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No 1.

POPULAR ESSAY,

On the Divine Decrees.

No. V. USES.

Floriferis ut apes in saltibus omnia libant.

LUCR. Lib. III. 11.

As from the sweetest flowers the lab'ring bee
Extracts her precious sweets.—Creech.

Predestination is the true solution of the great question concerning the origin of all things. It takes us back into the counsels of eternity, and points out to us the great primeval spring from whence the past, present, and future, flow. It cannot therefore be a question of idle speculation; but it is fruitful of the most important practical results, as the following uses of it will demonstrate.

I. The doctrine of the divine decrees displays the unrivalled grandeur of Jehovah.

The ancient Greeks and Romans had 30,000 gods; for so many, in their opinion, were necessary to administer the government of the world. They partitioned off the universe into three great apartments, heaven, earth, and hell; and these were peopled with gods terrestrial, celestial, and infernal. The earth again was subdivided into a multitude of divisions, and they had gods of the ocean and the land; gods of the woods and rivers; gods of fire and of the air; until each department in nature, each moral attribute, each nook and corner of the globe, had a god. Neither the light of nature, nor the utmost

Any one disposed to aid in this benevolent work can gain all the information he may desire by addressing REV. HUGH M'MILLAN, the Secretary of the Board, at Xenia, Green Co. Ohio, or myself at Oxford, Ohio.

DAVID CHRISTY, Agt. of Board.

[From the *Charleston Observer*.]

LETTER I.

PSALMODY—THE QUESTION.

My Christian Friends,—My opponent, "Charlestoniensis," has taken to himself a very long, out-of-the-way name. As there will be occasion often to use this name, I will abridge it down simply to that of Mr. C., meaning, of course, no disrespect; it is done for the sake of convenience.

In Mr. C's No. 1. there is not much that demands *my* attention, though its contents may elicit some remarks from Mr. W. F., should the brother think them entitled to his consideration. From a remark at the commencement of this No. 1, Mr. F., it appears, had attempted to throw the burden of proof on the subject in dispute on Mr. C., which he, Mr. C. thinks was demanding quite too much. What! shall the representative of the "ninety-nine hundredths of the whole Christian world, in every age," be called upon to account to a *very small body of Christians* for the course which this great majority are *said* to have pursued in the case in question? The expression conveys the idea that *truth* and *right* must be with the majority; or, at least, that the majority are not to be called on to "define their position," or prove the correctness of their principles and practices *first*, it is enough for them to act on the defensive! It was not so in the days of Elijah. That distinguished Prophet demands of the majority to establish the correctness of their conduct and opinions *first*, and then he would advance proof in attestation that God, and truth, and right, were with him. They might have responded, What! shall 450 Prophets, with Ahab and Jezebel, and all Israel at their backs, account to *one man* for their opinions and practices?

Luther, at the commencement of the Reformation, was almost alone, and the truth was with him, and not with the "ninety-nine hundredths," who, in Psalmody, and in every thing else, had departed from the living God.

Mr. C. received two copies of my Discourse, one of which he supposes, was from the author, and was sent as a challenge to a reply. A mistake, however; I sent it not. My friend wishes to make the impression that he is the challenged party, and that I am the challenger and agitator of this subject; and hence, in his concluding note of December 10, he says, "I shall listen to the teachings of one who has thought it necessary to agitate this subject, and to challenge and invite discussion." No great crime if I had invited discussion, but I think the invitation comes from another quarter. If I am not mistaken, my friend called for the Discourse several months before its publication, in a communication published in the Observer more than a year ago. If this be so, then he it is "who has thought it necessary to agitate this subject, and to challenge and invite discussion." We have "listened to his teachings" for several months, and pronounce them *heterodox*. A second copy of my Discourse was sent to brother C., by some friend, accompanied with an earnest request that he would review it in the Observer. He can contain himself no longer! ---he begins to "wax valiant in fight"---he breaks the long and ominous "silence"---ominous of the coming storm, he enters upon the task of proving, not that the Psalms of inspiration should be used *exclusively* in the praise of God, but that the Psalms---God's own Word---should be *excluded* from His worship, and that a very poor *imitation* of that Word, accompanied by *other human* hymns, should be introduced, or more properly, should be continued in use, instead of the inspired Psalter! "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph."

In his No. 2, my opponent proceeds to the discussion of the subject. He states the question negatively, in five particulars, showing what it is not; then affirmatively, in two particulars, showing what it is; and at the close of the number, he presents a proposition embodying the question at issue, which proposition he proceeds in the next, and all succeeding numbers to discuss.

This closing proposition is the best thing in No. 2, yet it is not strictly correct---not sufficiently full and fair. In his statement of the subject negatively, I deny the correctness of each and every one of his particulars. But before proceeding to notice these particulars, permit me to say, that the brother has not given a clear, and fair, and full statement of the main point in dispute. The matter before us is to be viewed according to the *practice* of the Church in this country. And what is that practice? Why it is, that while two or

three *very small* denominations of Christians use the Psalms of David exclusively, the remaining "ninety-nine hundredths" of the Christian Church exclude these divine songs from divine worship, and adopt in their stead mere human compositions. The question then is, shall we use, in the instituted worship of God, the Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual songs of the Holy Ghost, usually called the Psalms of David, or shall we use human compositions? Or, in other words, shall we sing in the praise of God *his* songs, or *ours*? This is the *main* question or point; and what is the spontaneous response to this question from every Christian heart? Certainly it is, that we should sing the Lord's songs. Why then does not Mr. C. state the question fully and fairly, and come up fearlessly and at once to its discussion? Why fill up some seven or eight numbers, in a good degree, attempting to prove that we have a right to sing other *divine* songs as well as those called David's, and then, in No. 8, attempt to slide gradually and imperceptibly into the defence of *human* compositions---stating (the monstrous doctrine) that what was proper for the primitive Christians to do under the *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, may now be done by Christians under his *ordinary* influences; and that it is "quite as modest and Christian to sing our own hymns, as to offer our own prayers, or preach our own discourses!" Mr. C. knows that the *principal point* in dispute is not whether we ought to sing other *divine* songs in God's worship besides David's Psalms, but whether we should sing these Psalms or human songs? In stating the subject then, it was his duty to have brought this prominent point clearly into view, and in its discussion to have kept it constantly before the mind. This idea should have been embodied in the proposition which heads his numbers, and not kept on the back-ground, as though he were afraid to give it too great a prominence.

But let us notice the negative positions of our brother. In his first negative particular he says, "the question is not whether the Church is at liberty to sing any thing and every thing, or the compositions of any body and every body, without regard to the orthodoxy of the doctrine, the correctness of the sentiments, &c. Again he remarks, "we do not believe that the Psalmody of our Churches is a matter which ought to be left to their individual selection, or to the random choice of mere private opinion and judgment. We think the Church ought to take order, and exercise her most vigilant oversight in this matter."

Now I do maintain that what Mr. C. here denies to be the question, *is* the question, in part at least. It is, whether the Church shall sing "any thing and every thing, from rigid Calvinism

down to blank Arminianism," or be confined to the Psalms of David. This is the *practical* question; and experience has shewn that when we depart from this divine standard—the Psalms of David—there is no limit to the hymn-making business; and among the multitude of hymns that are in use there is Arminianism of the blankest kind, as well as other errors, set off too in all the charms of poetry, and rendered bewitching and ensnaring by being offered up in Christian assemblies as *praise to God*. Although the Presbyterian Church may have *taken order* to prevent such erroneous hymns from being introduced into her collection, yet she has never, as far as my knowledge extends, adopted any measures to prevent her members from singing such hymns in other Christian assemblies. No, on the contrary, we often read glowing accounts of great revivals in which the different hymn-singing denominations have participated, and without a doubt the hymn books of the different sects are employed on such occasions—books containing a variety of sentiments—and at such times, (the conclusion is inevitable,) the mingled throng of anxious, animated worshippers, join in sweet concord, singing now "rigid Calvinism," and again pouring forth the "blank Arminianism," and all ascending as praise to God.

The Church should "take order" in the selection of her Psalmody, says our brother; and who, or what does he mean by "the Church?" Why, forsooth, he means the *Old School Presbyterian Church*—rather a presumptuous claim—sufficiently arrogant for a Pope or a Prelate to advance. The Confession of Faith says, (ch xxv. 2,) "the visible Church, which is also Catholic, or universal under the Gospel, consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children," &c. For this Catholic Church there ought to be a *standard of praise*. But if every denomination of professing Christians, (in all of which there are some true members of the visible Catholic Church,) is allowed to "take order," and provide its own songs of praise, the consequence will be, as it is this day, that God's people will be constrained to sing "any thing and every thing," &c.

Throughout this discussion our Charleston friend has been very prompt in giving his *authority* for opinions advanced, but what authority does he give for the notion that "the Church" should "take order" in preparing a system of Psalmody for her use? None, save his own *ipse dixit*. The assumption is altogether gratuitous.

We deny that the Church as a whole, or in its parts, has any

right to take order in selecting what she pleases as the matter of praise to God. God himself has attended to this matter, and has given the whole Church a Psalter of his own selection and dictation, and consequently in this business no mere mortal has any right to intermeddle. Although my friend says the Church ought to "take order" in selecting a Psalmody for her use, yet when he enters on the discussion of the subject he finds a great many people, both under the old and new dispensation, making their own hymns—every man for himself, and every woman too. The idea seems never to have entered into the heads of those whom he represents as making hymns in olden times, that they ought to wait until the Church would "take order" before they would pour forth their effusions—and the dear brother, in No. 8, forgetting what he had laid down in the premises, advances the opinion that it is "quite as modest and Christian to sing our own hymns, as to offer our own prayers." If this be so, then why should the Church interfere with private right and privilege? If *one* man has as much right to make his own hymns as his own prayers, so has *every* man, and in improving this right or privilege, every man will make such as will correspond with his own views of truth, and the consequence will be, some will sing truth and others falsehood—that is, "any thing and every thing," &c.

In his first negative particular then, our opponent has not stated the question correctly. The term "the Church" must not be confined to the Presbyterian Church. It is a term usually applied to those denominations who, in the judgment of charity, are entitled to the name Christian. And when we take a survey of "the Church" in this extended sense of the term, we find one division singing this doctrine, and another that or the opposite doctrine; and (as it often happens) when the members of the different hymn-singing communities meet together, they join in the song, no matter in what, or in whose hymn book it may be found. We say then the question is, shall "the Church" be *confined* to David's Psalms, in praising God, or ought she to set aside this inspired Psalter, as the "ninety-nine hundredths" have done, and "sing any thing and every thing," as the great majority of Christians, in this country, are now doing?

But while we are on the subject of taking order, it would be gratifying as well as mortifying to know how often the Presbyterian Church has taken order on Psalmody since she left the good old way. She has been at this business for something like 50 years, or more. I have before me a book

of Psalms and Hymns, authorized by this Church, and entered in the Clerk's office in 1834; and yet scarcely was it adopted until a Committee was appointed to "take order" in getting up a better one, for Mr. C. says, No. 2. § 1. that "a Committee has been laboring for years to form a more perfect and complete book." And is this Committee likely to succeed? By no means. The Biblical Repertory for July, says, with reference to this *new book*, "We are free to confess that there are many things in it which we consider unsuitable for the worship of God. Some of them are mere sentimental effusions, some exhortatory addresses to sinners; some objectionable from the lightness of their measure; and others from their want of all positive excellence." Alas! Alas! when will this business of taking order come to an end?---Committees may *labor* in this work until dooms-day comes, and then they will not have a book of praises to please the members of the Church, to say nothing of pleasing God. The Church had better give it up as a bad job--face about, and turn again to the use of David's Psalms; and, in military phrase, command her members to stand "as you were." By adopting such a course, she may expect to obtain *repose* touching the subject of Psalmody, and not before.— "Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the way and see, and ask for the *old paths*, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find *rest* for your souls."

The consideration of Mr. C's remaining negative particulars is deferred until next week, when I hope to state the true question at issue: and in Letter 3, to proceed to the main argument—the Divine authority for the exclusive use of David's Psalms in Divine worship.

Yours, &c. W. R. H.

WEBSTER'S DEFENCE OF CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

We hope to see Mr. Webster's Defence of Christian Morality and of its professed Teachers, as a body, as contained in his argument before the U. S. Supreme Court, in the Girard Will case, published in full in some popular form for distribution through the country. Of all the distinguished services which this great man has rendered to his country, this free expression of his views, on a topic of paramount interest, is by no means the least. His manly vindication of the honorable profession,