



Absolute Predestination

Elder Gilbert Beebe

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These were all published separately and to my knowledge were not ever compiled like they are here. I just thought it might be nice to have them all together like this.

Tom Adams

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Number 1

THE ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION OF ALL THINGS.

ON this important part of the doctrine of Christ, we wish to be well understood, as we considered it a fundamental part of the faith of the Gospel. In the absence of this doctrine we can have no confidence in the predictions of the word of God. If the prophets spake and wrote of undetermined events, events concerning which the Holy One himself had not made up his mind, they must have spoken and written with the utmost uncertainty. If it were possible to banish the doctrine of Predestination from the Holy Scriptures, we should not only lose thereby our interest in the ancient predictions of the Old Testament, but we should find it impossible to believe the testimony of the new. What consolation would the exceedingly great and precious promises of the Gospel afford us, if we had reason to believe that God had not yet determined whether they should ever be verified? Again, what confidence could we have in the veracity of God, if it were certain that his promises were made without any determination on his part to perform them? Indeed there could be no certainty of a future state without the predestination of such a state. No heaven, no hell, no resurrection, nor final judgement. Thus we see to what an awful dilemma we should be driven without this doctrine. Predestination is the pre-determination of all events that can possibly come to pass, it involves the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, and exhibits the wisdom and the power of God; the one presents the plan, the other carries into execution the things decreed. Predestination is the result of the counsel of God's own will, originating with himself alone. "With whom took he counsel, and who instructed &c." In the doctrine of Predestination all the Attributes of Deity shine forth, with dreadful majesty. The entire history of mankind is by Predestination established in the view of God, and the final destiny of all things are held in his almighty hand.

"There's not a sparrow nor a worm,
But's found in his decree;
He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be."

We may consider this doctrine first in the economy of salvation, and then in its more general bearings. First God has chosen, or predestined, his people unto salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and a belief of the truth. - 2 Thes. ii. 13. Agreeable to his own sovereign pleasure as expressed in the above text, he has predestined them to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself according to the good pleasure of his will. - Eph. i. 5. He has predestined them unto eternal life. "As thou hast given him power over all flesh that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." - John xvii. 2. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." - Acts xiii. 48. He has predestined their calling, conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, their justification and glorification. "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." - Rom. viii. 29, 30. In short, every thing in relation to his people here and hereafter is so firmly established in the decree of God, that no power can prevail against them. "He rideth upon the heavens in their help and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is their refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." - Deut. xxxiii. 26, 7. "Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against

Israel; according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?” - Num. xxiii. 23. “Even the very hairs of your heads are all numbered.” - Math. x. 30, Luke xii. 7.

Predestination is not confined to the adorable purpose of Salvation by Grace, but it has a direct bearing on all things. Not a sparrow can be brought to the ground, nor can the troubled ocean dash her foaming waves one inch beyond the limits of God’s decrees.

If any thing was left upon uncertainties, every thing must have been equally uncertain. If the smallest atom in creation were suffered to fly at random in the full sense of the word, God himself not knowing where, or when it would alight, it would prove what cannot be proved, viz: that God is deficient in knowledge. The Omniscience, and the predestination of God, must stand or fall together; they cannot be separated. We are confident that both exist in glorious harmony in the mind of him who has declared the end from the beginning, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure. See Isaiah xlvi. 10. The doctrine of Absolute Predestination, when rightly understood, does not involve the idea of man’s acting involuntarily in sin; nor does it exonerate him from accountability; this may be discovered by noticing the following examples. The crucifixion of Christ, the abduction of Joseph, together with many other circumstances recorded in holy writ. “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 iv. 27 · “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands crucified and slain.” - Acts ii. 23.

The brethren of Joseph had no knowledge of the purpose of God when they sold him to go down to Egypt, they meant it for evil, but God ordained it for good. When the Jews persecuted the disciples of our Lord Jesus into strange cities they knew not that God had ordained this very method of sending his missionaries everywhere preaching the word. And amidst the abounding abominations of the present day, it is our consolation to know that God has ordained “The wrath of man shall praise him, the remainder of that wrath he will restrain.” - Psalms lxxvi. 10. We need only to understand this precious doctrine, and we shall most assuredly love it. The christian exults in the thought that death and hell can do no more than what our Father please.

We might notice the objections commonly brought against this doctrine, but we shall wait until such objections are presented; and in the mean time earnestly request our brethren to examine the word of God on this important subject. And that the G3d of all grace may give us light and wisdom from above, that in his light we may see light, is our prayer in Jesus’ name, to whom be glory, power and dominion, now and forever, Amen.

New Vernon, N.Y.,
February 6, 1833

Elder Gilbert Beebe
Editorials Volume 1
Pages 28 – 31

Number 2

ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION.

WE are pleased with the communications of our esteemed brother Trott, on this all-important subject; and we do hope that our readers will faithfully examine all his numbers, comparing them with the infallible standard, the bible, with unbiased minds, open for the reception of truth. These numbers we are fully persuaded will bear examination; and certainly the importance of the subject should be a sufficient incentive to lead us to weigh them in the balance of the sanctuary.

Among others, we doubt not, some well meaning brethren have started at the position assumed by brother T., that the predestination of God extends to the wicked actions of men and devils. But is there not a cause, why they are so fearful? Few, very few of our pulpits have rung with this doctrine for the last ten or fifteen years. Arminians and New School Baptists have and do hate it; while some, who are compelled to acknowledge the truth of it, have thought they were doing God service by suppressing the publication of it; and of that class, not a few who have seemed unconscious of the presumptuous stand which they occupy, while they are virtually attempting to dictate to the all-wise God what portion of his truth will do to publish, and what should be kept back. It is sufficient for us to know that God has revealed this doctrine in the bible; it is our privilege to publish it, and leave the result with him.

This subject evidently involves the consideration of the extent of God's government. If we say that God cannot, without attaching impurity to his nature or motives, govern or overrule the wicked actions of men and devils, we say in substance, that he cannot maintain his holiness unless he resigns his universal government.

The examples given by our brother, from the sacred volume, of the overruling providence of God in regard to some, and the express declaration of his foreknowledge and predestination of the wicked actions of others, are in point; nor can they be easily surmounted by those who protest against the universal government of God. The bible is full of testimony on this subject. God has declared the end from the beginning; and he says his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. Prophets and apostles have corroborated this testimony. Balaam was forced to acknowledge that he could not go (though a wicked prophet,) beyond the word (or decree,) of the Lord; and Satan himself if he could speak truth, would tell us that he could not drown a swine without the permission of God.

But leaving all other witness, we would be perfectly safe in resting the whole subject on three of the scripture references offered in brother Trott's. numbers, viz: Acts ii. 23, iv. 27, and the history of Joseph. In the first two passages, in relation to the crucifixion of our Lord by wicked hands, we have an example of the extent of God's government, in perfect harmony with the responsibility of man for his conduct; and in this transaction we have placed before us the grand centre of all human events; this is the most important of all; all others, past, present and to come, stand connected with this. The model then which displays the government of God over the wicked hands which acted in the murder of the Holy Child Jesus, is suited to every event that ever has or ever can come to pass.

In the case of Joseph, we are taught that notwithstanding the foreknowledge and determinate counsel of God, which bounds the rage and wickedness of all beings that exist, men and devils act voluntarily in sin, without the least regard to the purpose or decree of God; of whose purpose or decree they are totally unconscious. Of this truth, what a striking example is given in the case of Joseph's brethren.

Read the words of Joseph to them, Gen. 1. 20. “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” Thus we see that while men and devils act from wicked motives, with wicked hands, God means it for good; overrules even their wicked acts and murderous designs for his glory, and the good of all such as are the called according to his purpose. Amidst all our trials and conflicts, opposition and persecution, be this our consolation:

“That death and hell can do no more
Than what our Father please.”

NEW VERNON, N. Y.,
March 19, 1834.

Elder Gilbert Beebe
Editorials Volume 1
Pages 128 – 130

Number 3

ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION

Mr. Beebe: - In a former letter I requested your views on the absolute predestination of all things. I asked for information, and for nothing else; but I will excuse you for not answering me, for I know that I am not worthy of notice, but I am a poor unworthy worm of the dust.

Your unworthy friend.

R.S.

Reply. – We assure our friend R.S. that our apparent neglect of this request was not owing to any want of respect for him, nor to any unwillingness to give him such views as we have on the important subject of his inquiry. Those who truly feel sensible that they are poor unworthy worms of the dust, and yet have a desire to be informed in regard to the universal government of the supreme God, of his prescience and irrevocable decrees, are the very persons above all others, whom we desire to serve to the full extent of the ability God may be pleased to give us.

Predestination, as a highly esteemed writer in the Signs once remarked, does not require to be qualified by prefixing to it the word absolute, as the predestination of God must of necessity be absolute in every particular. Jehovah is an absolute God, and all that he purposes or performs must be absolute. There can be no fiction nor anything merely nominal with him. Predestination is destination beforehand, and as nothing can be before hand, or subsequent with him, the term as it is used in the scriptures is used in reference to our finite state, as creatures of time; or rather as creatures of God, but for the present, in the time state of existence. God inhabits eternity, and all things are present with him. The progression of time and development of events can add nothing to his stock of knowledge. We his creatures may and we certainly do, live and learn. He has himself called our attention to the fact that he has declared the end from the beginning, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. This declaration of the end from the beginning proves his prescience, so conclusively, that but few are so hardened in infidelity as to openly and in so many words, deny his foreknowledge of all events; for if he were deficient in knowledge he could not with unerring certainty declare the end from the beginning and from ancient times, the things which are yet to transpire. But there are those who while they admit what is called the foreknowledge of God, deny that his knowledge is based upon his own purpose and determinate counsel. They urge the following objections to predestination. It is fatalism, it destroys man's free-agency, and his accountability, and makes God the author of sin; and some there are who go still farther and say if the doctrine of predestination be true, God in predestinating the events of time, etc., has transcended his right and is unjust. Our friend R.S., we think, will agree with us, that it very easily becomes poor sinful dying mortals thus irreverently, not to say blasphemously, to question the eternal right of God to do what seemeth to him good, in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth, or to set up their standards of justice and denounce their creator if he does not abide by their decisions. Let all such first meet the searching interrogative of the inspired apostle, "Hath not the potter power over the clay, to form one vessel to honor" etc.? The holy prophet of Jehovah, by inspiration, has informed us that God is the potter, and we are the clay. Hence we must acknowledge his eternal right to dispose of all things, all events, and of all worlds according to his own pleasure. Let this be admitted and all murmuring against his predestination will cease. It is not our

purpose to meet the objections urged by men to the doctrine of divine revelation, and by logical argument to put them to silence; nor do we design to attempt to make the doctrine palatable to the natural mind of man which is enmity against God, for all such attempts are without the least prospects of success. The enmity of the carnal mind is fully demonstrated in the objections which they bring, but we design rather to search out and call the attention of our inquiring friend to what God has revealed in the scriptures on the subject, and this we will do, if God permit, whether men will hear, or whether they forbear. The term predestination, as we have intimated, has reference to the order and succession of events in time, by which the eternal designs of God are brought to pass. And, so far as pass, predestination simply signifies that God had purposed, God's providence is concerned in bringing his designs to decreed, ordained, or destined the accomplishment of those things before they were, in order of time brought to pass.- Hence to us, it is predestination, with God it is destination, because his infinity connects and comprehends the end with the beginning, for he is himself the First and the Last, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending.

Having, as clearly as we are able, defined predestination, we pass to enquire whether it be a Bible doctrine. If it be a Bible doctrine, we must admit it, or reject the Bible as a record of infallible and eternal truth, and take the open ground of infidelity. And who can trace the sacred pages of the holy book and say that it contains no testimony in support of the doctrine? In the absence of predestination how was it that the prophets of Jehovah foretold the events of ages, thousands of years before those events were actually fulfilled? Who, or what directed the prophetic vision of holy men of old, to look down the vista of intervening centuries, and in the name of the Lord Jehovah predict the things that should come to pass down to the end of time, and even the resurrection of the slumbering dead, and the judgement of the last day. If these things were not before determined of God, how were they known, and if they were unknown to God and man how were they foretold? And if they were foreknown of God, and he inspired holy men to foretell them, that knowledge and decision of God was what the Bible calls predestination. But we have no need of ifs in this investigation. The scriptures do most clearly and emphatically declare that "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; that God spake to the fathers by the prophets, and also that the spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, did testify beforehand of his sufferings and of the glory that should follow. This was and is predestination. God spake by the prophets, saying, "It shall come to pass." Do not these words imply a decree when uttered by him who speaks the word, and it stands fast, who commands, and it is done? How harmoniously do both testaments agree in this fundamental doctrine. Throughout the first, or Old Testament, God, by his prophets, declared the things that should come to pass. Apostles and inspired evangelists in the New Testament respond, saying, "And it came to pass." But perhaps some may demand, What came to pass? We reply, all that God by the prophets said should come to pass. First, in reference to the advent of the blessed Saviour, for he himself declared that all that was written of him in the law, and in the prophets and in the psalms must be fulfilled, and when dying on the cross of Calvary he exclaimed, "It is finished!" and in awful confirmation the retiring sun, prevailing darkness, the quaking earth, rending rocks, opening graves, rising dead, and rending vail gave ample demonstration. Daniel, in harmony with all the other prophets of the Lord, had predicted that at a specific time the God of heaven should set up a kingdom that should never be destroyed, that the Messiah should come, should be cut off, should make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The whole New Testament is a record of the faithful fulfillment of these predictions. Long had the prophet slumbered with his fathers, before the accomplishment of his seventy weeks, but the word of our God could not die, it liveth and abideth forever.

The predestination of our God also embraces all the heirs of immortality. “For whom he did foreknow, them 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.” This predestinated people is blessed with “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, according as he (God) hath chosen them in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. Having predestinated them unto the adoption of children, according to the good pleasure of his will. In whom we have received an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after (or according to) the counsel of his own will.”

There are those who admit the doctrine of predestination, so far as it applies to the coming of the Savior, the work which he was to perform, the sufferings which he was to endure, and the glory which was to follow; and also in relation to the good works which God before ordained that his people should walk in; but reject the idea that his purpose and foreknowledge extends to the wicked acts of men and devils. But for ourself, it is our firm conviction that if a single event could possibly transpire from the creation of the world to the end of time, from the rise and fall of empires, to the falling of a sparrow, or a hair of our head to the ground, that such unforeseen and consequently unprovided for events would unavoidably endanger and render uncertain the execution of what is admitted to be ordained and decreed of God. How could it be otherwise? Can we consistently believe that it was predestinated that Christ should suffer on Calvary to redeem sinners, and yet that he did not foreknow that there would be any sinners to save? Did he decree that his dear Son should be delivered into the hands of wicked men; and yet not contemplate in that decree, either the existence of wicked men, or what they should do in condemning and crucifying him? But aside from all human reasoning, or vain speculation on the subject, God has informed us, by his inspired apostles, that Jesus was delivered by his determinate counsel, and foreknowledge, and put to death by wicked hands. And again, the inspired apostles break forth in praise to God, in devout acknowledgement both of the decree and of its accomplishment, that, “And when they had heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of the servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontious 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 iv. 24-28). Here let it be observed the holy apostles of the Lamb did not start back with horror, and exclaim, fatalism! this makes God the author of sin! or this destroys the accountability of man! They saw nothing in all this reflecting unfavorably on the character or purity of the supreme God; but they saw such harmony in the purpose, decrees, and actual accomplishment of the designs of God, as led them simultaneously and with one accord to lift up their voice in devout adoration and praise to the Most High God, whose providential government was so clearly manifested in controlling all events. The things which they now saw brought to pass were distinctly spoken of by David in his day, and pointed out by the slaughtered lamb which Abel, by faith, offered to God some four thousand years before any of the actors in the crucifixion of Christ, were born. God had not only decreed what they should do, but he had also decreed what they should not do. “The enemy should not exact upon him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him.” “A bone of him should not be broken.” “He should not be holden of the pains of death.” His soul should not be left in hell, nor should his flesh see corruption. Neither death nor hell could go beyond the purpose and decree of God. None but Judas could betray him, without involving a contradiction of the purpose and decree which

was recorded in the scriptures; the pieces of silver for which he was betrayed were numbered and recorded in the decree of God, as published by the prophet hundreds of years before Judas was born. The parting of his raiment, and casting lots for his garments, was all a matter of ancient record, together with all the minute circumstances which occurred; all of which we are informed were done that the scripture should be fulfilled. The murder of the infants by Herod, brought to pass the decree published by the prophets six hundred years before. “Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children because they were not. (Jer. xxxi. See also, Matt. ii.18. The case also of Joseph and his brethren is a very clear and striking illustration of the overruling government of God, as embracing all events. And who shall dare to charge God with unrighteousness, because he retains in his own hand a supreme control of all beings and of all events; because he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. Who has a right to infer that God is the fountain of sin or unholiness; when we are informed that men with wicked hands, do whatsoever his hand and counsel before determined should be done? Paul when declaring what God had said of Pharaoh, that for this purpose he had raised him up to make his power known in him, etc., anticipated the blasphemous out breakings of the human mind in opposition to the predestination of God. “Thou wilt surely say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault,” or hold man as a responsible being, “for who has resisted his will?” But the apostle did not forbear to declare this doctrine because men resisted and blasphemed it; but says the apostle, “Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?” etc. When the enmity of the human heart is subdued by the quickening power and grace of God in regeneration, then the heaven-born child is reconciled to God, and loves to contemplate the power and glory of Jehovah. Then is he prepared, with the inspired psalmist, to rejoice that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth; that all power in heaven and in earth is vested in the blessed Savior. But if left to doubt his all-prevading power and providence for a moment, now sinks his spirit at the fearful thought that some wheel in the vast, and apparently complicated machinery of nature might be suffered to revolve unbound by the wisdom and foreknowledge of God. If one of the wheels could work without the power and providence of God, its effects might be to ungear the whole system of divine government, and worlds on worlds be dashed in irretrievable ruin. When the enlightened mind of God’s dear children contemplates the glory of this subject, they fall down before God in admiration, and with the four beasts, and four and twenty elders, cry Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God, Almighty. They are filled with the most profound reverence for, and confidence in the God of their salvation.

One reason we have thought why some of the children of God have seemed to be unreconciled to this doctrine is that they have failed to discriminate between the overruling power and providence of God and the effusions of his Spirit. “Let no man say when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted, neither tempteth he any man.” When men are tempted to sin they are tempted of their own lusts, and by the devil. But how hopeless and desperate would be the condition of all who are tempted, if God had not the power and providence to control the temptation, and overrule its effect according to his eternal purpose and pleasure for the good of his tried and tempted children, and for the glory of his own great name. Our every temptation, though they flow not from God, are directed, and restricted and made service-able to his saints, by him, is absolutely certain. Hence Peter assured the saints that God would control this matter. He will not suffer you to be tempted beyond that which ye are able; but will also with the temptation make a way for your escape. That glorious High Priest which becometh us, was himself tempted in all points as his children are, and knows how to succour them that are tempted. Soon after he was baptized, he was led up by the Spirit, unto the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. He was not led there by the devil; but by the Holy Spirit of the Lord God which was upon

him. Neither was he tempted of the Spirit of God which led him into the wilderness; but he was tempted of the devil. The devil could neither afflict poor old Job, nor even drown the herd of swine, until he received permission of the Lord, and it is hard for us to think that any of the saints, however shy they may seem to be of the doctrine of predestination, really would wish or be willing that God should have less, or that sin or Satan should have more power. It is a blessed reflection to us that

“Death and hell can do no more
Than what our Father please.”

Volumes have been written upon this subject, and volumes may still be written, it is too rich and boundless ever to be exhausted, but after all that we can say, it is the Spirit of the Lord alone who can present it in its beauty to the sons of men. He, the Spirit of the Truth, whom the world cannot receive, can slay the enmity of our carnal mind, and give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, shining in the face of Jesus Christ. May that spirit in all its quickening power and grace be with our friend R.S. and all others who earnestly desire a knowledge of the true God and eternal life.

Middletown, N.Y.,
Feb. 1, 1854

Elder Gilbert Beebe
Editorial Volume 3
Pages 18-25

Number 4

ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION OF ALL THINGS.

In our last number we promised to notice the request of brother Burson, who desired our views on the subject of the absolute predestination of all things. We have frequently given our views on this subject, and still feel willing to give such views as we have on this and all other scriptural subjects.

Although it is common for all wise men to lay out their plans and predetermine, or predestinate what they intend to do, it is exceedingly hard for men to comprehend the doctrine in its application to him who has “Declared the end from the beginning, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” Although our Savior has called that man a fool who without predestinating, preconcerting his arrangements, or predetermining in regard to his undertakings, would attempt to build a house, it is thought by many incompatible with the divine perfections of our Lord that he should predetermine, pre-arrange or predestinate, in the building of a world. If God has declared the end from the beginning, he has so declared on the ground of positive knowledge of the end, and if he absolutely foreknew all things, all things must have been before determined, either by himself or by some other power. If not predetermined by himself it might well be demanded, With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him, when he measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? (Isaiah xl. 12-14). We must admit that God possessed all this knowledge of himself independently, or deny his omniscience; and we must acknowledge that his perfect knowledge rested on the counsel of his own sovereign will and pleasure, or conclude that he was instructed by some other, which conclusion we think none who know the Lord will be likely to make. But we need not speculate, nor attempt to establish this matter by inferences, however clearly drawn, for in his holy word we are informed that it is the theme of reverence and worship of the four beasts, and the four and twenty elders, who, falling down before him, and casting their crowns before his throne, continually cry, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” - Rev. iv. 10, 11. And in his word Jehovah claims that he has created all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil; and he says, in vindication of his supreme Godhead, “I form the light, and I create darkness; I make peace and I create evil; I the Lord do all these things.” We cannot read these declarations from the mouth of God himself, and resist the conviction that our God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

But our brother desires us to speak more particularly on the words, “all things.” There are those who profess to believe that God has predestinated some things, but they cannot comprehend the idea that he has predestinated all things. Among the things which they allow that he has predestinated, are the redemption of his people from sin, and their eternal justification and immortal glory, the unspeakable gift of his dear Son, his advent to our world, his sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension to glory; but they cannot admit that God absolutely ordained that sin should enter into the world, that there should be any sinners to redeem, or that wicked men should, with wicked hands, crucify and slay the Lord of life and glory.

The Lord predestinated that Joseph should lay up corn in Egypt, but had nothing to do with his dreams, the envy of his brethren, or any of the circumstances of their projecting his murder, had no hand in sending the Ishmaelitic merchants to intercept their wicked designs, or with his being sold to Potiphar,

nor the strange course of Potiphar's wife, or the dreams of the butler and baker, who were fellow prisoners with Joseph. But we confess we cannot conceive how anything can be predestinated unless all things are. In regard to both the cases referred to, we are informed that God did control all the events. Peter, being inspired by the Holy Ghost, charged upon the Jews the murder of our Redeemer, in these words: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands, have crucified and slain." - Acts ii. 23. Again, "For a of 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. iv. 27, 28. In regard to the case of Joseph, God had made know to his great-grandfather Abraham, his control over this matter, and that the children of Israel should sojourn in Egypt, and be entreated evil for the space of four hundred years. (Gen. xv. 13, 14.) So also we are informed in the word that "the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain." - Psalm lxxv. 10. From this last quotation we learn that God, in his providential government, according to his inscrutable wisdom and the eternal counsel of his own will, allows wicked men and devils to go just so far in wickedness as he designs to overrule for his own glory, and no farther; they would if they could, do more, but God restrains them. His providential government, which is based upon the pleasure of his own will, according to which he works all things, extends to the falling of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of our heads, and it is and should be a consoling thought to all of God's dear children that

"Death and hell can do no more
Than what our Father please."

But it is argued by the opposers of Predestination, that if God has predestinated all things, man is not accountable; and some go so far as to say that God is the author of sin. The apostle Paul anticipates the blasphemous cavilings of the enemies of divine sovereignty. "Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault?" or why doth he hold men accountable for wicked actions? "For who hath resisted his will?" It is true that God's eternal and immutable will cannot be successfully resisted or thwarted, for he doeth his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and none can stay his hand. This the apostle does not deny or modify to avoid their blasphemous cavils; but he says, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why has thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory." - Rom. ix. 20-23.

As it is a mercy to us when God restrains us from sinning, and "leads us not into temptation, but delivers us from evil;" so is a manifestation of his wrath, upon the vessels of wrath, when he endureth with long-suffering, or allows them to fill up the cup or allotted measure of their iniquities, and when he sends them strong delusions that they may believe a lie, that they all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess. ii. 11, 12.) That the purpose and predestination of all things do not exculpate men from blame, nor involve the Supreme Jehovah as the author of sin, in the manner urged by the opponents of the doctrine, is very apparent from what is recorded in connection with the events to which we have made allusion. Although Christ was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God; those who were charged with his crucifixion were guilty of doing it with wicked hands. They acted as voluntarily and maliciously as though no such

determinate counsel had determined beforehand what they should do. Joseph told his brethren that God had, for their sakes, brought him to Egypt, and although they meant it for evil, God designed it for good; to save much people alive. Pharaoh was punished for his wickedness, although God had for that purpose raised him up, that he might make his power known in him, and from time to time harden his heart that he should not let the children of Israel go until God's wonders were displayed in Egypt.

Every intelligent being knows that in committing sin, he acts voluntarily, and follows the impulse of his own depraved nature, and every one who is born of God and taught by his Spirit, knows that sin is the opposite of holiness; that God is holy, and that sin is of the devil, and not of God. Still a consciousness of God's supreme power and wisdom, to fix its bounds, and say to it as he has said to the waters of the deep, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," affords a strong consolation to all who look alone to God for succor, protection and support, while destined to remain as strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

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Elder Gilbert Beebe

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ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION

The Old School or Primitive Baptists in former years have been very definitely identified and distinguished from all other religious or ecclesiastical organizations as Predestinarian Baptists, and as such have borne reproach and vituperation from those who hold more limited views of what we regard as the absolute and all pervading government of God over all beings, all events, and all worlds. With deep solicitude and painful concern we have witnessed in the preaching and writings of some of our brethren a disposition to so yield or modify the doctrine as to limit its application to such things as the carnal mind of man can comprehend or the wisdom of this world can approve. While some will concede that all things that they regard as pure and holy are ordained or predestinated of God, they deny that the absolute government of God does dictate by absolute decree the wicked works of wicked men and devils, for that, they say, would make God the author of sin. They therefore set up their judgment, and set bounds for Infinite Wisdom to be restricted to, and beyond which limitation He must not extend His government, without subjecting Himself to their censure as an unjust God and the author of sin. But how lamentable is the infatuation of poor, blind mortals, when

“The vain race of flesh and blood
Contend with their Creator, God;
When mortal man presumes to be
More holy, wise or just than He.”

There are undoubtedly many of the dear people of God who feel jealous for the glory of God, and who, without any aspiring ambition to be wise above what is written in the sacred Scriptures, from inability to comprehend the two great parallel mysteries of godliness and of iniquity, have felt a commendable concern lest in our weakness we should impute to God aught that would reflect on His adorable perfections, or withhold from Him that which He has ordained for the manifestation of His glory. It certainly becomes us, as finite beings, to speak of Him and of His government with fear and trembling. He is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and His name is Holy. His attributes are veiled in that infinity which no finite being can by searching find out. He keepeth back the face of His throne, the place and power of His government, and spreadeth His cloud upon it. As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are God’s ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. The standard of infinite purity and holiness is the will of God. There can be no higher law than the will of God, for only to the standard or counsel of His own will and pleasure does He Himself conform. “He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11).” “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46:10).” In this connection He said, “I am God, and there is none like me.” And in the revelation of the Lamb, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, “The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat upon the throne, and worship Him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created (Revelation 4:10,11).” “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 forever. Amen (Romans 11:33-36).”

When God created the Heavens and the earth no other power than His own was employed, no wisdom but His own was consulted, nor was there any other than His own will to dictate what, how, or for what purpose anything should be created. As a potter has power over the clay, it is his right to form his vessels as he please; and if he forms of the same lump vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor, who shall dispute his right to do so? The prophet says God is the potter and we are the clay; then, “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory (Romans 9:21-23).” Dare any of us poor, finite worms of the dust dispute the sovereign right of God to do all His pleasure in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of earth? “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” How appropriate and forcible are the words of Job, “Hell is naked before Him [God], and destruction hath no covering. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them. He holdeth back the face of His throne, and spreadeth His cloud upon it. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of Heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof. He divideth the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through the proud. By His Spirit He hath garnished the Heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand (Job 26:6-14)?”

Can we contemplate the awful majesty, profound wisdom, deep and unsearchable counsel, infinite goodness, unerring workmanship in all that He has condescended to let us know of His great and marvelous works, from the spreading abroad and garnishing of the wide Heavens, down to the formation of the crooked serpent, and still stand in doubt of His predestinating power and unrestricted government over all beings, all worlds, and all events?

Are death and hell and all things naked before Him, and destruction uncovered to His all-seeing eye, and yet unlimited by His power and wisdom? Has He stretched out the north, and balanced the earth upon nothing, without any design, purpose or decree concerning their subsequent destiny? Has God bound up the waters in His thick cloud, and “given to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment (Proverbs 8:29),” and yet left all to the vagary of chance? When He set His throne above the Heavens, was it to be the place of no power in controlling the destiny of all things in Heaven and earth and hell? For about six thousand years the sun, moon and stars have with exactness filled their respective orbits, and without the variation of a second of time from their creation made all their revolutions, in obedience to the decree of the Creator. Is it by chance that “The Heavens [thus] declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork?”

But, say some to whose minds the doctrine of the universal government is obscure, “We admit that God has predestinated some things, but do not admit that He has predestinated all things which come to pass.” Let us see how this partial or limited government would accord with the Divine record. Suppose that in what we have been contemplating of the Heavens we should find the sun and moon, and all the stars but one, held firmly in their orbits by the irresistible will and decree of God, and that one solitary star, without any fixed orbit, is allowed to range the infinity of space, wandering with more than lightning velocity, guided only by chance; where would be the safety of all the other stars? What would

become of the predestination of those heavenly bodies intended to be preserved from hazard by the decree of God?

To us it has been a comforting thought that God has set the bounds of our habitation on the earth, and the number of our months is with Him, and our days are appointed to us as the days of an hireling, who cannot pass His bounds; but what assurance of safety would that afford, if He has left murderers and blood-thirsty men or devils unrestricted by His predestinating decree? To our mind, either everything or nothing must be held in subjection to the will and providence of God. Even the wickedness of ungodly men is restricted by predestination, so that “the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain.”

“Pains and deaths around us fly
Till He bids we cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit
Unless the God of Heaven sees fit.”

For death and hell can do no more than His hand and counsel have determined shall be done. Does this make God the author of sin? or, in other words, does this make Him a sinner, or charge on Him an imputation of impurity? By no means. Against whom is it possible for God to sin? Is He amenable to any law above Himself? If so, by what law can He be indicted, in what court can He be tried or convicted? How preposterous! It is His eternal right to do all His pleasure,

“Nor give to mortals an account,
or of His actions or decrees.”

It savors of atheism to deny that He is the self-existent, independent God who has created all things for His own sovereign will and pleasure. And if it be admitted that He had a right to create the world, and all worlds, it must then be also admitted that He had a right to create them according to His own will and pleasure. Worms cannot charge Him with error because He did not assign them a more exalted place in the creation, or for creating them worms instead of men. Men cannot justly charge Him for not creating them angels, nor angels because He did not make them gods. The world, with its infinite variety of living creatures, from the minutest insect to the most huge monster, as well as man, were all made for the pleasure of their Maker, and all must subserve the exact purpose for which they were made. Even the crooked serpent, as well as the harmless dove, all were pronounced good in their respective places; not good in the sense in which God is good, but good because they were precisely what He intended or predestinated them to be. Had the serpent been straight, or the dove crooked, or if the things made had been different from what the Creator intended, there would have been a defect in the workmanship. We cannot, with such exalted views as we entertain, think that God has ever failed to secure the perfect accomplishment of His own design or purpose in anything He has ever done. The entrance of sin into the world, and death by sin, which by the offense of one man has passed upon all mankind, was no unprovided-for event with Him, to whose eyes sin, death and hell have no covering. The eternal purpose which God had purposed in Himself before the world began was sufficiently perfect and comprehensive to include all that could and can possibly transpire, or He would not have declared the end of all things from the beginning. “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18).”

But there are many who admit the foreknowledge of God, and yet deny His determinate counsel, on which the certainty of all the events of time depends. Men may have a limited foreknowledge of things

which God has made certain by His determinate counsel and irrevocable decrees, as it is said, “The living know that they must die;” but God’s foreknowledge depends on nothing outside of Himself, for He has challenged the universe to tell with whom He has taken counsel, or who has instructed Him. To us it seems perfectly clear that nothing could be foreknown that was undetermined, and that the foreknowledge and determinate counsel of God are inseparable.

It is also generally admitted that in the salvation of His people, “Whom He did foreknow, them He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).” but that the well-beloved Son of God was delivered into the wicked hands of men to be crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, is not so readily admitted. The wicked works of those who crucified the Lord of glory were not foreknown by His murderers; but it was foreknown and determined of God, Peter said, to those whom he charged with the wickedness of killing the Prince of life. “I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled (Acts 3:17,18).” “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).”

The wickedness of men in betraying and crucifying our Lord had been positively predicted from the days of Abel, in what God spake to the fathers by the prophets, and by what was signified by all the offerings which were made under the former dispensation. The pieces of silver for which He was betrayed were counted and declared hundreds of years before Judas was born; and the dividing of His garments, and the lot cast for His seamless robe, was determined of God and declared by the prophets. The history of Joseph, and the wickedness of his brethren, was in fulfillment of his dreams, and in accordance with the purpose in which Joseph said, God meant it for good.

It has been said by some that these great events which God has overruled for good were ordered of the Lord, but that the smaller matters, and the wickedness of men, were not predestinated. Our Savior has informed us that the determinate counsel of God in His all-pervading providence numbers the hairs of our head, so that not a hair can fall to the ground without Him; even the little sparrows are protected, and the ravens are provided with food by His determinate counsel. And Paul assures us that, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

It seems to us unreasonable, as well as unscriptural, to say that the government of God directs and controls some things, and that other things are left to the control of men or devils. If God’s government extends only to the good deeds of men, then is His absolute government totally excluded; for “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Romans 3:10-12).” We would not limit the government of our God, nor, because we cannot comprehend His designs, dare to say He has no designs.

“He in the thickest darkness dwells,
Performs His work, the cause conceals;
But, though His methods are unknown,
Judgment and truth sustain His throne.

“In Heaven, and earth, and air, and seas,
He executes His firm decrees;
And by His saints it stands confess’d
That what He does is always best.”

Men act voluntarily when they commit sin; they have no more knowledge of or respect for the purpose of God, than Joseph’s brethren or Potiphar’s wife had in his case, for there is no fear of God before their eyes. It is even so with the princes of this world; if they had known Jesus, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But it was needful that Joseph should be cast into prison, and it was expedient that Christ should suffer, therefore that knowledge was withheld from the persecutors of Joseph and of Jesus, until they should fill up the cup of their wickedness. And it is thus in the wisdom of God that the world by wisdom shall not know Him. Yet such is the wisdom, power and righteous government of our God that He can and does set the exact bounds by which the wickedness of men and devils is limited, and beyond which they cannot go. Satan is bound a thousand years with a great chain, and after the thousand years he shall be loosed for a short time. With all his rage and malice he is restricted by the supreme power and decree of God, to do no more nor less than what God will overrule for the good of His people and for His own glory. And thus also, “God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” as in the case of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, hardening the heart of Pharaoh until all the plagues and judgments were accomplished, and His own almighty power and glory were then made known in delivering the Hebrews, and in overwhelming Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. “Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus (Romans 9:17-22)?”

The Apostle, fully aware of the disposition of the carnal mind to cavil and reply against the sovereignty of God in the execution of His pleasure, did not attempt to apologize for God, or so to modify the doctrine as to render it less objectionable to the carnal mind; but he called attention to the infinite disparity between the infinitely wise, holy and omnipotent God, who holds our everlasting destiny, and by whose longsuffering we are permitted to live, and poor, finite, depraved, short-sighted man, and the daring presumption and extreme folly of questioning the justice or wisdom of God in working all things after the counsel of His own will. We regard it as a very serious matter to charge that God cannot govern the world, by His own determinate counsel, wisdom and power, according to the eternal and immutable design or purpose purposed in Himself before the world began, without subjecting Himself to the charge of being the author of sin. Sin is the transgression of a law under which the transgressor is justly held amenable, and to the penalty of which he is subject. But we have endeavored to show that God is under no law but that of His own will and pleasure, and therefore He doeth His pleasure in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. He could by no law be held under obligation to leave the affairs of this world or any part of them to be governed by chance, or by the will of men. As He is in one mind, and none can turn Him, His purposes are eternal, like Himself. His decrees being perfect from everlasting, admit of no improvement or change. If He had not the right to predestinate all things pertaining to the events of time before He created the world, we ask what right has He acquired subsequently to execute the orders of His throne? If it had been His pleasure to have prevented sin from entering into the world, can we doubt His power or wisdom or ability to have done so? If sin has entered this world in opposition to His will, or because He had not the wisdom and power to prevent its entrance, what assurance have we that it will not also enter the world to come? But it is to our mind far

more consistent with what God has graciously made known to us of His being and attributes to believe that God had a purpose worthy of Himself, however inscrutable to us, in regard to the entrance of sin, as well as in regard to all things else. He bids us “Be still, and know that He is God.” To our feeble mind the conclusion is unavoidable, that the predestination of God either controls all things or nothing.

We look at a vast complicated machine, with its ten thousand wheels. We cannot comprehend or understand its workings, but we are told that the machinist has a perfect knowledge of all its parts save one; there is a definite use for every wheel and spring, but one is held in the machine which has no certain motion or definite use. How long could that machine run in safety, with the unruly part liable at any moment to throw the whole into confusion? We cannot see how any part of the government of God can be absolute and secure, if God has not the undivided government of the whole in all its parts; and if He has today the full control, had He not the same control yesterday and forever? If He has not the full control today, is there any certainty that He will have tomorrow or at any future period? If we admit that God absolutely governs all things according to the counsel of His own will, and that He is immutable, then we must admit that He has determined what shall and what shall not transpire in time or in eternity. But to deny His universal control of all things, including all principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, things present or to come, whether they be visible or invisible, is to deny that He is the God of the whole earth, and virtually deny His eternal power and Godhead. If He has not the power and wisdom to determine all events, how can He cause all things to work together for good to them that love Him?

But while we hold that He is supreme in power, and that He works all things after the counsel of His own will, we are certain that He reigns in righteousness, and that there is no unrighteousness with Him. To admit the universal government of God is to admit the predestination of all things, from the falling of a sparrow to the dissolution of a world. In the absence of predestination, with what certainty could the Holy Ghost inspire the holy prophets and Apostles to foretell all that should ever come to pass? If it were undetermined in the purpose of God, how could the Apostles tell us of perilous times that should come in the last days, or apostasy from the faith, and spiritual wickedness in high places?

But we will submit these remarks to the consideration of our readers, and desire that what we have written may be carefully tested by the infallible standard, the Scriptures, and received only so far as they are sustained by the word and Spirit of our God.

October, 1880
Elder Gilbert Beebe

Number 6

EDITORIAL OF ELDER GILBERT BEEBE

Reply to Elder Lemuel Potter's Pamphlet Entitled

“Unconditional Election Stated and Defined, or Denial of the Doctrine of Eternal Children, or Two Seeds in the Flesh.” By Elder Lemuel Potter, Member and Pastor of the Baptist Church, Grayville, Illinois.

A copy of this work has been sent us, probably by the author, and courtesy requires an acknowledgment of the receipt of it. It may also be expected that we should review the work. We have not the time to examine it as carefully and thoroughly as would be requisite to form a judgment of the merits of all that is contained in the 125 octavo pages. From the cursory glance over some of its pages, we find much to approve, especially in his scriptural arguments in defense of unconditional election, and in refutation of what is commonly known as the Two Seed doctrine in the flesh of the human family. But of what he denominates the “Doctrine of Eternal Children,” it being a doctrine of which we do not remember that we ever heard before, brother Potter must excuse us for asking for more light. On pages 51 and 52 he says:

“This is not news to the Lord; he knew this would be the state of mankind, as well in the very dawn of eternity, so to speak, as he does now; and he made a choice in Christ before the world began of a people for himself, out of the polluted race of Adam. In this he showed mercy to the objects of his choice. Hence, he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world; not because they were holy, or possessed any degree of holiness, but that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. In the covenant of grace in Christ before the world began, all the means necessary to their redemption and final salvation were ordained in Christ, and this is what the apostle means when he says, ‘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 Jesus before the world began (I Timothy 1:9).’ Those people were given to Christ in the covenant, and have sustained a covenant relationship to him ever since, or from all eternity. They are his by gift, not that they are his because they were in him, as the plant is in the seed, and have emanated from him in that sense. This people are a special people to the Lord all through the Bible; and as a distinguishing mark between them and the others, he calls them sheep, and the others goats. This difference is made between them by the mercy of God in choosing them to salvation. In the covenant with Abraham, they are embraced in the promise, ‘In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ This is the seed that David speaks of: ‘A seed shall serve him, and it shall be accounted unto the Lord for a generation.’ Here is the Lord’s seed; and the fact that they are called a seed does not argue that they are as old as the Lord. But we are told that they must be everlasting children, for Christ is said to be an everlasting Father, and there could not have been an everlasting Father without everlasting children. ‘And his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).’ This is a prophecy; and a prophecy is not the telling of what has been, but what shall be. He shall be called, The everlasting Father; not has eternally been. The believer in Christ shall have everlasting life, or hath everlasting life. Does that argue that he eternally had everlasting life? Then those people are called sheep, and they are in every inhabited portion of the earth. ‘My

sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them (Ezekiel 34:6).”

We fail to comprehend how God made choice of a people in Christ if that people did not in any sense exist in Christ when the choice was made. We do not understand that the flesh and blood of the people chosen in Christ existed in him, nor that he himself existed in the flesh until his incarnation, for in their flesh and blood relation they did not exist until their creation in the earthly Adam, in common with all others of mankind. Still we are informed in the word of divine revelation that the saints at Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus were blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places IN Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen them in him (not into him) before the foundation of the world. We cannot conceive of the existence of Christ as the Son of God, begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, only in his Mediatorial relation to his eternal Godhead, as the Father, and as the Head over all to his church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. We have understood that he is the Word that was with God, and also that he is the Word that is God. The Head of the church is Christ, and the Head of Christ is God. The fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him. He could no more sustain his Mediatorial relation if he and the Father were not one, than the church could inherit eternal life if they were not one with him, even as he and his Father are one. We think we agree with brother Potter, if we understand him, that Christ did not exist in flesh and blood (except in purpose) until he was made flesh by incarnation, by being made of a woman, and conceived by and born of the virgin Mary. But we do believe that he did exist as the Son of God, as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, from everlasting. His Mediatorial names or titles, Jesus and Christ, are expressive of his relation to the Father as a begotten Son, and to the church as her Head and spiritual and eternal life. The name Jesus signifies Savior; and he is the Savior of his body, the church, which he could not be if he were not truly God, for he says, “I am the Lord, and beside me there is no Savior (Isaiah 43:11).” This is all expressed in his name Jesus. Christ is a name or title signifying Anointed, used interchangeably to signify the same, which will be seen by comparing Psalms 2:2 and 45:7 with Acts 4:25-27. Both titles are applied to the Mediatorial relations borne by him to the Father and to the church, without the least disparagement of his eternal power and Godhead, and the Word which was and is and must forever continue to be the “true God and eternal life.”

If we have read correctly the record which God has given of his Son, as the Head of the body, the church, he, as the Head of the church and Savior of the body, is not only the begotten, but the only begotten of the Father; and we infer that the begetting of the Head includes the begetting of the spiritual body, and all the members of the body of which he is the Head. We know of no other way in which the members of Christ’s body can be partakers of the divine nature, or inheritors of eternal life. If the life which was given us in the earthly Adam was eternal, it could not die; but the life which was with the Father, and was manifested, according to I John 1:2, and which was given us in his Son, according to I John 5:11,12, is emphatically eternal life, which was with the Father, and is hid with Christ in God. And this life which was given us in the Son of God was included, with all other spiritual blessings, in the unspeakable gift of God’s dear Son. Brother Potter says (but by what authority he has failed to tell us), that “Those people” (of whom Paul speaks in II Timothy 1:9) “were given to Christ in the covenant, and have sustained a covenant relationship to him ever since, or from all eternity;” and that “They are his by gift, not that they are his because they were in him, as the plant is in the seed, and have emanated from him in that sense.

Here it seems to us that brother Potter fails to discriminate between the life which was given us in the Son and was and is so identified with his Sonship that no man can have it separately from him as the

Son of God, as John says, “This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” The eternal life of which the record speaks is so identical with him that no man can have the one and not the other. We say that, as it appears to us, our brother has failed to discriminate between this eternal life given us in the Son, and that mortal life which was given to us in, and emanated to us from, the earthly Adam. Death has passed on all the posterity of the earthly Adam, for that all have sinned. But the life given us in the second Adam, who is the Lord from heaven, being hid in God, is pure, for it is Christ, the anointed Head and eternal life of the church, which is his body. In the earthly Adam we all die. Eternal life is not an extension of our Adamic life. As the sons of Adam, we are creatures of God; but as sons of God in Christ, we are children and heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ to an inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and cannot fade away. If our spiritual, immortal and eternal life had been given us in the earthly Adam, all the children of the earthly Adam alike would, in being born of the flesh, have derived it from him, and would not, after being born of the flesh, require to be born again, of an altogether different seed, to develop in us a spiritual life, as the production of an incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever.

As to a covenant relationship from all eternity, to our dull comprehension, brother Potter has not made this matter clear; in fact, we are so much in the dark, that we do not know in what part of the Bible such a relationship is recorded. Until very recently, we do not remember to have ever heard of it before. But he describes it negatively, as not proceeding from Christ, as plants from the seeds which produce them. If we understand the assertion, it denies that the people of Christ were his children at all, only that they are children of Adam which the Father has given to him in a covenanted gift; but this covenanted relationship is sustained by gift. Now, if brother Potter can explain to us what vitality a simple gift or covenant can impart, he will tell us what we confess we do not know. We read of many covenants in the Bible. God made a covenant with Noah, Abraham, Moses, Israel and David; but we are not aware that any of these brought those who were embraced in them into any vital relationship to himself. We have read also of a covenant which God has made with his chosen, in which he has sworn unto David, in which David, according to the testimony of the apostles, personifies Christ; but this covenant recognizes both the type and the anti-type in seminal and vital relationship to their respective seeds. “I have made a covenant with my chosen: I have sworn unto David, my servant.” What are the provisions of this most solemnly attested covenant? “Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations.” “He shall cry unto me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my first born, higher than the kings of the earth.” This is a clear declaration of vital relation, even that of Father and Son. My Father, my First Born! And this covenant and oath of God secures to Christ, as his first-born Son, a seed which shall serve him, and be counted to him for a generation. (See Psalm 22:22.) This firstborn son, as the anti-type of David, shall be a progenitive Head, shall have children as his own seed, which were chosen in him, and blessed with and in him with all the spiritual blessings which are secured by the covenant of the sure mercies of David. “My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven (Psalm 89).” Was David a type of Christ? Did his seed exist in him before they were born? Did his children proceed from him as plants from the seeds which produce them? If so, by what authority shall we say that the seed of Christ did not exist in Christ as their seminal Head, and proceed from him as the vine from its roots, as the branch from the living vine, and as plants from the seed? Jesus used a similar figure in relation to himself, with a solemn double asseveration: “Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall

into ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).” Peter testifies that those who are born again, are born of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, and that the subjects of this birth are a chosen generation; and all generations are produced by the seed of which they are generated, as plants are produced by the seeds in which their existence and vitality were contained before they were brought into visibility.

We presume that brother Potter believes, as we certainly do, that the Son of God is the begotten Son of the eternal Father, and stood in that vital relation to the Father before the world began, as the Son. Now if the children of God were chosen and blessed in him before the foundation of the world, and we accept the testimony of Christ himself, and of his inspired apostles, that they are the body of which he is the Head, would it not be a singular anomaly that a head should be begotten and born, and the body and members of that head only adopted? The Scriptures abound with figures illustrative of the union and relationship of Christ and the church. We are told that Adam is the figure of him that was to come; and that Adam was first formed, then Eve (I Timothy 2:13). In the book of the generations of Adam it is written, “In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created (Genesis 5:1,2).”

We cannot think that Adam was like God in the supreme glory of his eternal perfections; for if like God he had been immutable, he could not have fallen in sin and transgression. If he had been like God in any of his infinite attributes of wisdom, power and dominion, he would have been independent, and not a subordinate being. Yet he was created in the likeness of God, in the sense intended in the declaration referred to, and in the sense in which God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Genesis 1:26,27).” “So,” in this manner, according to this purpose, was man created, and to this extent did he, as an image, delineate and figuratively portray the second or anti-typical Adam, who is the Lord from heaven.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his Mediatorial Sonship, is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of his Father’s glory, and the express image of his person; the appointed heir of all things; by whom also he made the worlds. (Hebrews 1:1-3; Colossians 1:15.) Adam as a type, “is the figure of him that was to come. He was created in the image and likeness of Christ, as the heir of all terrestrial things, having dominion over all created things, and as the seminal head and progenitor of his race; and of him, when he, not being deceived, had followed his bride into the transgression, it was said, “Behold the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil, etc. (Genesis 3:22).” The inspired writer to the Hebrews, in Chapter 2, verses 5-10, explains very clearly in what sense Adam was created and made in the likeness of his Creator, and is the figure of him who was with God, and who was God, and whose name is called “the Word of God.” He took not on him the nature of angels, for they could not set forth his dominion. “For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, [the glorious anti-type of whom Adam is the figure] who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are

all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”

Adam’s name and life and posterity were all called Adam; so the church of God had her spiritual and eternal life hid with Christ in God, and named in his name, living in his life, and in him blessed with all spiritual blessings, according as they were chosen in him before the foundation of the world. In all this the earthly Adam is the image or type of him that was to come. Adam, as the seminal head and progenitor of all the race of mankind, is the figure of Christ, as the seminal Head and spiritual progenitor of his spiritual seed, which he saw when his soul was made an offering for sin. He is their life, and that life in him is eternal life. It was with the Father, and given to his seed in the Son, or Sonship of the only begotten of the Father. It is only in this begotten relation that any vital union can be developed between God and the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. No covenant contract of conveyance, or gift, or adoption, can constitute vitality. Our union to God must, to be a vital union, be begotten of God the Father in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son; as it is written, “The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

We hope that it is not in any derisive, sarcastic or scoffing way that any of our brethren would speak of the eternity of the existence of the children of God in Christ, as the head and source of all spiritual union and communion with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, as “eternal children.”

It is with deep concern that we have observed of late, among some who claim to be Old School or Primitive Baptists, a disposition to sap the foundation of the Christian’s faith and hope in God, by ignoring the vitality of our union to and with God in Christ. They are willing to admit an eternal union, if we will give up the vitality of it, and call it a covenant union, or in any way deprive it of vitality; but it seems to us that a union without life would be a dead union, it could not make us partakers of the divine nature. But when we claim that the life on which our relation to God as his children rests was given us in Christ Jesus, with all other spiritual blessings, before the foundation of the world, although this heart-cheering doctrine is so fully declared in the Scriptures, an effort is made to call down onus, and what is far worse, on the doctrine, the obliquity and ridicule of those who do not entertain the same views that we do.

Much of the confusion in the minds of the saints, we think, arises from a failure to discriminate between Adam and Christ. In the earthly Adam we all die. Why? Because we were all in him in the transgression. By that one offense sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Did all men sin in the first offense of Adam? That occurred almost six thousand years before the birth of any of the men of the present generation. But if we had not been in Adam as our seminal head and progenitor, could we have sinned in him? Could death have passed on us as men that had sinned, if we were not in him as his posterity or children? If we were not children of Adam when he transgressed, and death thereby entered and passed upon us, when did we become his children? Did Adam call his wife’s name Eve because she was the mother of all living before any of her living children were born? Did Levi pay tithes to Melchisedec before or after he was born? Were Jacob and Esau children before their birth, or was it not until afterward? These questions relate to our natural life, as children of the earthly Adam, and who is the figure of him that was to come. Then tracing the analogy of the figure, we ask, Are we the children of God in Christ today? If so, were we his children yesterday? He is the same yesterday, today and forever. If we are his seed, or children now, were we his seed almost two thousand years ago, when his soul was made an offering for sin, and when we saw his seed and was satisfied? If we were the children for whom he hung bleeding

on the cross, nearly two thousand years before any of us were either born of the flesh or born again, how long have we been counted to the Lord for a generation? Can any one tell more accurately than did the inspired psalmist? “Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God (Psalm 40:1,2).” Our earthly life was given us in Adam when Adam was formed of the dust of the ground; but our spiritual life was given us in Christ when Christ was given to the Head of the church, and all spiritual blessings were given us in Christ before the foundation of the world, even as all earthly or temporal blessings were given us in Adam after the foundation of the world. Through the earthly Adam sin has reigned unto death, even as grace has reigned through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord. God’s children were children before they were partakers of flesh and blood, even as Christ was the Son of God before he took part in like manner of the same flesh and blood. So he partook of our nature to redeem us to God, who in our fleshly nature had sinned; and we whom he has redeemed, in being born of his incorruptible seed, receive of his spirit, of his life, which was given us in him before the world began, and so are we made partakers of his divine nature.

We have not attempted to review the pamphlet, nor have we even read it all, as our time is closely occupied; we have offered our objections to some views, but in no acrimonious spirit. We candidly believe that much of the discord that has disturbed the saints has arisen from a want of clearer understanding of each other’s views.

Elder Gilbert Beebe
Middletown, N.Y. June 1, 1880.