

learners, and sincere seekers after the truth, remembering that if the doctrine of predestination is taught, we are bound to receive it upon the testimony of God, whether we can understand it or not. Let any one turn to the first chapter of Ephesians, and I think he will find the doctrine clearly stated. In the fourth verse we read:

"According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ in whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

The expression "before the foundation of the world," means before time begins, or from all eternity, and as we are "predestinated to holiness," it follows that individuals, and not nations are meant, and if we are chosen to be holy, it cannot be that we are chosen because we are holy, or because God saw that we would be holy, as our Arminian brethren contend.

In the eighth chapter of Romans the doctrine is again clearly stated: "For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son. . . . 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."

Here we not only see the chain of love emanating from the throne of God in the eternity that is past, and binding the redeemed soul back to that throne in the eternity to come, but we see each successive link in its relation to the sinner's salvation, and in its proper relation to every other link, and thus we find that the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit are given only to the elect. In the ninth and eleventh chapters of Romans, Paul argues this subject at length. He first speaks of Jacob being chosen before he was born, so that he could not have been chosen on account of any superior goodness which he possessed, and as though the Apostle anticipated the very objection which is so frequently (and so unjustly) brought against this doctrine, viz., that it makes God unjust, he asks: "What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness (or injustice) with God? God forbid. (Nay, verily.) For He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So, then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy."

Such is Paul's reply to this objection so often urged. In the next place he refers to the case of Pharaoh. "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he will hardeneth."

You remember the history of Pharaoh, and you remember, too, that the Bible plainly states that "the Lord hardened his heart." I shall not attempt now to explain what that means, but do you say that it was unjust? Very well, the issue is not between you and me, or between you and the Presbyterian Church, but between you and your God! Your objection is not directed against the Calvinistic creed, but against the Word of God. It might be consistent in an infidel to urge such an objection, but it is very inconsistent in a Christian, for he thus strikes at the very foundation of that religion which he professes to love and cherish, he thus makes an open attack upon the Bible, he thus makes a thrust at the very vitals of Christianity!

But Paul again condescends to answer the objection. He says, "Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" In other words, if God did just as he pleased, why did he find fault with Pharaoh? Listen to Paul's reply: "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power (*exousian*, the right) over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonour? What if God willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering, 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 before prepared unto glory?"

Has He not the right to treat both classes as He pleases? What say you? Is it unjust? If you say so you impugn God's character, and openly attack the

Bible and thus place yourself on the side of scepticism and infidelity. Is it right for God to exercise His sovereignty over His creatures? If so, cease your objections to this doctrine. Give up either your objections, or your Bible: Now which horn of the dilemma will you take?

It is generally supposed that all the difficulties are on our side of the question, and so our opponents try to put us on the defensive, well knowing that it is easy to bring objections in a few words, which it requires volumes to answer. Now I propose to put them on the defensive. They say the doctrine of predestination makes God unjust. But if you reject the doctrine on this ground, you impugn God's character and openly attack the Bible! Which objection is the more formidable, and which view the more pernicious? granting that they are both valid.

But Paul has already answered the objection to our position, and thus vindicated God's justice, basing his argument as he does upon the divine sovereignty, and that is the only way God's justice can be vindicated, for if it be unjust in God, in the depths of a past eternity, with all the circumstances of life and surroundings clearly revealed before him, then and there, to pass by a sinner, so it is equally unjust in him to pass by that sinner in time, when all those foreseen possibilities have become actual facts. *Rev. T. M. M. Connell, in Christian Observer.*

#### IF I JOIN THE CHURCH MAY I DANCE?

"If I join the church have you any objection to my dancing?"

Such was the question of Mary W—, addressed to her pastor as he was speaking to her about making a public profession of religion. She was about eighteen years of age, of high social standing, intelligent, cultivated, thoroughly a lady in feeling and manner, and surrounded by all that makes life attractive and pleasant.

Having been hopefully converted, after much thought and prayer she had decided to unite with the church of which Mr. A— was the pastor. But before doing so, she asked him, in the conversation alluded to, "If I join the church, Mr. A—, have you any objection to my dancing? I am very fond of it, and feel very unwilling to give it up. What do you think of it?"

"I will answer your question by another," said the pastor. "Suppose that there was a large and fashionable party, or a public ball in the town and you were invited to it. And suppose you had accepted the invitation, and that going at rather a late hour, you found all engaged in the dance, and you saw me, your pastor taking part in it, and leading it, what would you think?"

A look of surprise, almost astonishment passed over her face as she frankly said, "I should think it very strange, and greatly inconsistent."

"Well," replied Mr. A—, "If dancing is a right and a good thing, why should not I enjoy it as well as you? And if in its influences and tendencies it is wrong and evil, why should you engage in it or wish it more than I? A minister is but a good man trying to do good to men. And there are not two standards, one for him and another for the members of his church; not two rules of Christian living, one for you and another for him. If he is to be spiritual, and set a holy example, and to come out from the world and be separate, and shun worldly amusements, why should not you? And if such amusements are right and proper for you as a follower of the Saviour, why are they not for him? And why should you, or any member of the church, wish to be or do what you would not like to see him be or do?"

She thought a moment seriously, and then said, "It is plain to me now. I will never dance again." *And she never did.*

Uniting with the church by a public confession of faith in Christ, she lived, and after some years died, an exemplary, faithful, spiritual Christian, a help to her pastor in every good word and work, and a bright example to all who knew her.

With this brief narrative in view, three thoughts are suggested for serious and prayerful consideration.

1. As to all worldly amusements, if you have the least doubt as to your conduct—if there is the least conflict between inclination and duty, go in prayer to the Saviour, and ask him what you ought to do, and then act as you believe He would approve if he were present with you.

2. If there is the least doubt, is it not better to err on the safe side, and rather keep too far from the world, than too near to it?

3. Is it not right for you, in this, as in all things, to take such a course that if all were to imitate your example, it would make the church a holy and spiritual and useful church, and give you personally the highest and best influence as a devoted and faithful Christian?

#### THE MAJESTY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, who was capable of appreciating literary excellence and was the most charming writer of his age, found in the Bible a majesty he sought for in vain elsewhere. We only wish the man who did more by his philosophy and rhetoric to fire the French Revolution than any other one man, had not simply admired, but obeyed God's blessed word. The subjoined is taken from his "Emile," and the portrait of Jesus has not been better painted by un-inspired pen:

"I confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures astonishes me: the holiness of the gospel is an argument which speaks to the heart, and which I should be sorry to be able to answer. Read the books of the philosophers with all their pomp: how petty they are beside this! Is a book at once so sublime and so simple the work of man? Can it be that he whose history it relates was himself a mere man? Is this the tone of an enthusiast, or of a mere sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! what touching grace in his instructions! what elevation in his maxims! what profound wisdom in his discourses! what presence of mind, what acuteness, what justness in his replies! what empire over his passions! Where is the man, where the sage, who knows in this way how to act, suffer, and die, without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary good man covered with the opprobrium of crime, yet meriting the rewards of virtue, he paints, trait by trait, Jesus Christ. . . . What prejudice, blindness, or bad faith does it not require to compare the son of Sophroniscus with the son of Mary! What distance between the two! Socrates dies without pain, without ignominy; he sustains his character easily to the end. If he had not honored his life with such a death, we should have thought him a sophist. They say Socrates invented ethics; but others practised morality before he taught it. Aristides was just before Socrates described justice; Leonidas died for his country before Socrates taught the duty of patriotism. Sparta was temperate before Socrates praised sobriety; Greece abounded in virtuous men before he defined what virtue is. But Jesus—where did he find the lofty morality, of which He alone gave both the lesson and the example? From the midst of a furious fanaticism proceeds the purest wisdom; among the vilest of people appears the most heroic and virtuous simplicity. The death of Socrates, tranquilly philosophizing among his friends, is the sweetest one could desire; that of Jesus, expiring amid torments, abused, ridiculed, cursed by a whole people, is the most horrible which one could fear. . . . Yes: if Socrates lives and dies like a philosopher, Jesus lives and dies like a God!"

#### PROFUNDITY, OR WHAT?

A writer under our hand dilates on the deep and mysterious meanings that lie hidden in "every word" of the address of our Lord to Nicodemus. This reminds us of a certain class of teachers who try to cover their shallowness by insisting on the amazing depths and heights of meaning that are to be found in the most lucid passages in God's word. The implication is that the preacher, or writer, himself must be exceedingly profound and far-seeing, otherwise he could not perceive so very much beyond what is apparent to common intelligence. By the same rule of exegesis you may dwell upon the depths and mysteries of such an expression as, "*Good morning to you.*" "*Good*—think of all the word suggests! Who can explain it! What depths of hidden meaning! *Morning*; how sublime and beautiful! *To you*: mark, this is a direct address. It involves personality and implies relations to time and space and eternity. What tongue can tell its entire import! And taking the expression as a whole, it is marvellous in its concise inclusiveness as well as its pregnant exclusiveness. It is evident that man-made ministers must have shut their eyes to exclude the light of the expression; otherwise our churches and creeds would not be so full of darkness as they are."