

The Remnant

*“Even so then at this
present time also there
is a remnant according to
the election of grace.”
Romans 11.5*

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ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION

By William M. Smoot, 1912

“Eternal God whose lofty throne,
Extends beyond all mortal sight,
To puny man Thou art unknown,
Revealed in faith’s exalted flight.”

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” Ephesians 1:11.

We have before us a copy of the “*Messenger of Truth*,” a periodical claiming Old School, published at Laurel Fork, Virginia. In this paper, one of the leading articles is an Editorial attack upon the doctrine of PREDESTINATION. In the same paper appears communications relating experience to which we think no serious objection can be found. We have frequently been made to wonder how any one with an experience of Gospel grace could object to the doctrine of the Eternal, Irrevocable, and Absolute Predestination of All things, whatsoever comes to pass. We are not at all surprised to find opposition to this truth in the world, for the “natural mind” of man revolts at the sover-

eignty of God; it “is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Romans 7:7). But we are greatly surprised that anyone who has ever felt the touch of the Divine presence, “the powers of the world to come,” should ever question this most precious, soul cheering, and God honoring doctrine. The prophet tells us, however, that, “The leaders of this people cause them to err” (Isaiah 9:16). It was bad nursing (II Samuel 4:4) that caused Mephibosheth’s lameness. And it is false preaching and false teaching that often poisons the minds of the children of God against Gospel truth.

The editorial to which we refer is written in the ingenious manner that characterizes writings of this character, opponents of the doctrine being apparently in fear that the character of God is assailed by the doctrine of Absolute Predestination; and rush to the front to vindicate the character of Him, whose infinite purity and holiness cannot be called into question; and is therefore not in any sense involved in any discussion of this or any other point of doctrine.

We will quote a few subtle paragraphs from the article in the Messenger: “God said to Adam, concerning the tree of the knowledge of

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Contents

Absolute Predestination, by Elder William Smoot, 1912.....	1
Preface to his book, <i>Prophetical Landmarks</i> , by Horatio Bonar.....	9
Predestination, by Elder Silas Durand.....	16
Books, Tapes, Notices.....	9 and 17-19

(Continued from page 1)

good and evil, 'Thou shalt not eat of it.' Did that mean that Adam could not eat of it? Or did it mean that he should not or ought not? If it had meant that he could not, that he was not and never could be able to eat of it, the penalty would not have been affixed, or if it had been fixed, it never would have been executed." —unquote.

Now in this extract, we have a **man of straw** set up, and then demolished! The reader will notice the ingenious manner in which the terms could not, should not, and ought not are used. The writer slyly steps aside from the force and meaning of the Scripture that he is discussing. He fails to quote the whole verse, but clips from it one clause, leaving out the essential part. The verse reads: "*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die*" (Genesis 2:17). That God did not intend or predestinate that Adam should eat of this tree, as declared in the editorial to which we refer, is absurd in the face of the declaration: "*In the day that thou eatest thereof.*" Here is not only the prophecy that he should eat of the tree, but the day appointed in which it was to be done. How could this language have ever been used if there was to be no

day of the kind named? This declaration reveals both the foreknowledge of Jehovah and predestination. When the full verse is faithfully quoted the sense in which the word “shall” is used is clearly seen. “*Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” That is, Adam “should not,” or “could not” eat of the **tree and remain in the state of his original creation**. The day that he ate of the tree should mark his fall. The changeless “shalt not” of his Creator was evidenced when he fell from that original state, fell under the law of sin and death, and reached the fulfillment of the second shall, “*Thou shalt surely die.*” The meaning of the first shall, is as clear as the second; the first calls for the second. We might transpose the verse, and it would not lose its force” “*In the day [predetermined time] that thou eatest of the tree. . . thou shalt surely die; for thou shalt not eat of it [and remain in your present condition in Eden.]*”

We might here inquire in what way could the coming of a Savior have been absolutely predestinated, and the entrance of sin, left out of such predestination, left to “chance.” Savior and sinner, salvation and sin are relative terms; the one calls for the other. The same eternal purpose or predestination that absolutely provided, pre-determined, ordained, and predestinated the coming of Christ as the Savior of sinners, as absolutely and irrevocably ordained the fall of Adam, and the consequent entrance of sin.

“Lo, in the fall we are led to espy,
‘Twas all for the lifting of Jesus on high.”

Adam in the original creation was simply an earthly man fitted only to occupy an earthly sphere. He was not fitted for heaven. The fall of Adam was essential to the revelation of Gospel grace in the face of Jesus Christ, and how could such an important factor be other than as

the Scripture declares: “*For if by one man’s offence, death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ*” (Romans 5:17). Leave out the fall of Adam and what would have become of the whole economy of Redemption? Hence both sin and salvation must have been embraced in the one full and complete design, purpose, or predestination of God.

When an artist designs a picture, the lines of light, and shades of darkness are embodied in the one design; the dark background must be there to bring out the life-lines of the picture. It is written: “*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep . . . and God said, Let there be light; and there was light*” (Genesis 1:1-3). Was not this darkness as much a part of the creation as the light? Did not both spring from one creative word that made the heavens and the earth and “all the host of them?”

The Scripture so declares and also gives us the typical meaning of the darkness and light: “*I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things*” (Isaiah 45:7). When did the Lord form the light and create the darkness; or makes peace and create evil?

The editor of the Messenger sums up his view of the fall of Adam in the following paragraph:

“Did God mean that He would not suffer Adam to eat of the tree? No; but He meant that Adam should not do so; that he had no right from God to eat of it. It was Adam’s duty to obey his Maker, but he disobeyed Him of his own will; he knew better and was not deceived. So the penalty ‘Thou shalt surely die,’ was a just recompense for his disobedience. By

the disobedience of this one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. And had it not been for the intervention of mercy through the atonement of Christ all men without exception would have remained in death under the penalty.”—unquote.

Here is *Arminian “Free Agency” pure and simple*; from which it is clearly seen that this writer, instead of placing the fall of Adam to the Predestination of Almighty God’s determinate counsel, places it upon Adam himself; as an old preacher in West Virginia used to say, “Adam made himself a sinner.” And but for the intervention of Jesus Christ all his posterity would have remained in death. That is, the intervention of Jesus Christ was an after-thought, after-consideration, a revelation of the mercy of God at the expense of His justice, in order to extricate Adam from the pit into which he had placed himself. This is in line with the Article of Faith of the Kehukee Association of North Carolina, that God made Adam “able to stand, but liable to fall.” What improvement does this make upon the Divine Character? Assuredly He must have foreseen that Adam would fall, if left liable to; and why not, we ask from the stand-point of human wisdom, was not Adam made unable to fall, and thus left without immortality to roam at will in the Garden of Eden, an earthly paradise? Such questions are as the “*wisdom of this world*” which “*are foolishness with God.*” But we quote again from the Messenger:

“The believer has been created in Christ Jesus unto good works. These good works come in after creation; after regeneration; to the saints, after they have been quickened.”—unquote.

Here of course is the “sinner born again theory,” which is the heart’s delight of all Means Baptist—the quickening and regeneration of the natural man. Again we quote:

“If we boast of the ‘wills and shalls’ of Jehovah, let us know how to do it. If they are as some affirm, and the commandment, ‘Thou shalt not steal,’ is addressed to all men, then no man ever stole or committed a theft.”—unquote.

This is the first time we have ever seen in a periodical professedly Old School, the assertion that such a commandment, in the peculiar sense in which they were given, were addressed to all men.

The writer warms up in his discourse, and closes with the following:

“Those who preach that God purposed Adam’s transgression have no authority for what they preach; they draw on their imagination, or use the imagination of others. It contradicts the Bible, sets at naught God’s word, and makes prayer, preaching, exhortation, rebuke, reproof, and admonition vain things. We verily believe that many good brethren and sisters are deceived by this theory.”—unquote.

Have we not here an example of the character described by the apostle: “*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them...shall speak evil of the things that they understand not*” (II Peter 2:1,12).

In the writings of such honored elders, and Old School fathers as Gilbert Beebe, J.F. Johnson, R.C. Leachman, Samuel Trott, Thomas P. Dudley, Philander Hartwell, David Patman, J.M. Theobald, and a host of others, the doctrine now so bitterly assailed was clearly proclaimed for an hundred years. It has remained for a crop of youngsters who have crept in unawares (II Timothy 3:6) into the Means Baptist ministry to assume superior knowledge to the Baptist fathers of former days; and more

important still to *“holy men of God”* who spake as they were *“moved by the Holy Ghost”* (II Peter 1:21).

But let us pass to more fully consider the subject at the head of our article: ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION. We have but little use for the term “absolute,” only as it more clearly distinguishes the doctrine to which our enemies object. The word as we use it with Predestination, means predestination without limit. Yet predestination when used alone certainly means this also. The character of God is above reproach; can never be measured by human reason, or comprehended by the natural mind. *“No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him”* (Matthew 11:27). The revelation that He has been pleased to make of Himself manifests His eternal self-existence. *“I AM THAT I AM”* (Exodus 3:14). *“I am the LORD and there is no God besides Me”* (Isaiah 45:5). *“There is no power but of God; and the powers that be, are ordained of God”* Romans 13:1. We might quote without limit testimony clearly revealing the infinite self-existence, the boundless power, and wisdom of God.

Self-existence is an attribute of Sovereign power. Eternity, nor time, can hold but one self-existent Being, and that Being is the great “I AM;” all other beings depend for existence upon Him who *“is before all things, and by Him all THINGS consist”* (Colossians 1:17). “Predestination” is a New Testament term, and used but few times. It is somewhat similar, but not entirely in meaning to the word “purpose,” a word used more frequently, and in both Testaments. Paul instructed Timothy to “rightly divide the word of truth” (II Timothy 2:15). To rightly divide the word of truth is to place each point of doctrine in its proper place, for

each point of the *“doctrine of God our Savior”* has a certain bearing in the great work of Redemption.

The apostle connects the doctrine of Predestination with Election, placing Predestination immediately after Election. *“For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son”* (Romans 8:29). *“According as He hath chosen us in Him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will”* (Ephesians 1:1.5).

From the order in which these two points of doctrine are placed in this and other New Testament connections, it is evident that Election is one, if not really the basic principle of the Gospel system; and that Predestination is the Divine warrant of the eternal triumph of the election of grace. The full verse from which we have partly quoted reads: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30). Predestination is here given, insuring the call, the justification, and glorification of the election of grace.

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will” (Ephesians 1:11). In this text we have both the purpose and predestinated used with a slight difference only in the meaning of the two words. Predestination is

used here as in other Scriptural testimony, connected with the “*inheritance of the saints in light*.” The choice in Christ is first referred to, and Predestination insures in all the heirs of promise the security of their redemption in Christ Jesus.

“*According to the purpose of Him who worketh all things*”. The “**all things**” to which reference is here made may be more especially the calling, justification, and glorification of the election of grace; but the doctrine of Predestination covers all this ground; not only directly, but all that has, what may be termed an indirect connection. In the revelation of the stupendous work of Redemption; crowned with the glory and honor of the Lord Jesus Christ, it was necessary that an arena be provided where this work should be done, hence time was brought into being for God’s good pleasure, (Revelation 4:11,) and for the manifestation of the wonders of His will.

In the verse preceding the text the apostle clearly presents the work of predestination: “*That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ*.” Time and time’s creatures were created for the development of this great work; it was to be made manifest “in the dispensation of the fullness of times.” Hence all created things directly or indirectly tend to the one great end for which they were created under the master hand of the great Architect of the universe; the Creator of all worlds; and the Disposer of all events.

Who dare question that this all powerful God, Jehovah, the I AM THAT I AM, who purposed in eternity; and holds complete control of all the eternal developments revealing the salvation and glorification of His chosen family, would fail to securely keep in the grasp of His Almighty power the manifestation of

this eternal purpose through all the changing scenes of time; or that He would create anything which He could not govern; or that the far reaching revelation of the purpose or predestination of God should leave out of its secure, accurate, and irrevocable ordination a single event, to come by “chance,” permission, [permissive decrees], or any other agency save alone the eternal decrees, the purpose and predestination of Almighty God. He alone is responsible, as He alone possesses absolute power. He has not delegated such responsibility to any of His creatures, whether men or devils. He seeks not to evade His own responsibility, but entirely assumes it in the testimony before quotes: “*I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the LORD do all these things*.” (Isaiah 45:7).

As stated, the “all things” in our text may refer to the varied exhibitions of His grace in the salvation of Israel; yet they cannot ignore, but must necessarily embrace, the scenes of time in which these displays are made. For instance, the crucifixion of Christ was necessary, but wicked men must be raised up, a cross supplied, a wicked king enthroned; all these visible, temporal things must be provided [predestinated] at the proper time “*by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God*” (Acts 2:23). And all these wicked agencies were raised up as Pharaoh was raised up and his heart hardened (Exodus 7:13) “*for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done*” (Acts 4:28).

The crucifixion of Christ so far as being a result of predestination, was neither an isolated, nor an exceptional case; but an example of all time’s developments; all absolutely all, whether good or evil or indifferent, large or small, must have some bearing direct or remote upon the glory of God in Christ Jesus; the objects for

which all worlds and all things were created by God.

“Predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things.” For the only and best of causes He can work “all things”; For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things [without exception] **were created by Him, and for Him**” (Colossians 1:16). We are aware that those who would pervert this testimony are experts in playing upon words, and might take exception to the phrase *“worketh all things;”* that it could not be construed to sustain the doctrine of predestination. The reader will notice that this clause is not the important clause of the text; but that the purpose and predestination of God, are the essential factors in the text; *“Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things.”*

Let us transpose this part of the verse, and while retaining its force, we see more clearly it’s meaning, “He who works all things has predestinated them according to His purpose.” That is, the inheritance referred to in the text is obtained [experienced] according to the purpose and predestination of God. Predestination then secures the execution of the purpose; the development of the eternal design; the Divine medium through which this development is secured; and this predestination is “according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.”

Predestination also is the absolute ordination of the “all things” embodied in this purpose, and embraced in this working. The apostle in the 8th chapter of Romans covers this same ground, but in a somewhat different manner. He tells us of the “all things” predestinated and working together for the good of the saints, and

for the glory of God. In the “all things” are named tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and the sword, death, [all considered “evil”]; death, life, angels, principalities, powers etc. These are among the “all things” alluded to in our subject, and these can be termed of a temporal character: things of time.

We might take up the things to which the apostle refers one by one, and see how clearly we can trace the predestination of God. His ruling hand is seen in each event: as no depths of poverty [famine] to which the saints can be subject, no peril, misrepresentation, no depths of great sorrow [tribulation] or sore bereavement etc. These things are essential to the development of that people who are chosen in the furnace of affliction; and the apostle concludes his summary of these things that attend their pilgrimage with the promise: *“All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”*

From what we have written then it will be seen that the Scriptures teach that God has created all things, and works all things in the sense in which He has predestinated them according to His good purpose to work together for the good of His elect; that these things must cover the things of time, as time itself was brought into existence for the good pleasure of God, and the development of His purpose, as purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began.

The enemies of the doctrine object to it, more especially upon the principle of the predestination of evil things. They assume to themselves ability to measure the character of Jehovah. What blasphemy! To claim ability to measure the character of that great, Almighty God clothed in the dazzling splendor, the infinite purity and holiness of heaven; and to

measure His character by that wisdom which He is pleased to term “foolishness” (I Corinthians 3:19;) and all this in face of the declaration; that the world “by wisdom knew not God” (I Corinthians 1:21).

The text tells us that the “all things” which we have discussed in this article are working “*after the counsel of His own will*” (Ephesians 1:11). Mark the positive assertion: “**His [God’s] own will.**” He does not consult with men or devils. “*For who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who hath been His counsellor?*” (Romans 11:34). “*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that form it, Why hast Thou made me thus?*” (Romans 9:20). These are pertinent questions to such foolish criticism. The entire question regarding the predestination of evil things, as the fall of Adam, rests upon what God Himself declares upon the subject. Could there be, or has there been an act of greater wickedness than the crucifixion of Christ? And yet what saith the Scripture of it? “*For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed; both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done*” (Acts 4:27,28). To this Scripture we will add a few quotations of similar import. “*All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.*” “*Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field, which the Lord God had made*” (Genesis 3:1). Was he not wicked?

Does not this Scripture do away with the foolish notion of some of a self-existent devil? Again, let us quote: “*The Lord hath made all things for Himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil*” (Proverb 16:4). “*I make peace, and create evil (Ra); I the LORD do all these*

things” (Isaiah 45:7). “*Shall there be evil (Ra) in the city, and the LORD hath not done it?*” (Amos 3:6). “*I have created the waster to destroy*” (Isaiah 54:16). “*Vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*” (Romans 9:22). “*And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart*” (Exodus 7:3). “*Declaring the end from the beginning*” (Isaiah 46:10).

Will opponents of the doctrine inform us how the end could be declared from the beginning, and events between left out? “*He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou*” (Daniel 4:35). “*Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth*” (Romans 9:18). “*He turned their heart to hate His people*” (Psalm 105:25). “*And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*” (II Thessalonians 2:11). We quote but a few from abundant Biblical testimony upon this subject. Evidently prophets and apostles were not afraid of the doctrine maintained in this article.

Events must take place by predestination or by chance; and how can anything be secured by chance? A single chance shot may at any time destroy the whole structure of God’s creation. If they take place by predestination, it must be of God, of men, or of devils; and how by the devil who is but a creature of God, and could not even go into the herd of swine without permission (Matthew 8:32); or yet in man whose breathe “is in his nostrils” (Isaiah 2:22). Then absolutely and truly of God who does what He pleases “*in heaven, and in earth, and in the seas, and all deep places*” (Psalm 135:6) do all these things take place.

“O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable

are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are ALL THINGS: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Romans 11:33-36).

—*W.M. Smoot*

From *THE SECTARIAN: November, 1912*, as reprinted by Brother Hoyt Sparks on the **Predestinarian Forum** (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/predestinarian/>). We are truly thankful for Brother Sparks’ continued reprinting of these precious old documents, bringing them to our attention once again. “*Then said He unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old* (Matthew 13.52).”

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Preface to the book **PROPHETICAL LANDMARKS** by Horatio Bonar, 1847

I DO not mean this volume for a controversial one. It touches, no doubt, upon controverted points, and to that extent must partake of this character. But I have striven to avoid the attitude of disputation as much as possible, and to treat with respect the judgment of brethren in Christ who differ from me.

I have read most of the works written against the system here maintained. They are very few in number. What may be the reason of this, I do not undertake to say. I have not referred to any of them by name, nor quoted their language; but I have endeavoured to state fairly the substance of their arguments.

In reading these, I have been struck with the peculiar method of reasoning which they adopt. Their object is rather to *disprove* our hypothesis than to *prove* their own. They take for granted that if millennialism be overthrown, then their system must come in its place as a matter of course, without any further proof. They do not build up nor fortify their own system so much as they try to overturn that of their opponents. Hence their theory does not stand upon direct *textual* proof from Scripture in its favour, but upon the supposed absence of proof for the opposite.

Assuming that millennialism is in its very nature impossible, and, therefore, not capable of being proved, they endeavour to turn the edge of millennial expositions, and to show that a different sense is *possible*. But surely this is not all that is needed. Millennialism may have no foundation in Scripture; but still anti-millennialism may be equally baseless. What I desire of our opposing brethren is, that they would produce the *direct positive texts* on which they ground *their* theory; not on which they rest their opposition to our theory, but *on which they*

build their own. All the length they have advanced as yet, is, that our system is false, and that theirs *may* be true. It remains that they prove from Scripture that theirs *must be* true. They have not done this. But surely, both logically and theologically, their reasoning is at fault till they do so.

Besides, in reference to most of the disputed passages, the ground which they take up appears to me very narrow and insecure. Our position is, that the texts in question *must* be interpreted in a certain way, and do not admit of another sense. We may be wrong in this. But such, at least, is our position. What, then, is the counter position? Only that they *may be* interpreted differently; that certain doctrines (supposed to be in jeopardy) *demand* a different sense, and that the passages themselves *admit* of it. Now, these passages are the hinges of the whole question. They can have but *one* true meaning—a meaning to be determined, not by general inferences from collateral doctrines, but from the examination (textual and contextual) of the words themselves. If, then, we maintain that the principles of sound interpretation *compel* us to adopt the literal view, why do our brethren not take up the opposite position, and say that these same principles *compel* them to adopt another sense? Why do they stop short of this, and merely say that they do not feel constrained to adopt our meaning, for that the passages admit of another? Why do they not oppose their “must be” to our “must be?” If their theory be thoroughly invulnerable, and ours as thoroughly feeble, why do they not venture upon a more positive method of interpretation?

Let me illustrate my meaning by reference to a passage which I have taken up at length in the seventh chapter. I mean 2 Thessalonians 2:8. It is one of the most conclusive that has been adduced in the discussion; not only because it is clear and pointed in itself, but because it occurs in a plain epistle, and not in any book of figure or symbol. *Its testimony to a pre-millennial*

Advent appears to me irresistible. Our position respecting it is, that if there be certainty in language, consistency in statement, and coherence in argument, the expression, “BRIGHTNESS OF HIS COMING,” must refer to the literal Advent. How, then, is this met? Not by showing that it cannot do so, or by proving that it does not imply this; but simply by trying to show that the words *may* mean something else. This surely is a very feeble and indirect way of meeting our statements. Nor do I think it the fair method, either logically or scripturally. Respecting such an important passage, something more decided and direct ought to be produced. It should at least be shown that *our interpretation is wrong*, and not simply that another is *possible*. For what is this but an admission that the *natural* sense of the passage is on our side, and only the *non-natural* on the other?[1] And if the natural and probable sense be ours, and only the non-natural and possible be theirs, can we hesitate in deciding which of the two is according to the mind of the Spirit?

The general line of argument adopted by anti-millennarians appears to me both unsound and unsafe. They argue that millennialism is in itself so carnal, so absurd, so inconsistent with other doctrines, that it cannot be believed. Hence they approach Scripture with such a bias, that one can scarcely expect a calm and thorough examination of the passages under discussion. But even though the bias were not so injurious, still the method of procedure is inadmissible. If the question be one purely of Scripture-interpretation, then, no previous ideas of our own, as to the nature of the doctrine, ought to be allowed to weigh with us. Our inquiry simply is, What has God written? It is unfair, it is illogical, nay, it is deeply sinful, to come to the consideration of an important doctrine, with minds so *pre-occupied with the conviction that it cannot be proved*, that the weighing of evidence is altogether unnecessary. If the case is one of evidence, let us either fairly and scrupulously weigh that evidence, or

else decline to enter on it. But let us not undertake to weigh it, when we have previously, and upon other grounds, settled the whole question.

It is most unsafe to make *our ideas* of the possible our standard in measuring Scripture. It is clear that, in such a case, we are dictating to God, and not submitting to be taught by him. I know not a more melancholy instance of this than Dr. Bush, of America, in his recent work upon the resurrection. He sets out in the same track which many anti-millennarians have adopted, viz., that the doctrine in question is an impossibility. "The physiological fact (he writes) of the constant change which our bodies are undergoing, *is irreconcilably at war* with the tenet of the resurrection of our bodies" [p.390]. Commencing by an attempt to prove that resurrection *cannot be*, he then goes on to show how those passages which speak of it are to be interpreted, so as not to teach it.

The replies to his work which we have seen, at once assail him here as most illogical in the arrangement of his argument. They tell him that he is no judge of what is possible or impossible. They admit the difficulties implied in a resurrection (difficulties far greater than any which millennialism contains), but they leave these in the hands of God. Is any thing too hard for Him? They tell him, also, that the object of his book is to reconcile Scripture to a pre-conceived theory of his own. Such are precisely our answers to anti-millennarian works, most of which set out with similar assumptions, and go over nearly the same ground as the American Professor. We say that such a method of reasoning is unsound and untenable; that man is no judge of the possible or the impossible; that difficulties are nought to God; and that nothing can be more dangerous than to attempt to reconcile Scripture to a theory of our own. We see to what lengths this method of arguing has conducted Dr. Bush, and we ought to be upon our guard against applying that method to any revealed doctrine whatsoever.

There is another American Professor to whom I would refer, in connexion with some of the above remarks; I mean Moses Stuart, of Andover. He has recently published a very elaborate Commentary on the Apocalypse. In it he is compelled, as a critic, to admit that the first resurrection, spoken of in the twentieth chapter of that book, is a literal one, and that the words do not admit of being spiritualised. But to compensate for this singular admission, he gives us his opinion very freely upon the merits of millennialism. He calls it "a gross conception;" an "impossibility," having no "foundation but in the phantasy of the brain." He speaks of "the dreams of men;" "visionaries of ancient and modern times;" "phantasies of lively imaginations;" "enthusiastic visions;" "idle, yea, worse than idle, fancy dreams;" "dreams of phantasies of ancient and modern Millennarians, who make a worldly and sensual kingdom." [2] I do not cite these expressions to complain of them, far less to retort them. Neither do I refer to them as evidences of an unbecoming and uncandid spirit in the Andover Professor; of this I leave others to judge. Nor do I feel aggrieved by the epithets bestowed upon millennialism; they have not tended to persuade me that I am wrong, nor convinced me that I am an enthusiast or a dreamer. I cannot think that they will weigh much with any calm and thoughtful mind. If I can only hold fast, and defend what God has written for the instruction of his Church, I shall not be offended at these reproaches—reproaches which both in Britain and America are but too common among the assailants of the derided system. The reason I have quoted Professor Stuart is, because his method of dealing with the subject is a specimen of the mode of reasoning which is too much indulged in by Antimillennarians. They tell us that our theory is visionary and impossible, and that, therefore, it *cannot* be scriptural. Now, did it not occur to the learned Professor that this is precisely the false position which Unitarians adopt, and which

he and his fellow Trinitarians condemn? No one knows this better than he; and we might well be surprised at his adoption of principles in one case which he would condemn in another. I was struck, too, when I remembered the calm manliness with which he argued the question of the divinity of Christ against the Unitarians, and could not help wondering why he should speak more kindly to the deniers of his Lord than to his brethren in Christ. When he was arguing with the former, he stood upon the broad ground of Scripture, refusing to be moved away from this by their oft-repeated charges of impossibility and absurdity. When reasoning with the latter, he both loses sight of his former principles, and leaves behind him his former spirit. He does not meet us calmly, and prove that *his* system is scriptural and *ours* unscriptural; but he *assumes* throughout that millennialism is a silly fable, and that, therefore, all texts which seem, to favour it *must be* explained away. This, surely, is indefensible; for, however unworthy of his grave notice we may be, yet the peril of admitting such a principle ought to have deterred him from the course he has pursued. Would that he might be persuaded to return to his former position, and take up the present question calmly on the direct scriptural grounds! Of this, however, I have little hope. He has entered upon devious paths, and studied too admiringly the German school. His work on the Apocalypse is, notwithstanding its scholarship, a fearful exhibition of Rationalistic irreverence for the inspired Word of God. I intended to have devoted a chapter to the history of Millennialism. This, however, I have since resolved not to undertake. To do it thoroughly, would have occupied more time than I can at present afford; for though there are many sketches of this in various works, of which I might have availed myself, yet most of these are second-hand; and having, in the course of reading, noted down, many things, both in the fathers and in later divines, I could not have satisfied myself with a brief sketch, and I had not the

leisure, nor had I sufficiently digested my materials, to prepare a full history. But the conclusions to which all inquirers upon this subject have come, in reference to the *early* history of the doctrine, is, that *during the three first centuries it prevailed universally*, its only opponents being the Gnostics. This is now an acknowledged historical fact, a fact which we may well ask our opponents to account for, a fact which we believe cannot be accounted for, save upon the supposition that *Chiliasm* was an article of the Apostolic Creed.[3] But I do not mean to enter farther into its history. And one of my chief reasons is, that I have no wish to prop up the system by human authority, even of the most ancient and universal kind. I would not that our faith should “stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.” If it cannot be unequivocally maintained from Scripture, I will not even attempt to call in human witnesses, however numerous and however venerable. Let it stand or fall by the Word of God alone. Yet it would be well if our opponents, when casting reproach upon us, would remember that some respect is due to the honoured names that have been associated with it from the days of the apostles to our own.

As to the difficulties which are said to adhere to the system, and to render it incapable of proof, let me say a word. Previous to the fulfilment of every prophecy, there have always been difficulties connected with it, by which faith has been proved, and over which unbelief has stumbled. The predictions concerning the first Advent contained an amount of difficulty, perplexity, and apparent impossibility which completely overshadows every thing of that nature in the present case. Man’s reasoning with regard to *difficulties* has been thus entirely overthrown. It has been shown that he is no judge of these, and that when he attempts to estimate them, and to mould God’s word according to them, he is sure to err. We have been made to see how very careful we ought to be in pronouncing upon

these, and how unbecoming our position it is, as finite learners, to insist upon weighing a doctrine in the balance of our difficulties, rather than in the balance of the sanctuary. We seem to take for granted that the *harmony* of Divine truth must be so necessarily and immediately perceptible by us in all its parts, that if there appears to us any dislocation or incoherence, we are entitled to strike out the doctrine that seems to introduce the discord, *previous to* any consideration of the amount of scriptural evidence in its favour. Our difficulties are reckoned sufficient to place it beyond the circle of evidence altogether, and to justify us in at once throwing it out of our system upon the internal evidence of its own incongruity. But such a mode of adjusting systems is inadmissible,—especially seeing that all these systems contain in them many things which we cannot reconcile or link together in our present state. Were this method of reasoning lawful, the Jews might well have excused themselves in disbelieving the incarnation; and Unitarians might maintain the field successfully against the asserters of the Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nay, we ourselves should be thoroughly baffled in our attempt to prove the resurrection of the body; for, beyond all question, that doctrine presents to us difficulties altogether insoluble by us, difficulties so formidable that there is absolutely no escape from them, save by a direct appeal to what God has written, and to what God is able also to perform.

Instead of being staggered by the existence of difficulties, ought we not to feel that nothing else could be expected? Had there been none—such, should we not have been inclined to say that the doctrine was of man, not of God? Man may construct a scheme of the future, as a child draws a map of the stars, in which there shall appear no difficulties, no incongruities. But is God's system of the future likely to be as smooth and comprehensible by us? It is a future which is all his own, a future where there are ten thousand movements to adjust, and ten thousand

conflicting forces to calculate—a future in which there are new truths to be evolved, and, hence, new links to be formed for knitting the whole together. Surely, then, it is no great demand which God makes upon us, to wait in patience for a little while, and not to prejudge HIS system, because the links are not visible, and the order not in keeping with our ideas of harmony. The points in which it now appears dark or even disjointed, may be the very parts where there has been most of Divine wisdom expended; and the cause of the seeming difficulty may be the vast stretch of that infinite wisdom, so far transcending the lowness and narrowness of human thought. How often does that part of a picture on which the artist has bestowed most pains, and into which he has cast his whole soul, appear a blemish to the unpractised eye? So is it with reference to the things of God; and hence the exceeding danger, not to say irreverence, of testing a doctrine by the difficulties connected with it. These are not for us to decide upon. We are very likely to pronounce falsely upon these, or to reason improperly from them.

All this is especially true when the system in question is not only occupied with the future, but with that future in a very peculiar way. Let us, for example, assume, for a moment, that the Millenarian hypothesis is true; then, all that it involves is connected with a period *after the coming of Christ*. That coming must, of necessity, introduce many changes,—changes which make any calculation of ours as to the state of things *then*, still more difficult and hopeless. Even were we able to arrange the events and measure the difficulties of a future which was the natural and unbroken continuation of the present, still that would be no reason for our venturing to pronounce upon the difficulties of a system which is not to be developed till after Christ has come and taken into his own hands the reins of government. If our theory refer to the order of things after the Advent, then we are entirely precluded from the consideration of

these difficulties. Are we at liberty to affirm that what may seem difficulties just now, will be so *then*? Are we prepared to maintain that the Advent will introduce nothing new in God's administration of the world, and that what appears to us incongruous now will really be so then? May not what is new in that future order of the world, be the very things which shall adjust all these fancied dislocations, the very things which were awaiting to fill up that which now appears incomplete,—to knit together that which now seems loose and broken?

There is a remark of Dr. Owen on another subject which may very fittingly be quoted here: "A truth, well-established and confirmed, is not to be questioned, much less relinquished, on very entangled sophism, *though it should appear insoluble.*" Were this statement weighed, and carefully applied to the doctrine under discussion, in the same way as sound divines have applied it to other truths, there would have been, if not a total abandonment of position, at least a greater moderation of language, and perhaps some abatement of self-confidence, on the part of those who have intrenched themselves behind certain fancied difficulties, as if they formed a bulwark against Millenarianism, which must prove absolutely impregnable.[4]

The present volume consists properly of two parts. The first ten chapters contain what I have called the landmarks of prophecy, and the data for ascertaining the position of the Advent. The remaining five are devoted to an inquiry into the principles of interpretation, with some suggestions as to the predictions regarding Antichrist, and a brief glance at those "signs," which are the outriders of the approaching King, sent forward to warn the world, and to prepare the Church for his speedy Advent. I am aware that the work is far from being complete. I have done little more than set forth a few principles for the more exact exposition of the prophetic Word, and indicate the line of argument which I conceive ought to be pursued in all attempts to

determine the position of the Advent. I do not profess to have enumerated, far less to have exhausted, the proofs in favour of the doctrine here advocated. It would require many volumes, instead of one, to open up and illustrate what is written in Scripture concerning the coming and the kingdom of the Lord. They greatly err who suppose that our doctrine on these points is based on a few knotty and doubtful texts. The passages on which it rests, and on the strength of which we ask the reader to hesitate before he rejects it, are neither few nor ambiguous. They give forth no uncertain sound, no feeble, no inarticulate utterance. Their testimony is not scanty and infrequent, but full and oft-repeated. No other doctrine can produce a larger, more distinct, and more vigorous testimony in its favour. Many of the truths which we receive as incontestible, are built upon a basis by no means so solid or so broad as this. Its witnesses are very numerous, and worthy of being listened to. It pervades the whole Word of God, from Genesis to Revelation. It is not confined to the figurative books; it declares itself with equal fulness, in narrative and epistle, as in symbol or type. Like a thread of gold, it runs through the whole web of revelation, crossing and re-crossing it every where, and imparting the richest brilliance to the whole texture. It is the burden of all prophecy. It is the summing up, as well as the unravelling of all history. It is the final and grand solution of the mystery of God's dealings with this world of ours. It is the germ of Israel's types. It is woven into all their ordinances, and rites, and festivals. It is the theme of many a psalm; the heart of many a symbol; the subject of many a parable; the end and point of many a promise; the seal set to the "Gospel of the grace of God," as the "Gospel of THE KINGDOM," that is, the good news concerning the open gate for sinners, into that kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world!

It has been the HOPE of the Church through many a starless night, when other hopes had gone

out one by one, like beacons shattered by the tempest, leaving her disconsolate and helpless. It is now again, in our day, pressed upon her notice, as her strength in “the hour of temptation, which is coming upon all the world,”—the only light which cannot be quenched, and by which she will be able to steer her perilous course through the gloom of the thickening storm.

It is no dream of carnal enthusiasts, enamoured of materialism, and anticipating a paradise of gross delights. It is the calm belief of spiritual men, resting upon God’s sure promise, and looking forward to a kingdom of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” It is no hasty conjecture, no novelty of a feverish age, rashly caught up, without consideration and without evidence. It can produce the testimony of ages in its behalf; and they who have held it in our day, have been men who have studied their Bible on their knees, and have come to their conclusions after long, deliberate, and most solemn investigation. It is no fable of romance; it is sober scriptural reality, though far beyond what fancy ever painted. It is no vision of the politician; yet it shows us how, ere long, shall be exemplified that which have held it in our day, have been men who have studied their Bible on their knees, and have come to their conclusions after long, deliberate, and most solemn investigation. It is no fable of romance; it is sober scriptural reality, though far beyond what fancy ever painted. It is no vision of the politician; yet it shows us how, ere long, shall be exemplified that which earthly Governments have been vainly striving to realise,—a peaceful and a prosperous world. It is no creation of the intellect; the wisdom of this intellectual age rejects it as foolishness, and rationalism resents it as one of the exploded fancies of unenlightened criticism.[5] It is no popular theory of the many; there are comparatively few throughout the Churches who receive it,—few who will even concede to it a place among the things which deserve serious study, or are accessible to proof.

Yet all are concerned in it; and it comes abroad proclaiming itself alike to the Church of God and to the heedless multitude, as the consummation towards which the various lines of prophecy are rapidly converging, as the glorious issue of all the confusion, the sin, the change, the death, that have made earth so long a wilderness, as the only cure for those deep and manifold evils under which men are groaning, and which they are so earnestly, yet so vainly, striving to remedy.[6] *Kelso, January 1847.*

Footnotes.

[1] No Post-Millennialist has attempted to show that our interpretation of this passage is false, or unlikely, or unnatural. All they assert is, that *another is possible*. And thus they “get over” the difficulty. Would it not be better to *yield* to it?

[2] See vol. ii., pp. 361, 362, 374, 479, 480. I have been struck with the resemblance to Jerome in these expressions. He is perpetually recurring to the Millenarians, and never fails to bestow some hard epithet upon them; at the same time, he acknowledges that very many (*plurima, multitude*) even in his day held that doctrine,—so much so, that he tells us that he foresees “the fury which he is likely to raise against himself” in opposing it (*ut praesaga mente jam cernam quantorum in me rabies concitanda sit*).—Jerome, Proem to the sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah. The reference to this passage in Kitto’s “Cyclopaedia” is inaccurate, and the translation is second-hand; but the article on millennialism is good and fair.

I may notice here, also, how of late Anti-millennarians have been too much led into that spirit of sharpness and self-confidence, which, about twenty years ago, they used (and with justice) to condemn in their opponents. Is it too much to expect that brethren should argue mildly and calmly, however firmly, in discussing with each other the things concerning the King?

[3] “The doctrine of the Millennium, or the reign of saints on earth a thousand years, is now rejected by all Roman Catholics, and by the greatest parts of Protestants; and yet it passed among the best of Christians for 250 years, for a tradition *apostolical*, and as such, is delivered by many fathers of the second and third century, *who speak of it as the tradition of our Lord and his Apostles*, and of all the ancients who lived before them, who tell us the very words in which it was delivered, the scriptures which were then so interpreted; and say that it was held by *all Christians that were exactly orthodox*.”—Whitby’s “Treatise on Traditions”. Whitby, it is well known, was a *Post Millennialist*, so that his testimony is the more striking.

[4] There are two classes of “difficulties,”—the direct, or scriptural, and the inferential, or rational. If the objections adduced by our opponents were of the first class, they would be legitimate, even though ultimately overruled by stronger evidence. But almost all of them belong to the second class, being inferences of human reason, which can only be taken up after positive evidence has been disposed of.

[5] Several of the opponents of rationalism have embraced the doctrine of the pre-millennial advent and reign. I have already quoted Olshausen, I may here quote a sentence from Gess: “The dead saints, at the appearance of Christ, are to be organised again with the material bodies. This is to take place a thousand years before the awakening of the other dead. They are to reside again upon earth, and to live and reign with Christ for a thousand years.”—*The Revelation of God in his Word*, pp.227, 228.

[6] Having occasionally been called to take up some prophetic points in one of our periodicals, I have not scrupled, in the present volume, to avail myself freely of what I have written.

PREDESTINATION

By Elder Silas Durand, 1901

One says, “If the advocates of the theory of unlimited predestination object to the application of their theory to all the acts and movements of beasts, birds and creeping things, as well as the acts of all men, as working together for good to them who love God, they should cease to misapply Scripture to brace up their dangerous doctrine.”

That doctrine which is founded on the Rock does not need bracing up. But does the brother (sic) forget the many instances recorded in the Scriptures, in which the acts and movements of beasts and birds and creeping things, as well as the acts of wicked men, were especially directed by the Lord to the fulfillment of His wise purposes? Does he forget that there is a special covenant made for His people in the Gospel day “with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground?” (Hosea 2:18) What is there worthy of ridicule in the belief that even the mote which flies in the sunbeam, as well as the sparrow in the sky, is directed by the Lord? The frogs and insects were important in the execution of God’s judgments upon Egypt. The frogs and flies and caterpillars filled the land of Egypt, but their movements were so directed and controlled that not one, not even one of the lice, could pass over the line that divided Egypt from Goshen.

The Lord sent fiery serpents to punish Israel, ravens to feed Elijah, and two bears (only two) to vindicate the character of Elisha as a prophet. The lion must slay the disobedient prophet, but could not tear his body nor hurt the ass; yet he must wait quietly by until the other

prophet should arrive to witness the fulfillment of God's word by him (I Kings 8:14). Also in other cases it is recorded that lions were directed and controlled by the Lord. (I Kings 20:36; II Kings 17:25; Daniel 6:20). It was not by chance that Herod was eaten by worms: the angel of the Lord was sent to smite him with that fearful judgment. Also the viper was directed to fasten upon Paul's arm, that the Barbarians might know that he was an honest man (Acts 28:3-6). The dove was returned by the Lord with the olive leaf, and the flight and time of every sparrow is so bounded and controlled that "one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father" (Matt. 10:29).

To me this is a most precious doctrine. It is glorious to know that in all events, and over all things, "The Lord God omnipotent doth reign." As in the case of Job, so in the case of all the Lord's people, he designs all their trials, and cause and manner of them, and no enemy can go beyond the limits of God's purpose in his power to afflict, and all the wicked designs of men and devils shall result in the final good of the Lord's people, and in His own declarative glory. Jesus said to Pilate, "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above." So Job recognizes only God's good hand in all the evil that came unto him through the devices of Satan, saying, "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?" So Joseph said to his brethren, "But as for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, as it is this day, to save much people alive." "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to Whom be glory forever. Amen."

— *Fragments*, page 97.

LARRY HALE IS TAKING ORDERS FOR ELDER MATTINGLY'S BOOK

Brother Larry Hale is preparing the printing of a collection of the writings of Elder David Mattingly. This second printing is a revision of the first. Added are the pagination of the entire book, corrections to some of the articles, and a *frontispiece* picture of Elder Mattingly. Larry is using a different printer this time, so the format is slightly changed, and the cost of the book will be \$45.00, which includes the shipping cost.

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1 CORINTHIANS 8.6f

But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him.

Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge....

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The following is an outline of principles the readers of *The Remnant* may expect to see maintained in this publication. Under no circumstances do the publishers or writers for *The Remnant* seek to delineate herein a standard of doctrine or views to be imposed upon the readers. Rather, we set these principles before the readers that they may know what general principles guide our efforts. All attempts at declaring articles of faith will be marred by prejudices and frailty, and ours are by no means any exception.

We believe these principles are, in the main, harmonious with the articles of faith published by predestinarian associations and churches of the old order of Baptists known as Primitive, Particular, or Old School Baptists the world over.

1—The eternal existence, sovereignty, immutability, omnipotence, and perfections of Jehovah God; He has revealed Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these sacred Three are One; Jesus Christ was and is God manifest in the flesh, and in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;

2—The Old and New Testaments in their original languages are the verbally inspired word of God, and they are the complete and only valid guide of faith and practice; the King James Version is the preferred English translation;

3—The will of the eternal God is the first cause of all causes;

4—The absolute predestination of all things;

5—The eternal personal election of the redeemed in Christ, before the world began, and their eternal, vital union with Him; their number is fixed, certain, and sure, and can neither be increased nor diminished; their fall in

their federal head Adam into spiritual death, total depravity, and just condemnation; their utter inability to recover themselves from this fallen state;

6—The blood atonement and redemption by Jesus Christ are for the elect only, and are both efficacious and effectual in accomplishing the will and purpose of God to reconcile His people unto Himself;

7—The sovereign, irresistible, effectual work of the Holy Spirit in quickening the elect of God; the new birth is by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit without the use of any means;

8—The final preservation, perseverance, and eternal happiness of all the sons of God, by grace alone;

9—No works are good works other than those which God Himself has so designated; none of the works called good are left up to men to perform or not, at the creature's discretion; nor do the works of the creature, either before or after regeneration, result in merit accruing to his account in God's sight;

10—The peaceable fruits of righteousness are the certain result of God's working in His people both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and His people will be found walking in paths of righteousness for His name's sake;

11—The separation of church and state;

12—The principles outlined in the Black Rock Address of 1832;

13—The bodily resurrection, first of Christ, and also that of all the dead;

14—The final and eternal judgment; and,

15—The bliss of the redeemed and the torment of the wicked are both eternal and everlasting.