

tion! Hundreds of years before, David had sketched the traitor's character, and marked out his course; Psa. cix; lxix; xli. Zechariah had specified the very amount that was destined to be paid him; Zech. xi. 12. The connection between the prophecies and their fulfillment is strikingly brought out in Acts i. 16. All efforts to the contrary, God's purpose must stand.—“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away;” Luke xiii. 33. But the most remarkable confirmatory feature of all, is the evidence freely borne by Judas in his Master's favor. The evidence of the other disciples will be charged with partiality. They were special friends of Christ. They were interested parties. A favorable testimony from them was only what was to be expected. But here is one who, if he could have fastened on anything against Christ, had every inducement to act the informant. He was filled with malice against his Master; he had recklessly thrown himself into the arms of his Master's foes; he had committed himself to a fiendish plot, and if he could have pointed to a single blemish in the character of his Master, if he could have dragged to light a solitary deviation from the path of rectitude, assuredly it would have been done. He had every opportunity as well as every inducement. For more than three years he had been on an intimate footing with Christ. He had seen him, not on the public stage merely, when a character may be assumed, but in his private moments, when men will be *en deshabille*—off their guard—seen as they really are; he had been with him on all occasions, eyeing him closely, but he found nothing in him; not one flaw—not the appearance of evil.

And as, stung with remorse, and furrowed by care, he comes into court and makes the marble pavement ring with the “reprobate silver” which he convulsively flings from him, this is his expressive testimony, “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood.”

VI. *The harmony subsisting between the purpose of God and the freedom of man.*

The treachery of Judas was decreed.—The purpose of God fixed it. The prophecies of God fixed it. Like every other part of the sad tragedy of Calvary, it was

but the acting out of the “determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” That counsel cleared not the other actors in this tragedy. Their guilt is charged home on them by Peter in the very same breath wherein he tells them that they were but ministers of the Divine will. “And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses,” Acts iii. 15. “By wicked hands have crucified and slain,” Acts ii. 23. Nor when many of them were subsequently pricked to the heart, do they presume to lay their load of guilt at the door of God. Like the brethren of Joseph, whose treatment of their brother is also specially spoken of as decreed, (see nar. in Genesis,) they feel themselves verily guilty. And so does Judas, though repentance (of the genuine stamp) is hid from his eyes. His destiny was decreed, but he feels that in working it out, he was a perfectly free man. The Divine decree neither helped nor hindered him. It was as if it had never been. He felt himself free in joining the circle of Christ's disciples—free in retaining that connection—free in making the black bargain with his Master's enemies, and no less free in its execution. He acts not under any compulsion, he is left to the freedom of his own will. The Lord even declares the decree. Judas knows perfectly well that his Master is cognizant of his intentions, and had probably perused again and again, the prophecies bearing on himself, but Christ's declaration, and these prophecies place him under no necessity, and he finds in them not the least palliation. Could any shelter for his poor naked soul have been found, under the decree of God, and the declaration of Christ, he was the very man to seek it. But, no. Such refuge fails him. He attempts not to say, “I am tempted of God.” He takes guilt home to himself. “I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood,” Matt. xxvii. 4. Had Judas been the victim of a stern fatalism—had he been placed under an invincible necessity,—he could not justly have been held accountable, and Jesus would have commiserated rather than condemned him. Jesus would have folded him in his arms instead of delivering him over to the tormentors. “Ah, poor soul, you are to be pitied. I know your kind intentions; but it is impossible