented unto this design, and proposal of the Father: Or the divine Wisdom and Will, acting distinctly in the Person of the Son, as is before expressed, He approved of this design and proposal of the Father, and the concurrence of the divine Will, in His Person, was His engagement, to take our nature into a personal union with Himself, at the time appointed. His language in this Transaction was: "*Lo I come.*" (Heb. 7:7-10.) Hence,

3. Though the human nature of Christ did not then subsist, He was considered, as God-Man, by the divine Persons of the Godhead. Not that the divine Understanding, in either of the divine Persons, accounted Him to have subsistence then, as Man; for that He had not; and, therefore, it was not possible, that the divine Understanding could conceive Him to be then existent, in His human nature; but lie

was had in repute, by the divine Persons, as God-Man, by reason of His certain future incarnation, which was then resolved upon, between themselves. And in this character, the Covenant of Grace was made with Him. I observe,

4. The work assigned unto Him, as incarnate; or what was required of Him, as His Person is constituted of the divine and human natures, in order to the salvation of His Body, the Church. And,

(1) It was required of Him to come under the command of the Covenant of works. That Covenant, without a *special* appointment, could have had no concern with, or power over him, either in its precepts, or threatenings, not only because He was not represented by *Adam*, with whom that Covenant was made, nor a natural descendant of his: but also, because His human nature, as united unto his divine nature is raised above the state and condition of a mere creature: And, therefore, it was a gracious act of condescension, in His divine Person, to consent, that, that constituent part of Himself, as Mediator, should come under the obligation of the Covenant of works: "*Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, in becoming obedient unto death.*" Again,

(2) Another thing required of Him, was to suffer and die for His people, to make Atonement for their sins: "*When Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin; He shall see his seed.*" -- "This article His divine Person also agreed unto. And the consent of His divine

Will brought His human nature, under obligation to submit to death: "*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?*" It was an act of infinite compassion in Christ to poor sinners, to consent, to give up His human nature, to the most dolorous sufferings, and unto the most ignominious, and also an accursed death, to redeem them from justly deserved destruction.

(5) The human nature of Christ being united unto His divine Person, these two things follow upon it:

[1] As Man He was at the disposal of His divine Will. As God, or a divine Person, He had absolute power over His human nature, which was a constituent part of Himself, as Mediator, and, therefore, He had full and proper right, to covenant and agree, that His human nature should both obey and die, in obedience unto the Will of the Father. For, that nature was His *own* in a *peculiar* sense, and it was fit, that it should be absolutely at the disposal of his divine Will. His assumption of it into union with Himself was with a view, that it might so be. And our blessed Lord clearly expresses the right of His divine Person to dispose of His human nature, according unto His own absolute pleasure, in these words: "*No man taketh My life from Me; I lay it down of Myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.*" The glory of Christ as Man is unequalled. in consequence of His personal union with the eternal Son of God: Hut this union is so far from raising His human nature, above an

absolute subjection unto His divine Will, that it necessarily infers it: Or the absolute subjection of His human Will, unto His divine Will, necessarily follows upon it. His engagement, therefore, as a divine Person, in the everlasting Covenant, brought an obligation upon Him, as Man, to do and suffer all that was included in that federal engagement of His, though His human nature was not then existent.

[2] When the blessed Jesus had subsistence as Man, his human Will, which is absolutely distinct from His Will, as God, was wholly under the direction and influence of His divine Will. And it was fit, that it should so be, for it would have been the highest incongruity, if the human Will of Christ had not been under the determining influence of the Will of His divine Person. Hence, it was possible, that the Will of Christ, as Man, should be in any instance or at any time, clash with His divine Will. And it is hence also, that the holy moral operation of the human nature of Christ, are to be esteemed the acts of His Person as Mediator, and that they become infinitely *meritorious*: Because they are the acts of His Person, who is God as well as Man, though the human nature only, is the immediate subject from which they spring; therefore, infinite merit attends them.

5. The Father gave the elect to Christ as *His jewels*, or His own *peculiar* people: "*Thine they were, and Thou gayest them me*" He was constituted a Head to them, and they became His members. And He came

under obligation to preserve them safe, and to conduct them to that state of dignity and happiness, which the Father, as the Effect of His infinite love, designed them unto the enjoyment of. For which reason our blessed Lord says: "*This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which He hath given me, I should lose nothing; but should raise it up, at the last day.*"

6. A glorious reward was promised unto Him, for the important services, which He undertook to perform. All the Glory that He possesses, as Mediator, was then granted to Him, on condition of his obedience, sufferings and death. And, therefore, He speaks of His having this Glory before the world was: "*With the glory which I had with Thee before the world was*" He had it, in promise and grant, when He engaged to fulfil the Father's pleasure, concerning the Redemption of His people.

Thus, I think it appears very clearly that Christ the eternal Son of God, as He was to become incarnate, entered into Covenant with the Father, and undertook to accomplish the whole of His Will, relating to the recovery of those unto whom He was appointed a Head, in such a way, as magnifies the law, and is becoming all the divine Perfections: And, that all that Glory, which He hath possession of, was given to Him by promise, in the character of Mediator, though neither constituent part of His human nature, his soul, or His body, then subsisted.

VI. And lastly: The Constitution of Christ Mediator, was *from everlasting, from the Beginning, or ever the Earth was.*

These phrases express either a measurable duration, or an immeasurable one. It is I think allowed by all, that a duration is intended, which was before-the existence of the world. That duration either had beginning, or it had not. If it commenced, and had beginning, it was properly *time*, and *not eternity*. Time and eternity differ, as *finite* and *infinite* differ. Time is finite, and eternity is infinite. And it is impossible, that there should be a medium between eternity and time: As there cannot be a mean between infinite, and finite. Whatever is, must be either infinite or finite, unlimited, or limited. And, consequently, this duration, if it began, it was time, it could not be eternity: It was measurable, and certainly had a limit, at which we must necessarily stop, in our conceptions about it; if not, it was eternity: Or a duration infinite. To say, that it was not measured by the regular motion of body, as time with us, is measured by the course of the sun, will not prove it immeasurable, nor can that be intended; because then it must be granted, that it was eternity, which it is not allowed to be, by those unto whom I have reference; but it is said to be an AFTER DATE of Eternity, by the *learned* author before mentioned, which had beginning, or commencement, which if it had, it was *properly time*, and it must differ from eternity, as that which is finite differs

from that which is infinite. And what is to be proved by all this? No other thing, than, that God's Decrees are *later* than His existence, and how much later he could not determine, *because neither the thing speaks, nor the Word declares it.* The Being of God was eternal, or had no beginning; but all His Decrees, if this is true, were *temporary*, or had beginning. And therefore, for an infinite duration, which must have been, before this *After Date*, or *beginning*, could take place; God was without any conceptions and thoughts of His works. That is to say, *Once God had no love to Christ as Mediator, nor conceptions concerning Him: Once He had no love to the Church, nor thoughts about her: Once He was without infinite thought and consciousness, and consequently He once was not God.* For, a Being without infinite thought and consciousness can't be God. As I have before said.

The other writer mentioned above, in order to support His notion of the existence of the soul of Christ before the Creation of the world, interprets these phrases, in the same manner; in this, copying after that *learned* author, as some others also do, to defend a notion which is *absolutely useless*, that hath not the least connection with. Dependence upon, nor is inferrible from any branch of evangelical Truth. But is wholly dissonant to the Scripture, and everts the eternal Covenant of Grace, wherein the Salvation of God's Elect was

everlastingly provided for and secured.

If there was a duration before the production of the world, which had commencement, why may there not be a duration, after the dissolution of it, which will have an end? And if the former is called everlasting, though it had beginning, why may not the latter be so called, though it should have an end? As some imagine it will; but both *are foolish dreams* and *alike untrue*.

Farther, if this liberty may be taken in interpreting the Scripture, I am sure, it will be impossible to prove from thence, the Eternity of God Himself; for His eternal existence is not expressed in stronger language, than is used about His decrees, and the designation of Christ unto the Mediatorial Office, in respect to that duration, wherein the divine Decrees were formed, and Christ was *set up*, or constituted Mediator. And such liberty can be taken, only to maintain that which is directly absurd, and repugnant unto some of the most glorious Truths of the Gospel, *viz*, Christ's eternal relation to the Church of God, and His eternal engagement in her favor, in the Covenant of Grace.

These phrases, "*from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was,*" so fully express Eternity, or that immeasurable duration which was before Creation, that I have scruple whether any, which do more strongly express it in Scripture, can be produced. So *operose* was Solomon, in *setting forth the Eternity of Wisdom,*

lest it should be thought that he spake of created Wisdom, as the learned Gejerus observes. When God represents unto us His eternal existence, it is thus: "*Yea, before the day was, I am he.*" (Isa. 43:13) And when He asserts the eternity of His Decrees, it is thus: "*Calling the generations, from or before the beginning.*" (Isa. 41:4) And the plain sense of the phrases here used, is, duration before the commencement of time, or the existence of any thing created. Christ was set up *before the world or time, before the beginning, and before the earth existed*. I humbly hope that the *proper* Eternity of the divine Decrees and the *proper* Eternity of the Mediatorial Office of Christ, are established beyond sober and modest objection; which were the important ends that I had in view, in this discourse. I shall close it with making three observations:

First Observation. The Evangelical Scheme is *wholly new*: It is a system of Truths, which reason in its highest perfection, could not possibly have acquired any knowledge of. There are three principles, from which we derive all our ideas, *viz*. Sensation, Reflection and Abstraction; by neither of which we could ever have obtained, the least acquaintance with the *deep things of God*. And this is, I humbly apprehend, the meaning of the Apostle in these words: "*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that him.*" (I Cor. 2:9) The eye hath seen much, and

the ear hath heard much: A very considerable part of our ideas, are gained by sight and hearing; which includes in it, the whole of the instruction that we receive from others, relating to the nature of things. But it was not possible that by these means we should ever have discovered any evangelical Truths: Sensation could not enable us to make such important discoveries; neither could Reflection on those ideas gained by sensation, help us in this matter: Nor could Abstraction, which is a separation of our ideas; by which acts of the mind a new kind of ideas are obtained, which are purely intellectual, assist us in this thing. The reason hereof is clear. The Truths of the Gospel have neither connection with, nor dependence upon, any branch of Truth, which a finite understanding is capable of discovering.

If we had a complete knowledge of the *first* Covenant, in the whole compass of its principles, precepts, promises and threatenings, we then should be absolutely unable to make the least discovery of the Doctrine of the second Covenant; for that is entirely new, and altogether distinct in its nature, from the first Covenant. And it being so, none of its Truths come within the verge, even of unimpaired and perfect Reason; which fully proves the absolute impossibility, of the human mind gaining the knowledge of its truths, by any acts it is able to put forth. Angels themselves could never have known any thing at all of evangelical mysteries, without

supernatural revelation. Truths they are, which were *hid in God*, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

To imagine, as some have imagined, that the second covenant is founded on Truths contained in the first; or upon those natural notions, which we have as men, of the moral perfections of God; is effectually to destroy both Covenants: For, that imagination, is inconsistent with the nature of the Covenant of works, and with the nature of the Covenant of Grace. The Mediatorial Scheme, hath no relation unto, nor agreement, in its nature with the Doctrine of the First Covenant; though it is calculated to secure the highest honour to it, by the obedience and death of Christ.

Second Observation. Hence we learn what will be the noble employ of the saints in the heavenly state: *viz.* The contemplation and adoration of the divine Perfections, as displayed in the astonishing affair of their recovery and salvation. Some men to please themselves with the thoughts of this, that in heaven they shall become perfect philosophers, and have a more extensive knowledge of things created, than *Adam* had in Paradise: That they shall be able to unravel nature in her secret causes, numerous operations, and multiplied various effects. I can find nothing in Scripture, which favours this tickling imagination: This I know, that the souls of the saints, will be eternally entertained, with what is infinitely more *noble, sublime* and *grand*, than any thing which nature can

possibly suggest to the mind. I am clearly of the opinion of an eminent divine in this matter, who speaks thus: *“Is it not much to be lamented that many Christians content themselves with a very superficial knowledge of these things? (i.e., Gospel Truths) How the studies, the abilities, the time and diligence of many excellent persons, engaged in, and laid out about the works of nature, and the effects of divine Wisdom and Power in them, by whom any endeavour to enquire into this glorious Mystery (of Christ’s Person) is neglected, if not despised! Alas, the Light of Divine Wisdom, in the greatest works of nature, holds not the proportion of the meanest star unto the sun in its full strength; unto that Glory of it which shines in this Mystery of God manifested in the Flesh, and the work accomplished thereby. A little time shall put an end unto the subject of their enquiries, with all the concernment of God and man in them for evermore. This alone is that which fills up Eternity, and which although it be now with some as nothing, yet will shortly be all.”* (John Owens, *Of The Person of Christ*, p. 290-291) The constant contemplation on these glorious and sublime Mysteries, fills the minds of the Blessed with the highest complacency and delight, and will maintain in them a holy Adoration of God unto Eternity.

Third Observation. If we approve of these things, and they are delightful unto us, as the Glory of God shines forth in them; it is an evidence in itself,

whether we allow it or not in our own favour, that we are the happy subjects of a gracious illumination from God. For such is the nature of these heavenly Mysteries, that the *carnal* mind hath not, nor can have any pleasure in them. That *receives* them not, they are *foolishness* unto it, whatever is pretended to the contrary; it cannot *know* them, because they are *spiritually discerned*. And, therefore, if the things themselves are agreeable to us, if they are our *chief joy*, and that state is most desirable to us; wherein we shall perfectly know them, and be for ever conversant about them, we are certainly *meet* for the enjoyment of it.

Our present satisfaction and complacency in these sublime Truths, as they are glorifying unto God in all His infinite Perfections, is a full evidence of our future happiness in the contemplation of them, in the world of Light and Glory above. For, our approbation of heavenly things is a clear proof, *that God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of His Glory, in the face (or Person) of Jesus Christ.*

FINIS.

In a Discourse delivered, in a monthly-Exercise of Prayer with a Sermon, on the 19th of September, 1754, John Brine.

Please check your address labels for your expiration date, and renew as soon as possible. Thank you, The Editors.

ARTICLE CRITIQUE

By S. C. Phillips

We realize the article by John Brine is much too lengthy for most readers, and rather deep for some. Yet, we believe it has some value in our own day.

Brine was replying to two authors of his period. The first was a Mr. Hussey's *The Glory of Christ Unveiled*; the second a Mr. Stockell's *The Redeemer's Glory Unveiled*. The second extended the earlier concepts advanced by Mr. Hussey. Briefly put, Hussey denied the eternity of the Everlasting Covenant of Grace, and Stockell advanced a *reincarnation*, rather than the *Incarnation* of Christ.

To a modern reader, it appears in places to be a *mere play on words*. But it is not. Our forefather in this case was able to sense the results of these views long before they came to fruition.

Eventually, Hussey's and Stockell's views grew into a denial of the eternal Sonship of Christ. In the 1860's, the issue split the Baptist in England.

So we see that small departures in doctrines often bring about great doctrinal heresies, discord, and divisions in the Church.

Ministers MUST be exceedingly careful to maintain doctrinal purity. There is in human nature a tendency as described by Luke in Acts 17:21, where the Athenians and strangers

there "*spent time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.*" Only God knows how much elders desire to flavor their sermons with novelties!

How shocking would such elders find their pet new concepts when full grown! Andrew Fuller advanced a view that in the atonement for our sins, that Christ died *sufficiently* for all mankind; but *efficiently* for the Elect only. Thus he found his excuse to preach "honest invitations" to all manner of men. Yet, his later followers preached it as being *sufficient* for all mankind, and *inefficient* for any!

In the 1920's and 1930's, many among the Old School began to utilize a new concept of an *eternal salvation* and a *time salvation*, whereby *grace* was *effectual* in producing good works. Yet, they heard their children proclaiming a time salvation which was *ineffectual* to produce good works separate and apart from a *conditional duty-faith!*

Today, we see many using the word *regeneration* for *resurrection*; and *resurrection* for *regeneration*; and some thus denying both doctrines! We find some even separating *Christ Son of God* from *Jesus the Son of* and claiming that "It was not Christ that died for sinners"! - - - flying fully into the face of ALL Scripture!

Multitudes use the word saved to mean regeneration, and regeneration to mean *conversion*, as if these are the

same things! In fact, the whole of the Arminian system believe that the Gospel *regenerates*, and finds no use for conversion which is by the Gospel!

Very few today believe the Holy Spirit *regenerates*; the Gospel is used in *conversion*; that *Christ* was the Mediator *from eternity*; that all the regenerated will be *sanctified* by the Spirit and *belief of the Truth*; and that salvation from *start to finish* is by God's free unmerited grace.

"Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (I Cor. 5:6)

GOD'S PROVIDENCE OVER THE EVIL ACTS OF MEN

By Frank B. Beck (deceased)

Why does God allow sinners to exit on the earth? Why does God allow sin? Why 'doesn't God save everybody? Why doesn't God destroy the Devil? Or, is God *powerless* in these matters? Are the sinful acts of men a part of God's eternal purpose, or something apart from His purpose?

The Problem of Sin

There is the problem of sin. How did sin originate? Did God *purpose* it, or *permit* it, or did it come in *unexpectedly*?

If we shall say that sin came in unexpectedly or unforeseen by God, then we charge God with *imperfect*

knowledge. That is not the kind of God we know in the sacred Scriptures. He is *perfect* in Wisdom. "*His understanding is infinite*" (Psalm 147:5) "*He knoweth all things.*" (John 21:17)

That God did know beforehand that sin would enter into the world is gathered from At-ts 15:18: "*Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world.*" This included the work of redemption from SIN and hell, which included sin.

If God saw beforehand that sin would enter into the world, *why did lie not prevent it?* Suppose that we say that He *could not*, then we charge God with imperfect *power*. Again this is not the God with whom we are acquainted in sacred Writ, lie does as *He pleases* (Psa. 115:3) and "*all power*" is given unto Christ "*in heaven and in earth.*" (Malt. 28:18)

We cannot say that He *could not*.

Then we must say that lie *would not*. If we conclude that God *could* prevent sin from entering the world but *would not*, then it must be that the *sinful acts men are included in the purpose of God*.

Concerning the evil acts of men, be it said, THAT MEN SIN OF THEIR OWN DEPRAVED WILLS. God does NOT "force" men to sin against their will. He doesn't have to — He leaves them TO THEMSELVES and they WILLINGLY sin. But God uses the sinful acts of men to His OWN

GLORY. either in justice or in grace, in that *He prevents sin permits sin, directs sin* in courses wherein lie can manifest His Glory, and determines how far the sinner or the Devil shall go.

I. God, In His Providence Prevents Sin

God oftentimes *prevents sin*. This is according to His grace and is not a matter of obligation. He does not have to prevent it and sometimes does *not*.

In the case of Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech God prevented sin. Abraham and Sarah had journeyed into Abimelech's country and Sarah was a "*fair woman to look upon..*" (Gen. 12:11) Therefore Abimelech took Sarah, *but God warned him not to touch her.* (Gen. 20:3-6) Indeed, Abimelech "*had not come near her.*" (vs. 4) Why was that? Surely that was not the natural thing to do, except that it was God *withholding Abimelech from sinning against Him*, as we read that He, in fact, *did.* (vs. 6)

On the other hand God did not prevent Shechem from committing adultery with Jacob's daughter Dinah. (Gen. 34)

Well may we pray in the words of the Psalmist: "*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins...*" (Psa. 19:13) Let God but withdraw his grace to keep us from sinning and we will be as the lowest demons in hell.

II. God, In His Providence, Permits Sin

God *permits sin*. This does not mean that He approves of it, for He judges it with the fiercest punishment. By permitting sin God, in righteous judgment withdraws His grace and leaves men to their sinful selves,

After David had committed adultery with Bethsheba God said to him: "*Because thou hast despised Me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife, thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes and give them unto thy neighbor and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.*" (II Sam. 12: 10-12)

God *hates adultery*, but will withdraw His grace from David's own house so that those nearest David will take his wives openly in adultery. God will *punish David with his own sin!*

In order to deceive sinful and deceitful King Ahab, the Lord "*put a lying spirit*" in the mouth of all of Ahab's prophets (I Kings 22:23) assuring him victory if he went forth to battle. This is what Ahab desired. He did not want to hear any other message. So God gave him up *to his lies though He warned Ahab* that he was being tricked. (I Kings 22: 13-28)

It is the same principle that runs throughout the Word of God. God permits the wicked to have his own way, gives him up to his sin. That this is so, examine the following references:

“But My people would not hearken to My voice and Israel would none of Me, so I GAVE THEM UP unto their own heart’s lust and they walked in their own counsels.” (Psa. 81: 11-12)

We are informed that in Old Testament times God *“suffered all nations to walk IN THEIR OWN WAYS.”* (Acts 14: 16)

We are instructed that the Gentile nations gave themselves over to idolatry and that *“Wherefore God also GAVE THEM UP to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonor their own bodies between themselves.”* (Rom. 1: 23-24)

That the Gentile nations changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped the creature more than the Creator and that *“For this cause GOD GAVE THEM UP UNTO VILE AFFECTIONS.”* - (Rom. 1: 25-26)

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, GOD GAVE THEM OVER to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient.” (Rom. 1:28)

The wicked who have not the revelation of God in the Old and New Testament and in the Person of Jesus

Christ reject the truth and love falsehood. Therefore, God will give them over to falsehood. *“And for this cause GOD SHALL SEND THEM STRONG DELUSION that they should BELIEVE A LIE, that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”* (II Thess. 2:11-12)

Why is this? *“Because they receive not the LOVE of the Truth that they might be saved.”* (Vs. 10) All who continue in unbelief of the truth are to this end “appointed” (I Peter 2:8) and were *“before of old ordained to this condemnation.”* (Jude 4)

God permits the sinful acts of men as a means to an end, to shew forth the Glory of His Justice and Holiness. *“For the Scripture saith unto , 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 all the earth.”* (Romans 9:17)

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS AND PERFECTIONS OF GOD

Selected from *Gospel Standard*, 1843 The unchangeableness or immutability of God is a strange stab at the littleness, the contemptibleness, and naughtiness of free will, Fullerism, and all universal redemptionists. And I ask, what is this unchangeableness or immutability? It is the immutability of God. And who is God? The Being

whose perfections are Himself, and Himself His Perfections. Thus the Perfections of God are searched into by any one in whom, through regeneration, dwells the Spirit of illumination.

When I think of those Perfections of God, as, for instance, immutability, I stand back, and tremble, and keep my distance, in reverence and godly fear at a Being possessed of such a tremendous quality as this of unchangeableness. "What!" say I, "can it be, that I, — a worm, a creature of a day, a moth, and a shadow, — can ever worship such an amazing Being as one who, infinitely more stable than the mountains, cannot ever be rooted up or altered in the least of His purposes? Can it be that *I* can worship Him?" Thus godly fear and every grace, with reverence and with admiration, take possession of his breast in whom is displayed, by the Spirit's power, this or any other admirable quality in God.

When I consider, also, that to this unchangeableness are also added the strictest justice, the most rigid justice, the most unalterable justice, the eternal and infinite determination to "*bring the wheel over the wicked,*" and "*not to clear the guilty,*" no, not in the least degree; when I consider a Being armed with such formidable qualities, (formidable to such a guilty wretch as man,) I stand amazed before Him! And, feeling my carnal mind enmity against Him, I wonder not that the unregenerate priests, and rabble, and religious folks among the Jews, called

out and roared out for Barabbas, a miscreant, rather than the God-Man. The beautiful attribute of hatred to sin, and power and determination to punish it, vexed the carnal professors of letter-godliness to distraction, the unchangeableness of God heightening it all, and the even-handed stroke of Infinite Justice blazing before their crooked goings-on. I say, need any one wonder that human nature roared out for Barabbas rather than Christ, if, in the self-existent light of God in a natural conscience, they saw the *unchangeable* hatred of God against pride, the show of a mere outward tinsel religion, and His unconquerable power to punish it; when they saw the *unchangeable* liking to humility which Christ showed; when they saw His unchangeable batterings against the love of the world, against ambition, against laying up money, the modes of life, the wisdom of man, and all the painted drapery of human proceedings?

I declare, for my part, that I have "stood and trembled" when I have thought of even this one attribute, the unchangeableness of this Almighty Being. What! will He not alter? And has He power to execute His purposes too? O the stun that it gives to the little, the great, the serpentine and twisted self-importance of such a wretch as myself! And I find that the patriarch Job shared with me in this; for he felt himself to be a wretch, or else he would never have indulged in that supernatural apostrophe, "*I abhor myself.*" I say that the patriarch Job

shared in this, to be brought to a mighty deep, when, in God's regenerating light, he was led to contemplate God's immutability. "*For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me; therefore am I troubled at His presence. When I consider, I am afraid of Him.*" (Job 23:14-15)

When I consider, again, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose obedience and blood-shedding I stand acquitted and gloriously righteous before God; in which Lord Jesus Christ all the Perfections of the Deity centre, harmonize, and shine in behalf of the redeemed; when I think of the difference between Him and my fellow-creatures, — He God as well as man, and taking on Himself the form of a servant, and being a penny-less carpenter; (for poor women had a minister to His wants;) when I think of Him a *servant*, though He was Lord of all, and contrast this with the blazing haughtiness of man; He a servant, and man galloping with the swiftness of a racer after respectability; He having no where to lay His head, and man cheated with the whim of a fine house; He called "a fellow" by the religious, and swarms of self-made Christians glorying in an honourable name; He crucified, and they stretched on their beds of ease; He almost pennyless, and they with their handsome incomes; He laid in wait for from the cradle by Herod, the slaughterer of innocents; hunted much through life by *nominal professors*, and strung by the cruel death of the cross; when I think of all

His troubles internally, which none scarce but God know anything of; I say, when I thus consider Christ, in whom harmonized and con-centred, in behalf of the redeemed, all the *Perfections* of Deity, and contrast Him with man or self, how my soul bubbles up with unutterable feelings, and sees the world to be a wilderness, and myself carnally and naturally a fiend! O God! how unsearchable are Thy thoughts! how high thy glories swell!

And I would observe that the unchangeableness of God stops in me the mouth of free-will prayer; it shows me that GOD HAS A WILL; it makes me WAIT for *indited* prayer; it makes me look to the Spirit to teach me to pray; it makes me see that all prayer not according to the will of God is wildfire; it makes me feel that I know not what to pray for; and it makes my ransomed soul (in which the Spirit of supplication dwells) look to the Holy Spirit alone, to teach me how to pray.

O blessed and soul enriching contemplations! My soul as a weaned child waits upon God. I sun myself in the blaze of His unalterable and countless Perfections. It makes me feel Him to be the habitation also of all amiableness, as well as of all power; for what is more amiable than perfect goodness, and what more beautiful than beauty itself? Gladness, goodness, and beauty are in God's tabernacle. (Joel 1:16; Psa. 96:6) I trust that the furnace of affliction will be sanctified to cleanse my misty eye-sight to see more of these things. I trust that I may

be brought to say, “*My soul fainteth for the living God,*” the self-existent habitation of all His many excellencies. May I be able even to say, with one of old, “*I opened my mouth and panted*” for the very fervent desire that I have towards God’s ways “*at all times.*” — signed I.K.

“BE YE SEPARATE”

A personal experience, by S. T., 1843

Note: Most all the elders now serving our churches in the Mississippi Valley were called out of Arminian bondage. The call: “Be ye separate” is a hard call on the flesh; *made* easy by the Spirit.

It pleased the Lord to stop me in my mad career when I was about eighteen years of age, by opening my blind eyes and causing me to see something of my lost state as a sinner. I then went among the so-called religious; and that I thought must be right; for I imagined that every preacher was almost an angel from heaven, and that he knew all mysteries. O how I did wish that I was like one! Yea, such was my blind zeal, that I declared that I durst trust my soul to what any preacher said. But still I could not get the thing I wanted, which was the approbation of God. The preachers told me to believe just *now*; but I felt guilt upon my conscience, so that I could not believe.

I went to prayer-meetings, where two or three were praying at once; and at one meeting, a person was preaching at the same time; so that there was a great uproar. A man came to me, and put his mouth against my ear, saying, “What an awful thing it would be, after all these privileges, if our souls should be lost!” and then he thundered out, “Amen!” When they were weary, they wanted to know how many were set at liberty, which they made out to be twelve, and reckoned me among the number, though I never said so. because I knew that it was not the case. I then began to think and to feel that I was worse than any of them, and one of the worst sinners in the world. I thought that I had committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that what I then felt was only the beginning of the torments of hell, which I should have to endure to all eternity.

At this time, I kept falling into sin in secret, and found my heart to be a seat of every foul fiend and every unclean and hateful bird, yea, of sins that I dare neither write nor hint at.

I went on in this state for a great length of time, under the Wesleyan Preachers, who preached perfection in the flesh, and that we were not safe without it, and how blessed it was to enjoy it; which I could readily believe, because nothing troubled me but sin, and I knew that all would be right if I could get rid of that. The class-leader would take up the subject with each of one of the members of the class, and press this perfection upon us, telling us that

to rest in justification or sins forgiven, was to be in danger of a greater damnation than to die in our wicked state. This I believed, because I was more miserable now than formerly; and I therefore justified all that they said, and remarked within myself, "That is the religion which I want; and it is a pure religion;" for I knew that heaven was holy, and that God was holy, and that "*without holiness no man should see the Lord*" Being determined to have it, if possible, I read the word of God, attended to family prayer, closet prayer, pray-meetings, and preachings two or three times on a Lord's Day (*SIC*); and I watched my thoughts, and words, and looks, and walk, to be perfect, if possible; for I knew no other way of being saved. But, alas, alas! instead of getting better and better, I got worse. The more I watched against sin, the more sin I did; and the more I struggled to be free, the faster I was bound. I fell into secret sin over and over again. Like poor Job, I cursed the day in which I was born; and I cursed the sins that had brought me into that state; yea, I wished that I had never been a professor. I could open my mind to no one; for I knew that they were all too holy to be like me.

One Lord's Day evening (*First Day*,— Ed.), as I was going to chapel, I was so miserable that I did not know what to do; and my guilt was so heavy upon my conscience that I thought, "What shall I say at class to-day?" I dreaded to tell lies and speak all the truth, I could not. I therefore turned

into the fields, to brood over my misery by myself, and sat down upon the ground, weeping, and cursing the day of my birth. But there was a secret something within me, which told me that more was to be known than I had yet heard of; and this kept me from despair.

Some times afterwards, I was elected clerk, sexton, and Sunday-school teacher in the: parish church, which offices I filled for fourteen years; and I was a Methodist at the same time! I never once thought that there was anything good for aught in the church, and did not choose it; but my friends thought that it would do me good, as it respects this world:, and therefore, I accepted it, and was well pleased with it for a time. It made me many fleshly friends, and so bettered my condition in life. Whilst here, the Lord was pleased to show me, by His Holy Spirit, the emptiness of all form; and not only that, but to show me the power of godliness, and to reveal the dear Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, bearing the curse for me, as my Surety, and suffering for my sins, and groaning, bleeding, and dying to save my soul from death and hell. I saw that my sins were laid upon Him, and that by His stripes I was healed. At that sight my sins fell off, and the guilt was taken from my conscience; so that it was now impossible to help believing. This was no "Act faith in the atonement," "Get an interest in Christ," "Get your sins pardoned," "Get the favour of God," and the rest of the miserable stuff of those blind-guides

called Methodists. They (as well as all others in general — Ed) justify the wicked, and condemn the just; and they bite with their teeth, and cry peace where there is no peace.

When it pleased the dear Lord to show me the way in which He saves poor sinners, through the blood and justifying righteousness of Christ being imputed to them, I could not help telling my religious brethren about it; for I began to see that they were unacquainted with it.

As to the (*Established*) Church, I could see death written upon every thing belonging to it, even from the pinnacle to the foundation stone, in reference to both ministers and people. But flesh and blood said, “Bear it; for you have many friends among them; and if you leave, they will all turn against you.” I prayed to the Lord, scores of times, that He would direct me, lest I should do what I should afterwards have condemned myself for doing; and the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, sent these texts with power into my soul: “*Let the dead bury their dead. Follow thou me;*” “*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*” I told the Lord that they were very kind to me, that I was almost like one of their own family, that I never had such friends before, and that they would do almost anything to serve me. The Lord replied, “*By faith, Moses refused to be called the of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer afflictions*

with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.” He would not suffer me to pray any more about it; and, when I tried to pray, something would say unto my mind, “Thou hast been convinced often enough. If thou regardest iniquity in thine heart, the Lord will not hear thy prayer.”

When, in the ceremony of infant sprinkling, the clergyman dipped his fingers into the water, and marked the child on the forehead, I used to say, “That is the mark of the beast;” and when he prayed that it might lead the rest of its life according to the beginning, I thought that his prayer would not be answered; for it began in lies and ended in hypocrisy. I often said to the old font, “Thou art a witness against us.”

But all this, was not enough to make me quit the old Harlot. The Lord laid His rod heavily upon me for other things. No ordinary affliction would cure me: I was too rebellious. His rod was, to choke me almost to death, when my sins were upon my conscience, and I, in my own feelings, was near the gates of hell; but I knew what it was for. And one Lord’s Day, while I was in the reading desk, He spoke powerfully to my mind, “I shall have to choke you again,” which made me fear that He would kill me in the Church. Thus was I driven out, or I should never have been out; and I am saved because the Lord would not let me die. Therefore, free grace is written in my very soul by the finger of God

the Eternal Spirit.

I have to say, to the glory and praise of God's holy name, that though I lost many fleshly friends, and have had to endure much persecution, I have peace of conscience, and the Lord has given me more and better friends. My bread has been given, and my water has been sure; and, with respects to this world's things, I get on as well as ever, and, I think, rather better. I have learned that all things beneath the heavens are the Lord's, both gold and silver.

For twenty years I saw, in the letter of the Word, that immersion was the only proper mode of baptizing; but it was not powerfully laid upon my conscience until several years since, while I was witnessing the ordinance. I could not stand, my grief was so great; and I wished to follow my dear Lord through Jordan, which I have been enabled to do.