

decree to save only a certain number? Those who would deny the decree of election must provide themselves not only with another Confession but with another Bible or, following out their favorite plan, "revise" it. No one doubts that there is "a way of harmonising the apparent contradiction," but some may doubt whether that way has yet been discovered. Certainly when passages not at all obscure contradict one another, then throwing over one set altogether, and retaining the other is not "a way of harmonising them." If you insist upon the exclusive view that God wills all to be saved, then why are not all saved? While finding fault with other explanations the revising party offer none. Their opponents might as well say that the statement that God wills all to be saved must be qualified and this is what some do.

The interpretation that "hating Esau" means loving him less (which is true in many cases) is here not to the purpose; for the question is what use does the Apostle make of the passage which he quotes. Temporal blessings may have been originally meant, though this is not clear, and at any rate spiritual blessings depend upon temporal privileges; but the apostle does not refer to temporal blessings when he applies the passage to those who were ordained to be vessels of wrath and to others to be vessels of mercy. Nor is it any explanation that the purpose of God is secret and unknown to such as speak and hear the gospel. Those who advance this plea must have strange notions of sincerity in moral beings. The Semi-Pelagian idea that the unbelief of the wicked is foreknown without being predetermined is less objectionable but still inadequate; because, if foreknown, it must be certain either by predetermination on the part of God or by necessary causes which are either dependent on the Supreme Being or they are not. If they are not, then, His power is limited and He is not omnipotent. If they are dependent upon Him then their effect is as much His as any other effect of His will.

None of these explanations are sufficient, for none is possible. The "harmonising" of the Divine purposes with human volitions is an attempt to explain a philosophical difficulty which was as well known to the Westminster divines as it is to the New York presbytery. They say that the decrees of God do no violence to the will of man. But, though it is a philosophical difficulty—one which arises from reason starting difficulties which it cannot solve,