

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Transactions of the Baptist Historical Society* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_tbhs_01.php

The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity.

A tract by an English Anabaptist circulated about A.D. 1557 in Scotland and England. Extracted from the reply by John Knox, licensed at Geneva 13 November, 1559.

THE questions about Predestination, debated by Erasmus and Luther in 1525, had been taken up in England. The author of this treatise relies chiefly on the Bible (which he usually quotes from the Great Bible, the then Authorized Version) and on logic; scarcely ever does he cite any "authority." Even when he announces the errors he opposes, he mentions no name, and keeps very free of personalities; indeed it is rare for him to turn and address the Necessitarian, he usually appeals to the reader to weigh arguments.

We find that from 1550 to 1555 there was much debate in England on this point. References to the literature may be seen in the Writings of Bradford, Parker Society edition, notes on page 306. It would appear that Calvin's *Institutio*, which in Latin had reached its fifth edition by 1550, but was not yet available in English, had won many converts to high views of Election to damnation; but this writer still regards them as novel and heretical. Some of the books that may have prompted the writing are:—

1547. Certayne Sermons or Homilies.
1548. Bullinger (translated). An Holsome Antidotus . . . against . . . Anabaptists.
1549. Calvin (translation). A short instruction . . . against . . . Anabaptists.
1550. Cotesford. An Epistle whereby errors revived by Anabaptists are confuted.
- Harl. MS. 421.64. Depositions of divers witnesses against some Kentish men, accused of holding erroneouse tenets concerning predestination.

The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity 89

1551. Turner. A preservative . . . against . . . Pelagius . . . Anab.
[a reply to Robert Coche].
Bullinger (translation by Veron). Dialogue.
1553. The XLII articles.
- 1555-6. Correspondence between various prisoners; see especially the letters of John Careless in Foxe viii, 163-201 (ed. 1843) and of John Bradford, vii, 196-284. From these we find Skelthrop, N.S. and R.C., Cuthbert Symson, Harry Hart, Trewe, Abyngdon, named as leading Free-Willers, and a long list in Kent and Sussex is available (Bradford i, 194).

It would seem that this treatise was composed with an eye not only to the official Articles, but also to Bradford's Defence of Election. But in the choice of a title the name of John Careless seems to have been too tempting to pass by.

No reasoned attack on Calvin's new doctrine had previously appeared in English from the ranks of the Reformers, and his friends felt that this could not be ignored; its influence was spreading into Scotland, and in 1557 the Scotch appealed to John Knox to deal with it, and some English repeated the request two years later. In one respect he had special qualifications, as he knew the author, and he promised to take it up (Works, Woodrow edition iv, 270; v, 128). The promise was duly fulfilled, and the reply appeared in 1560. But Knox was then steeped in the atmosphere of Geneva, and to a straightforward English book he opposed the authority of Calvin, and dragged in Servetus with his books of 1533 and 1553, Jerome Bolsec with his Genevan controversy of 1550-1551, and Sebastian Castalio of Basel—all of whom were important locally, but hardly in England or Scotland. If in this respect Knox's reply is quite beside the mark, and if its violent language is a painful contrast to the scriptural reasonings of the Englishman, we must yet remember with gratitude that the English treatise is to be recovered only from the pages of Knox, who professed to copy the whole, replying to selected passages.

The reasonings of the Englishman did not affect the XLII articles, which were modified only in other respects, and in the form of the XXXIX articles remain the Doctrinal Standard of the Church of England. But they so far influenced English opinion that a fresh edition of the reply was licensed in 1580, though no copy is known, and one appeared even in 1591. By that time the opposition to Calvin was gathering strength, and soon showed itself in the rise of the Arminian party.

This protest however came from an Anabaptist. It is important to notice that Anabaptists were not solely nor chiefly concerned with baptism: the very word never occurs in this treatise. The label was always misleading, and this tract is excellent evidence what topics

90 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

really did concern the maligned party. Incidentally it may be observed what a gulf lies between the thought of this sixteenth-century English Anabaptist, and the seventeenth-century English Baptists; they there-
steadily protested against being confounded with the Anabaptists, with whom they had very few affinities of thought, and from whom they were not historically descended. Indeed most English Baptists adopted the very opinions which are here opposed by the Anabaptist.

The author of the tract was provisionally identified by Mr. Laing in 1856, as Robert Cooche or Cooke. He first emerged into debate when Prebendary Turner of Isleworth lectured on Original Sin and Baptism. Some one opposed his views, and Turner in 1551 printed a book in reply, which quotes many of his arguments. An anagram on COWCHE identifies the opponent. From a letter of Parkhurst to which Laing refers, printed since by Mr. Burrage, we find that Cooche was well educated and musical, keeper of the wine-cellar at the court of queen Catherine [Parr]. He was such a vigorous debater that he tired out Coverdale, Parkhurst and Jewell.

Strype used this letter in 1721, and interpolated that Cooche went into exile under Mary, and then met Rodolph Gualter at Zurich. But this is a very bad guess, for Gualter actually wrote to Parkhurst in 1574 to ask who Cooche was, under the circumstances following. Cooche on 13 August, 1573, wrote from Elizabeth's palace to Gualter to say that he had written a few pages on the desirability of having a real supper, not a "morsel of bread and three drops of wine"; also as to the date of the original Last Supper. Before printing, he invited Gualter's opinion; the letter was printed by the Parker Society in the Zurich letters, ii, 236. Gualter therefore wrote to Parkhurst to ask as to Cooche's standing, and received the reply already quoted, which adds that the duke of Norfolk had assured Parkhurst that Cooche had abandoned his Pelagian views some while ago; at the time of writing, 6 February, 1574-5, he was a singer in the queen's chapel. Gualter then replied at length to Cooche's letter on the Supper, disagreeing with him, and Cooche therefore did not publish.

Mr. Laing pointed out that as Knox was at king Edward's court 1552-4, he had the opportunity then of meeting Cooche; and Knox's reply shows that he did know the author of the book now printed. To Mr. Laing's argument may be added the fact that R.C. was a prominent opponent of John Careless on this very question of Predestination. No other person has ever been suggested, and Cooke seems to meet all the conditions.

The present tract was divided by Knox into sections, and for reference he placed in the margin various numbers and remarks. All of these have been neglected as no part of the original. The edition of 1559 was passed through the press by a Genevan editor, who paid

no great attention to spelling or punctuation; when the original is quoted twice or thrice, there is much variety on these points, making it clear that the author's meaning is occasionally distorted. And as the reprint of 1591 differs further, no reliance can be placed on such details. Therefore the present editor is responsible for division into paragraphs, punctuation, and spelling. No word however is changed, except when specially indicated by [].

First Error.

“God hath not created all men to be saved by any manner of means, but before the foundation of the world He hath chosen a certain [number] to salvation, which is but a small flock; and the rest, which be innumerable, He hath reprobated and ordained to condemnation: Because so it pleaseth Him.”

The Confutation of the First Error.

To prove this true, they can bring forth no plain testimony of the Word. For there is no such saying in the Holy Scripture, That God hath reprobated man afore the world. But the sentences which they allege, be far fet[ched] and forged, contrary to the meaning of the Holy Ghost, as (God willing) it shall plainly appear. And where Scripture will not serve, they patch their tale with unreasonable reasons, for their whole intention is contrary to true reason.

God hath given to all His sensible creatures a natural inclination to love their births; then doth God also love His birth, as He sayeth Shall I cause other to bear, and shall not I also bear? Likewise, Shall God make other to love their births, and He not love His own birth? Man is the birth and child of God, created to His own image and similitude (as the Prophet saith) Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God made us? And Paul saith We are the generation of God. Wherefore God loveth His own birth, that is man. Then did He not reprobate and cast away man afore he was: For that were a proof that He hated and abhorred His own birth above all other. Now, there is no wild beast, much less any man, which would bring forth their birth to destruction. How much less then becometh it the goodness of God to make and bring forth, like to His own image and similitude, unto perpetual confusion?

To prove this similitude good, and to show how much His love towards His children exceedeth the love of all creatures towards their births, He sayeth, Can a woman forget the child of her womb, and not pity the same whom she hath borne?

92 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

And though she do forget it, yet I will not forget thee. Here He speaketh not only to the Elect (as some say), but also to them which did forsake and despise Him, as there, Alas! for these disobedient children (sayeth the Lord) that they will take counsel without Me. Here He calleth the wicked, which heap sin upon sin, and were disobedient, his children. Christ sayeth, If ye when ye are evil can give your children good gifts, how much more your heavenly Father? After the same manner may I reason with you (Careless by Necessity); If none of you, though ye be evil, would beget a child to misery, how much less would God, which is all good, beget and create man, His own image, to perpetual pains? Here we may see how much this naughty opinion is contrary to nature and to reason; and that it is contrary to the Word, God willing, I will prove. If God hath ordained the most part of the world to be damned, then were His wrath greater than His mercy. But the Scripture witnesseth, That His mercy is over all His works; and that God is slow unto wrath and ready unto mercy, so that His wrath is extended only to the third and fourth generation, but His mercy to the thousand generation. [Again] Wherefore thus (saith He), a little while I have forsaken thee, but with great mercifulness shall I take thee up unto Me. When I was angry I hid My face from thee for a little season, but through everlasting mercy have I pardoned thee. And David sayeth, His wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, and His pleasure is in life; heaviness may well endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. And so Moses called him A merciful and gracious God, long suffering, and keeping mercy in store for thousands. By these scriptures and many more, it is evident that God's mercy is greater than His wrath, contrary to their sayings.

Of all sorts and sects of men, I have judged them to be most abhorred which are called Atheists, that is to say, such as deny that there is any God. But now me think these Careless Men are much more to be abhorred. My reason is, Because they be more injurious to God than the Atheists; for he is less injurious to a man who believeth that he is not, than he which calleth him a cruel man, a tyrant, and an unjust person; so are they less injurious to God which believe that He is not, than they which say He is unmerciful, cruel, and an oppressor. Now, what greater cruelty, tyranny, and oppression, can be, than to create the most part of the world to everlasting damnation; so that by no manner of means they can escape and avoid the cruel decree and sentence against them? Seeing

the philosopher Plato judged them unworthy to live and to be suffered in any commonwealth which spake evil of God, what ought our judgments to be of such men which have so wicked an opinion of God? Whatsoever our judgment be of them, and whatsoever their deserving be, let us labour rather to win them than to lose them. But forasmuch as he which toucheth pitch is in danger to be defiled therewith, therefore ought we to walk warily with such men, that we be not defiled and infected of them. Specially, seeing that now-a-days this horrible doctrine doth fret even as the disease of a cancer, which infects from one member to another, until it hath occupied the whole body without it be cut away; even so this Error hath already infected from one to another a great number. The Lord grant them the true meaning and understanding of His Word, whereby they may be healed and the sickness cut off, the member being saved.

God created man a very good thing: and dare you say that God ordained a very good thing to destruction? Then God delighteth in the destruction of that which is very good. Man at his creation was a just and innocent creature; for afore the transgression, there was no evil, neither in Adam nor in us. And think you that God ordained His just and innocent creatures to condemnation? What greater tyranny and unrighteousness can the most wicked man in the world, yea, the Devil himself do, than to condemn the most innocent and just person? Hereby may we see that these Careless Men be more abominable than the Atheists, which believe there is no God. But these affirm God to be as bad as the Devil, yea, and worse; forasmuch as the Devil can only tempt a man to death, but he can compel none to fall unto condemnation; but God may not only tempt, but also compel by His eternal decree the most part of the world to damnation. "And hath so done (as they say), so that of necessity, and only because it was His pleasure and will." Then must God be worse than the Devil. For the Devil only tempted men to fall, but God compelleth them to fall by His immutable decree. Oh, horrible blasphemy!

The Scripture witnesseth that we did fall in Adam. For damnation came of one sin unto condemnation; then did we all stand afore in Adam, for none falleth but he that standeth. If we did all stand, then were we all Predestinate to life; for as our fall here is to damnation and death, so is our standing unto salvation and life. And to confirm this, we have many testimonies in the Word, which prove us to be Elected, Chosen, and Predestinate to life afore the fall, but none that

94 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

prove any man to be abjected, cast away, damned, and reprobate afore sin, by which death entered into the world. Paul to the Ephesians sayeth, God did choose us in Christ before the foundations of the world were laid, and ordained us before through Him to be heirs unto Himself, and were thereunto Predestinate. I pray you, show me any testimony of the Scripture which so manifestly proveth that God hath reprobate any before the foundations of the world. God hath no respect of persons: For He calleth the world from the rising up of the sun unto the going down of the same. He made both small and great, and careth for both alike, for they be all the work of His hands. And Esdras sayeth, It was not God's will that man should come to naught, but He prepared life for them. The Holy Ghost sayeth, That God hath not made death, neither hath he pleasure in the destruction of the living; for He created all things that they might have their being; yea, all the people of the earth hath He made that they should have health, and there should be no destruction in them, and that the kingdom of hell should not be upon earth. What can be more plainly and more directly spoken against this error? In another place sayeth the Holy Ghost, God created man to be undestroyed: and again, God ordained man that he should order the world according to equity and righteousness, and execute judgment with a true heart: Doth God ordain man to rule the world according to righteousness whom He reprobated? Do men gather grapes (as Christ sayeth) of thorns and figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruits, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, neither can a bad tree bring forth good fruit. Either make the tree good and the fruit good, or else the tree evil and his fruit evil. Either grant man at his creation to be righteous and good, and then I think ye will abhor to say, that God afore the foundations of the world did reprobate His good and righteous creature; or else grant him at his creation to be an evil and unrighteous creature. Could then righteous judgment come of such an unrighteous tree? Further, if man at his creation was an evil thing, then was he not the creature of God. For God saw all that He had made, and they were very good. If man at his creation, or afore, was reprobate, and ordained unto death, then was man guilty before the transgression; for God damned none but such as be guilty. If he was guilty afore his transgression, then was he a sinner, being yet innocent and just afore he ever consenteth or committed sin. And so conse-

sequently of this Error, I may infer many more such absurdities as should offend any faithful man's ears.

You say, "that God reprobated and ordained man to damnation, the most part of the world, afore the foundations of the world were laid"; and yet in the creation God made all men after His own image good and righteous, as the Scripture witnesseth. For as we were all created in one man, that is Adam, so were we all created in one estate, that is, after the image of God to life. Then if your opinion be true, the ordinance of God in His Election afore the world, is not conform to His ordinance in the creation. And the Holy Ghost sayeth, If I build up again that which I have cast down before, I declare myself to be a transgressor. If God created man to his own image unto life, whom before the creation He had reprobated and cast away, declareth He not thereby Himself to be inconstant and a transgressor? Ye cannot escape here with your bare solution, where ye say, "Afore the world God hath not ordained all, but some, unto damnation," for in our creation all were ordained unto life; for so much as we were all created after the image of God, of the ordinance of God in our Election afore the world. The Apostle writeth thus: We be blessed (sayeth he) with all manner of spiritual blessings in heavenly things by Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundations of the world were laid, that we should walk in them. Here do we learn that God's ordinance in His Election afore the world, and also His ordinance in the creation, is always one. For as we are chosen in Christ Jesus, so we are created in Christ Jesus; and as we are chosen to be holy and without blame, so are we created unto good works. Wherefore God's ordinance in His holy Election, and His mighty creation, is one and of like strength and sureness. Further, seeing we be (as the Apostle sayeth) both Elect and created in Christ Jesus, and forasmuch as there is no damnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, then is there no damnation either in the Election or creation.

If God reprobated man afore the foundation of the world, then God reprobated man before he offended. And if God reprobated and damned man afore he offended, then is death the reward of God's ordinance afore the world, and not the reward of sin. But the Apostle teacheth us that by sin, death entered into the world, and also that death is the reward of sin. I pray you, doth either God's law, or man's law, condemn any man afore he hath offended? I am certain

96 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

ye are not able to prove it to be so. Then ought you to be ashamed to burden God with such unrighteous judgment. Doth not God rather forgive the offence already committed? Let him be your God which condemneth the innocent afore he offend. But He shall be my God which pardoneth and forgiveth the offence already committed, which in His very wrath doth think upon mercy. And so with Job will I conclude, The great God casteth away no man.

Some others [there] be that grant, "that sin was a cause why man is reprobated." And therewith they hold "that God's absolute ordinance is also the cause." This saying containeth contradiction in itself; for if it be God's absolute ordinance, then is it not in respect of any other thing, but, as they say because it hath so pleased Him. If they meant that God's ordinance is the cause why sinners suffer death, or that God ordained that sinners for their sin should suffer death, I could agree with them; but that were contrary to that which they have said, that God absolutely ordained any man afore he was, yea, afore the world, to death, because so it pleased Him; for if death be the reward of sin, and for offence and sin we do die, then cometh not death by God's absolute ordinance.

And if I do grant that both God's absolute ordinance, and also sin, are the causes of damnation after your meaning, mark well what inconvenience followeth thereof. First, ye must grant me that God's ordinance is the principal and chiefest cause (for it cannot be inferior to any other cause). Secondly, ye will grant that the first or principal cause, called *Causa causae*, is the cause of the second and inferior cause, called *Causa causata*. So to conclude, God's ordinance, which is *Causa causae*, shall be the cause of sin, which is *Causa causata*. As for a familiar example: the heat of the sun and the dew cause the ground to be fruitful; and God also is the cause thereof, for He maketh the barren ground fruitful. But forasmuch as God is the principal and first cause, He must also be the cause of the same, which is but the second cause. Thus it is clearly proved, that if God's ordinance were the cause of reprobation, then God's ordinance should also be the cause of sin; and God should be author of evil, contrary to the whole scripture, contrary to the opinion of all godly men, and contrary to our faith. But forasmuch as, God willing, I intend to answer at length to this wicked opinion in the Confutation of the third Error, I will speak no more hereof in this place.

The Lord reasoneth with the inobedient Israelites which did forsake Him, saying, O My people, what have I done unto thee, or wherein have I hurt thee; give Me answer! If the Israelites had been so well learned as you, they might have answered, "Lord, Thou hast preordained us by Thy immutable decree to fall away from Thee, so that of necessity we must perish; in this hast Thou hurt us with an incurable wound."

Now I intend, with the help of God, to answer to the arguments which they that be entangled with this error, use to allege for the proof thereof; leaving such as be but vain, and engender rather contention than edifying; answering to such as seem most weighty, collected [out] of certain places of the scriptures whereby it may be thought that they may be deceived; beseeching the gentle reader to weigh the matter with an indifferent balance: and first hear before thou refuse, and, God willing, thou shalt not repent thee of thy labour.

But forasmuch as the author and maintainers of this Error do often make mention of Election, whereby they would cloak their absurdities, I will first declare how Election is taken in the scriptures three manner of ways; that is, generally, specially, and most specially of all.

First, we be all chosen and created in Christ Jesus, as Paul witnesseth to the Ephesians, in the first and second chapter: and conform to this Election, He lightened all them that came into the world, and calleth all men to repentance, both great and small, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, male and female, of all estates, without respect of person: and all that be thirsty He calleth to come to the water of life.

Secondly, He commendeth them which come at the first calling, to renounce father and mother, wife and child, with all other earthly things, yea, and themselves also. This is the second Election, where there departed an innumerable multitude, which will not forsake such things but for their own lusts. Here departed Cain, with the monstrous giants, cruel tyrants, and bloody hypocrites, and all persecutors which shed innocent blood. Here departed Epicurus, with all his belly gods, among which was the rich glutton which despised Lazarus. There departed Sardanapalus, accompanied with Venus, and all that be drowned in the lusts of the flesh, among which was Herodias. There departed Croesus, with many rich wealthy persons, among which was the rich young man of whom we read in the gospel, that with a sorry countenance he departed from Christ. There departed Tarquinius the proud, with such as be puffed up with the pomp [&] glory of this world, among

98 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

which was Herodes, of whom we read in the Acts of the Apostles that for his pride he was stricken of God and eaten of lice. There departed Demetrius the silver smith, with such as will not forsake their filthy lucre, amongst which were the master and mistress of the damsel possessed with a spirit that prophesied. There departed a whole band of Stoics, with their Destiny playing fast or loose, and that of Necessity, which passeth all jugglers' cunning; among them are all such as defend that of mere Necessity a few number must be saved, and of mere Necessity all the rest of the world must be condemned.

Whoso abideth this second Election and Calling, Christ commandeth them to take up their cross and follow Him, and thus to continue to the end. This is the third and last Election, of which sayeth the Lord, I have chosen thee in the fire of tribulation. Here the seventy disciples departed, for they cannot abide this hard saying. Here doth Judas trudge. They which remain suffer great assaults, insomuch that sometimes they turn their backs to their enemies, as the apostles did when Christ was taken; and there do worthy soldiers stagger, stumble, and fall, as Peter when he denied his Master, and swore he knew Him not. And Thomas could in no wise believe that Christ was risen and had obtained victory. Yet they which at the voice of their Captain rise up and turn again and fight lawfully even unto the end, they are chiefly above all others called Elect and Chosen, because they, continuing unto the end, obtain that whereunto they are chosen, and they follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. It is a hard thing that any such be deceived and fall away, forasmuch as they first are illuminated from above, and have forsaken all, yea, themselves, and have altogether submitted themselves to the governance of their Lord and Captain Christ. They daily obtain such victory of their enemies, that their warfare is now become easy. And in hope they have to subdue, by the aid and counsel of their Lord, all their enemies, their joy and comfort is so great that they esteem all earthly pleasure which should draw them back, but vain, foolish, displeasing, and beastlike: happy is he which understandeth this to be true, not only by speculation, but also by experience. These three kinds of Election are plainly set forth in the history of Gideon, which being well and duly understood—**Confer to the Word.*

* The copie which came to my handes, says Knox, was in that place imperfecte, for after the former wordes, it had onely written, "confyre to the world." . . . Ye proceede, saying—as follows in the text.

The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity 99

The first argument of them which abuse God's holy predestination is easily soluted; their argument is this: "Wheresoever there is Election, there is also Reprobation of the same sort. But God elected some men afore the foundations of the world: *Ergo*, He reprobated some other men afore the world." But God's election afore the world hath no respect unto His contrary reprobation afore the world; yea, there is no such word nor phrase in the whole Scripture, but God's election afore the world is general to all men, as His calling is general without respect of persons. This is already sufficiently proved, yet some of you do grant God's Calling to be general, but not His Election. And in this you accuse God of hypocrisy; you would make Him a dissembler like unto yourselves, which oftentimes with your mouth do offer and promise that which ye mind never to perform. But God is faithful, which is willing to perform all that He promiseth, even to them that refuse Him. And though they attain not the promise, because of their unbelief, yet all the time of their Calling be they in the general Election: as those whom the King called to the marriage, notwithstanding they came not, yet were they chosen to be partakers of the marriage; and the servant to whom the master forgave all his debts was chosen, notwithstanding he attained not that whereunto he was chosen, but became a reprobate, abusing the goodness of his master. God is no hypocrite, which calleth men outwardly, and forgiveth debts only with the mouth; but even from the heart, willing to give salvation to all them to whom He offereth it. And the cause why such do perish is their obstinateness to God's grace; and, as the Lord sayeth, "Their stiff neck which hath an iron vein and their brows of brass," which despise the goodness of God; they became castaways because, as St. John sayeth, "they love darkness better than light." And as Esdras sayeth, They kept not that which was sown in them, whereof we may gather that they become reprobates, because they rather refuse the grace offered and grafted in them, than that they are refused. Notwithstanding, both may be conveniently spoken; Because they have forsaken Me, I will also forsake them, sayeth the Lord. And again sayeth the Holy Ghost, Cometh not this unto thee because thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God?

Further, that this is untrue, "Wheresoever there is Election, there is also Reprobation of the same kind," it may be easily proved by the inconvenience which cometh thereof. Christ is the Elect and Chosen of God, as then, Behold this My Servant upon whom I lean, My Elect in whom My soul is pacified;

100 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

and in another place, Thou art My witness, sayeth the Lord, and My Servant whom I have chosen. And will you say therefore, that there be more Christs which be reprobate? For either this saying "Wheresoever there is Election, there is also Reprobation of the same kind," is false, or else there must be more Christs. That were much like to the saying of a Jew, which when he had talked with a faithful man very much concerning the temporal and worldly dominion and honour of Messiah, the Christian proved by the prophecy of Daniel and also by the prophecy of Isaiah, that Messiah should be evil entreated even of the Jews, and put to death as an offender: here the Jew being driven to a narrow shift, rather than he would apply and confess the truth, he rather confessed that there should come two Messiahs, of whom the one should be despised and the other magnified. And if ye be so minded, that rather than ye will depart from your Error, ye had liever confess more Christs, of which some be chosen and others reprobate—surely then, I think it is no faithful man's duty to reason with you.

Another argument gather they forth of God's prescience. But I will first borrow an argument of them concerning the prescience of God, and then, God willing, I shall answer to theirs. Paul sayeth;—Those which God knew before, He also ordained them before, that they should be like fashioned unto the shape of His Son, that He might be the first-begotten Son among many brethren: but God knew all men before; *Ergo*, He ordained all men before that they should be Christ's brethren, like fashioned unto Him. The first part of my argument is Paul's saying, the second ye cannot deny, and the conclusion is formally inferred of both the parts. Labour either to solute my argument without any ambiguity, whereby ye may satisfy others, or else forsake the error which it improveth.

Their argument concerning God's Praescience is this:— "God knoweth all things before they be done; God's prescience or foreknowledge is infallible; *Ergo*, Of necessity all things must come to pass as they do. Which being granted; They which perish, of necessity they do perish. If of necessity, then is it by God's ordinance, because so He willeth and so He hath ordained." This argument seemeth probable at the first blush. But I pray the reader to mark first, how these men put no difference betwixt the foreknowledge of God and His will. For they suppose that whatsoever God foreseeeth, He also willeth; but their supposition is untrue; for God foreseeeth the death of the sinner,

and yet He wills not the death of the sinner, but rather that he repent and live. Christ did foresee the destruction of Jerusalem, and yet He did not will it, for He wept and He wailed it. God did foresee the fall and final destruction of the Israelites, and yet would He not it. As He witnesseth Himself, saying, Wherefore will ye die, O ye house of Israel, seeing I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth?

Secondly, these men think that God's foreknowledge causeth all things to come to pass of necessity, which is also untrue. Foreknowledge of things past, of things present, and of things to come, dependeth of the thing that is known, and not the thing of knowledge. As, I know that Paul before he was called, he was a persecutor of Christ's church; but Paul was not a persecutor because I knew it, but I knew it because he was a persecutor. I know that in the month of July shall be harvest; yet shall not harvest be because I know so, but I know it because it shall be. Likewise, God did know that I should write this day; but yet did He not compel me to write, for I had liberty either to write or not to write: not because He knew that I should write, therefore did I write; but because I was to write, therefore knew He that I should write. Thus ye may see how they do err which affirm that God's foreknowledge causeth all things to come to pass of necessity. For as God doth foresee that men will do evil, so doth He also foresee that they may leave the evil undone; and as God foreseeeth that men will not do well, so He foreseeeth that they be not compelled thereto, but might do well if they list. As for example, Christ could and might have obtained more than twelve legions of angels, and yet God did know that He should not obtain them: also God did know that Christ should not pray for twelve legions of angels, and yet He might have prayed, as He sayeth Himself. Of this it is manifest, that notwithstanding the foreknowledge of God, things may come to pass otherwise than they do. Wherefore it followeth, that God's foreknowledge causeth no necessity. Pilate had power to crucify Christ, or to let Him go; which Christ denied not, but rather affirmed it, saying he had that power from above; and although Pilate did not deliver Christ, notwithstanding he might have done it. Ananias sold his possession, and yet he might not have sold it; he brought a part of the price thereof to the apostles, which he might have retained to him[self], as Peter witnesseth that the price thereof was in his own power. Many such examples may I bring forth, whereby it should appear manifest that, notwithstanding the foreknow-

102 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

ledge of God, things be done which might not be done, and things be not done which might be done.

Here I think it is good to answer to their objections which they collect of Peter's denying of his Master. "If these things which God foreseeeth to come to pass," say they, "may be left undone, then, notwithstanding that Christ did foresee that Peter should deny Him, yet was not Peter compelled thereto, but might have not denied Christ." I answer, that notwithstanding Christ did foresee that Peter should deny Him, yet was not Peter compelled thereto, but might have not denied Christ. "Well," say they, "then should Christ have been a liar, for He said that Peter should deny Him!" I answer, that notwithstanding that Christ so said, yet might Peter have not denied Him, and Christ notwithstanding should have been no liar. The like example have we in the first book of Samuel: David asked counsel at the Lord, If Saul would come to Keilah; and the Lord said, He will come down. Then said David, Will the men of Keilah deliver me, and the men that are with me, into the hands of Saul? And the Lord said, They will betray you. Then David with his men departed from Keilah, which when Saul heard, he left off from his enterprise, and came not to Keilah. Here we see that neither God's foreknowledge, which is also conform to His saying, neither yet His prophesying, did take liberty from Saul, from the men of Keilah, neither from David and his men; neither did Saul come to Keilah, neither the men of Keilah betrayed David, as the Lord had spoken. And David had liberty with his men to avoid the danger notwithstanding God had spoken it should come to pass. So all they had liberty, yea, even after God had pronounced what should be done. Insomuch, that their doings were plain contrary to the prophecy of God. And yet was God true, for He did foresee that if David did not depart from Keilah, using such liberty as God had given him, he with his men should be betrayed into the hands of Saul. And I pray you, Might not Peter, likewise using his liberty, avoid the bishop's house, and so never been tempted to deny Christ? Yes, I am sure, as well as David avoided Keilah.

But now to return to our purpose. If I shall grant that all things of mere Necessity must come to pass, according to the prescience and foreknowledge of God, then had Adam afore the transgression no Free will, but of mere Necessity did he offend, forasmuch as God did foresee his fall. Then had Christ no free will, for God did foresee all that Christ was to do. Then is God bound, Himself, and hath no liberty to do nor

The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity 103

leave undone that which He doeth, forasmuch as He foreseeh' all His own works: this belike you will make a goodly wise God! God save us from such dangerous and horrible errors, and give us steadfast and perfect faith to believe, not only that He is, but also that He is an omnipotent God, which freely after His own good pleasure doeth, and may do, or leave undone, whatsoever pleaseth Him.

The third argument gather they upon that which is written to the Romans, the ninth chapter:—Afore the children were born, that the purpose of God by Election might stand, it was said, The elder shall serve the younger: as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. For the true understanding of this scripture, we must know first that these words, The elder shall serve the younger, are not spoken of Jacob and Esau (for as touching the flesh, Esau did never serve Jacob), but they are spoken of two nations which were to come of them; as the Lord said to Rebecca, not two men, but, Two nations are in thy belly. And these words, Afore the children were born, are not to be referred to the sentence which followeth, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. For there was no such thing spoken afore their birth, as thou may plainly see in Genesis, but that was spoken many years after by the prophet Malachi; not of Jacob and Esau, but of two nations, of the Israelites and Edomites, as the prophet Malachi expoundeth; which we may well understand of the True Church and of the Malignant Church. If that had been spoken afore their birth, then had the Lord not said, Jacob I have loved and Esau I have hated, in the preterite tense; but, Jacob shall I love and Esau shall I hate, in the future tense; as in the other sentence He sayeth, The elder shall serve the younger, and not, The elder hath served the younger.

Now the Lord loved Jacob of His own bountiful goodness and free grace; Esau He hated because of his wickedness, for the Lord abhorred all wicked doers. As Moses sayeth, It is not for thy righteousness' sake, or for thy right heart, that thou goest to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations, the Lord thy God doth cast them out before thee, even to perform the word which the Lord thy God swore unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Here we see that the Israelites receive the land of promise, not for their own righteousness' sake, but only by the bountiful goodness of God. Again, the Canaanites are cast out of the same land, not because it was God's pleasure, or that He delighted in heir fall, but for their abominations which they committed

104 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

against God. So, that Jacob is beloved, it cometh of the free grace and goodness of God; and that Esau is hated, it cometh of his own evil deserving, conform to the saying of the Lord, Thy destruction, O Israel, is of thyself, and thy health cometh of Me.

Their fourth argument, Hath not the potter power over the clay, even of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour? Of this they infer, "that God hath ordained and made some to salvation, and some to destruction and damnation." But for the more perfect understanding of this place, afore thou go any further, read the xviii. chapter of Jeremiah, and thou shalt perceive this to be the meaning:—As the potter hath the clay in his hand, so hath God all men in His power; and as the potter breaketh the vessel wherein is found an incurable fault, so God destroyeth the man in whom there is found obstinate wickedness which cannot be amended. It is not the meaning of this place, that God, without any just cause, doth make any man to destruction. For as the potter maketh no vessel [in order] to break, yet notwithstanding he may, but he will not lose both his clay and his labour, but only breaketh such as will not frame to be good, notwithstanding he made them to be good, as every good artificer would [that] his work were good; so God created no man to lose him, but only loseth them which will not be good whom He created to be good: as the Lord sayeth, I planted thee a noble vine and a good root, whose seed is all faithful, how art thou then turned into bitter, unfruitful and strange grapes?

God would all men were good, and that all men should be saved; forasmuch as He is good Himself, and all that He maketh is good. But as the potter maketh of the same clay, some vessels to serve at the table, some in the kitchen or in the privy; so God hath some men to be in the body of Christ, as eyes, ears and hands, as princes, prophets, apostles; some to be as feet and other secret parts, as labourers and other of the inferior sort, for whom He hath not bestowed so many and so excellent gifts. Yet must thou understand, that it is not all one thing to be made to be broken, and to be made to dishonest uses; every vessel which is evil is broken, whether it be made to honest or dishonest uses, yea, though it were made of gold; and as it appeareth plainly in Jeremiah, where the Lord sayeth so:—Though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet of My right hand, yet will I pluck him off; and thereafter, This man Coniah shall be like an image robbed and torn in pieces. Hath a man anything

appointed for a more honest use than his signet? yet seest thou that if it become naught it shall be broken and destroyed. Again, every good vessel, whether it be made to honest or dishonest uses, it is kept, and not broken. Ask the potter, and he shall answer thee that he will be loath to break any vessel; but if any chance to be naught, he showeth his power in breaking of it. Ask the husbandman, and he shall answer thee that he planted no fruit-tree to be barren; but if it chance to be barren, he cutteth it down and planteth another instead of it. Ask the magistrate, and he shall answer thee that it is not his will to kill any of his subjects, for he would that they were all good; but if any become a thief and murderer, he showeth his power even over him in killing him. Even so sayeth God, I will not the death of a sinner, but rather that he convert and live. I will not that any man be evil, and therefore I forbid all evil, but if any man contrary to My commandment and will, of his own free choice and mind, refuse the good which he might have accepted, and doeth the evil which he might have left undone, then do I show my power over him, in that I cast him away like the sherds of a naughty pot, which serveth to no good use.

Where ye reply with, "That it lieth not in men's will or running, but in the mercy of God," I answer by the same sentence, That ye may both will and run; which is contrary to your whole purpose and doctrine; and yet, sayeth the apostle, our salvation dependeth of the mercy of God, for it is His free gift. The Gentiles, which for their wickedness were reject of God, in vain should they either will or run, without God extended His mercy towards them, as He doth now presently. Like as on the other side, the Jews which for their sins be now abject, in vain should they either will or run, without it pleased God to extend His mercy over them, as He shall do after that the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, as witnesseth Paul. For there we must understand, that when it pleased God to offer us His mercy, yet without we both will and run, we shall not obtain the reward; notwithstanding, neither for our willing nor running are we worthy to receive salvation, for it is the free gift of God, which he giveth to us, only for His own mercy's sake. God offered salvation to Jerusalem, not for the deserving, but of his mercy; yet obtained they, not salvation, because they would neither will nor run. As Christ sayeth, How often would I have gathered thy children, as the hen doth her chickens, and thou wouldest not! So

106 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

the scribes and the Pharisees made the counsel of God towards them of none effect, for they despised it; God's will was to save them, but they would neither will nor run, but keep still their old pace; so they perished. Wherefore unto our salvation is required chiefly the mercy of God, as the only sufficient and the efficient cause thereof, whereby we being unworthy and His enemies, be reconciled and received unto the fellowship of the saints. Secondly, is required that we both will and run, not as the cause, but rather as the effect and fruit of our reconciliation, declaring ourselves to be thankful for the benefits which we have freely without our merits received; otherwise the kingdom shall be taken from us again, and given to such as shall both will and run, bringing forth the fruits thereof.

Here, with great vehemence ye allege these words of Paul, Who hath been able to resist His will? of which saying ye infer "that God, without any cause known to us, hath reprobated and damned many, against which will, no man can resist." These words did Paul write, because he did not foresee that of his former sayings some devilish disposed persons would take occasion to burden God with unrighteousness. As ye do, making Him the author of evil; for ye say, "that God hath a secret will whereby He willeth the most part of the world to be condemned; which will, because it cannot be resisted, therefore of mere necessity, by the immutable decree of God, so many do perish." Further, ye thus affirming God to be the cause of damnation, only because it so hath pleased Him, ye cause many others to burst out and say:— Since His own will and pleasure no man is able to resist, let Him lay it on Himself, and not to us, if any sin be committed! And surely for my part, were it not I abhor your horrible doctrine, wherewith ye cruelly affirm God's ordinance to be the cause of damnation, I would not meddle further in this matter, but with reverence behold the works of God; forasmuch as I see, thanks be to God, no work of God wherein His mercy doth not clearly shine; but if your saying were true, then were His works full of cruelty, misery, damnation and destruction.

Now, as touching this saying, Who is able to resist His will? we must learn what is God's will. If you ask the Lord, He will answer you:—It is not My will that any man sin, neither is it My will that the sinner die, but rather that he amend and live; but if he will not amend, but continue in sin, him will I punish, and him may I also

The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity 107

punish, having power above all men, as the potter over the clay. Wherefore, when any man suffereth justly for his trespass, he ought not to accuse God and say, Who can resist His will? as [if] God willed absolutely the destruction of His creatures, as ye teach. God wills all men to repent and amend, and also that they who will not repent and amend be punished. This His will is just and full of mercy, against which will is no man able to resist; for either must they repent and amend, or else they must suffer. As the potter would gladly make of his clay a good vessel, but if it will not frame he breaketh it and casteth it away; and as the king would all his subjects to be obedient unto his laws, yet the unworthiest slave in his dominion hath power to break the king's laws, notwithstanding, when he suffereth for his offence, the king's will is fulfilled; even so, though God both willeth and commandeth us to observe His law, yet have we power to offend against the former part of His will, otherwise we should all observe the will of God and be saved, and so should there be no reprobate; but when for our disobedience we be punished, the will of God is fulfilled; which will is both good and just, and therefore ought no man to accuse it and say, Who is able to resist His will? no more than clay, when it framed not to be a good vessel, doth accuse the potter of breaking it.

As for the sentence of Paul, God willing to show His wrath, to make His power known, suffered with long patience the vessels of wrath ordained to damnation, etc., it is direct contrary to your error, notwithstanding ye abuse it to maintain the same. For seeing, as Paul sayeth, God suffered them with great patience, He is sorry for them; if He be sorry, then hath He no pleasure in their destruction; and that wherein He hath no pleasure, He willeth it not; and that which He willeth not, He doth not ordain it. Wherefore seeing God suffered them with great patience to fall, He hath not ordained them to fall. Thou despisest (sayeth St. Paul) the riches of God's goodness and patience and long sufferance, not knowing that the kindness of God leadeth thee to repentance. Behold here, the cause why God suffered with long patience is, that we should repent and amend. If they had been absolutely "ordained to damnation afore the foundation of the world," then God knew they should never repent and amend; to what purpose then suffered He them with long patience?

Notwithstanding this is plain enough, and conform to the

108 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

Word, yet ye despising whatsoever is contrary to your mind, ye stick fast to the literal sense of those words, Ordained to damnation, which words be spoken after the common manner of speaking; as they be called after the common phrase of speech, Ordained to damnation—Whose end is damnation. We use to say of a man that is cast to be hanged, This man was born to be hanged, notwithstanding it was not his mother's mind to bear him to be hanged. Such phrases have we very many in the scriptures, as Exodus xi., Pharaoh hearkened not unto you, that many wonders may be done in the land of Egypt. Forasmuch as the wonders done in Egypt were grievous to Pharaoh, he did not disobey [with] the intent that more wonders which were plagues should come upon him; but this was the issue of his obstinate inobedience. Exodus xix., Whosoever giveth his seed unto Moloch, let him be slain, because he hath given of his seed unto Moloch to defile My sanctuary and to pollute My holy name. The Israelites did not sacrifice their children to Moloch [in order] to defile the Lord's sanctuary and to dishonour the name of God, but to worship Moloch; notwithstanding that was the issue and end of their sacrifice unto Moloch, that the Lord's sanctuary was defiled and His name dishonoured. Thereby Jeroboam made the two golden calves, whereby he made Israel sin, to anger the Lord God of Israel. The cause why Jeroboam made the two golden calves, and his intention, was not to anger God; but he thought that if the people should go up and do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, their hearts should return to Rehoboam king of Judah, wherefore he made two golden calves to make the people sacrifice at Bethel, whereupon followed the wrath of God. [Again], Of their silver and gold have they made them images to bring themselves to destruction. The Israelites made them images, thinking thereby to be saved and not destroyed; yet their destruction followed thereof. Jeremiah sayeth;—O my mother, alas, that ever thou didst bear me to be a brawler and a striker of the whole land. Jeremiah's mother did not bear him to that intent, but yet this was the end. And in the New Testament:—If any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together to condemnation. The Corinthians came not together to the intent to purchase thereby condemnation, but of their abuses in coming together followed their condemnation.

By these places and many others, we may understand the phrase of scripture, That they be ordained to damnation:—

The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity 109

Whose end is condemnation; which they receive not by the will of God, which would all men to be saved, but as a just reward for their sins. As the traitor which suffereth ought not to impute his death to the sentence which the judge justly hath given against him, but to his own offence and treason; so when we for our sins be ordained to punishment, we ought not to impute it to God's foreordination, which is both good and full of mercies, but to our own offences. And seeing, as St. Paul sayeth, God suffered them with great patience, their damnation cometh not by the counsel and will of God, for which He is sorry, as He sayeth by the prophet Jeremiah, I have been sorry for thee so long that I am weary. Will ye say that God wearieth Himself, suffering and sorrowing for them whom He had reprobated afore the world? Surely, I think, that though ye hitherto have unadvisedly said so, ye will from henceforth say so no more; which God grant in time, that ye weary not the Lord also with sorrowing for you.

Now must we declare the saying of St. Luke, So many as were ordained unto life did believe; where we must understand, that as they that will not obey the truth are called in the scriptures, Ordained to damnation, as is sufficiently proved before, so they which willingly receive the truth, and couple the word with faith working by charity, are called, Ordained to life. Where ye do reply so, "Predestination is without any condition"; I grant, Predestination to life is the very free gift of God without any condition. Notwithstanding, we cannot come to life, but by the way which leadeth unto life. As he which received the one talent of his master, received it of a free gift without his deserving, but because he did not walk in the way appointed by his master, his talent was taken from him again: so afore, by the free benefit of his master he was chosen unto life; so now, because he did not walk in the way which leadeth unto life, he is ordained unto damnation. The prodigal son is received of his father, not for his deserving, but of the free goodness and benevolence of his father; yet is it required of him, that he walk hereafter as an obedient son, which if he did not, the latter fall should be worse than the first.

Predestination therefore is the mere gift of God afore the foundation of the world, at the which time nothing could be commended unto us; yea, afore we either have faith, or else by hearing of the word we may have faith, no spiritual commandment is given us; but when by hearing we may

110 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

receive faith, then is the way of salvation opened unto us, in which we must walk if we will be saved. And yet followeth it not, we must walk in the way which leadeth unto salvation; *ergo*, for walking the way of salvation we are chosen and accepted. For St. Paul sayeth, I am guilty to myself in nothing, but therefore I am not justified. [It is as] if a learned physician seeing one in danger of death, whom he can and may help, offereth physic to the patient, able to restore him to his health, and therewith prescribed the patient a diet. Now that the physician giveth physic to the patient, it cometh only of his own goodness; but if the patient do not order himself according to the prescript of the physician, the physic shall not help him. And though he observe good diet, yet ought he not to repute the receiving of his health to himself, but to the physician; for though it lieth in the patient's power to hinder his health, yet it is not in his power to give himself health. So Christ, our physician, offereth healthful physic to us all, and therewith prescribeth our diet, which if we do not observe, the physic shall not avail us. And though we observe it, yet ought we not to attribute our health to ourselves, but to the liberality of our physician, Christ, which of His mere mercy hath made us whole.

Wherefore, to return to our argument, they are ordained unto life, so many as will gladly walk in the way which leadeth unto life, that is, true obedience, and they do believe, as St. Luke sayeth.

The Second Error of the Careless by Necessity.

"The Elect, though they sin grievously, yet are they never out of the favour and election of God, neither can they by any means finally perish. So that Adam when he transgressed, and David committing adultery and homicide, were favoured even then and beloved of God, and never out of election, neither could they be. Again, the Reprobate, as Saul and Judas, were never in the favour and election of God, neither could they, nor none other reprobate, attain unto salvation."

The Confutation of the Second Error.

Here you see how they divide all men into two sorts, one Elected or chosen, which by no means can perish, and the other rejected or Reprobate before the world, so that by no means can they be saved. What can the devil wish his members to teach more for the advancement of his kingdom

The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity 111

than this? What can be invented to provoke men to live a careless and libertine life more, than if they be persuaded that neither well-doing availeth or pleaseth God, nor evil-doing doth hinder unto salvation? This is as much as if one should counsel the patient to refuse all healthful physic and good diet, and so wilfully to be the occasion of his own death. "For if they be" say they "of the Elect sort, though they do not commit theft, fornication, adultery, murder, or any other sin, yet be they still so beloved and favoured of God, that they cannot finally perish. And if they be of the Reprobate sort," say they, "neither repentance, amendment of life, abstaining from evil, neither fasting, prayer, alms, nor other good deed can avail; for they be so hated of God before the world, that by no means they can obtain His favour, but of mere necessity, do what they can, they must perish." Seeing it is so, sayeth the natural man, let us set the cock on hoop, and let the world slide, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow shall we die. So the people sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play.

Why, masters, have ye no conscience thus to cause the people of God to sin? See ye not how ye be led with the same spirit that Balaam was led withal, when he counselled to give occasion of sin to the people? I know ye will answer that "I mean not so." Mean what ye list, and do what ye can, yet this is the issue and fruit of your doctrine, and whosoever is thus corrupted by you, without he repent, he shall die the death, but God shall require his blood of your hands. Mark well your disciples: how many of them endeavour themselves to bring forth the fruits of repentance, how many of them seek for power to crucify the flesh with the lusts and concupiscences thereof? How many of them can we perceive by their conversation, that they have cast off the old man and put on the new man, walking sincerely in their vocation and the true fear of God? But if they accustom to frequent your congregations, as the Papists do the Mass, then be they "faithful brethren!" I hold my peace of that ye use to have respect of persons, preferring the wealthy, which if they be liberal, though they be drowned in many vices, you use to help up such sores with this saying, "There is none during this life that can be known to be in the Election, be he never so virtuous, not any out of the Election, be he never so unrighteous." After this manner ye do heal them up, so that they need not to endeavour themselves to bring forth the fruits of lively faith, for the

surest token of their Election they think to be, that they be of your congregation. But Christ sayeth, In that shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if you do whatsoever I command you: and again, Ye shall know them by their fruits; for a good man out of the treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things. Yet ye say "No man can be known to be either in the Election or out of the Election during this life"; and for proof hereof ye allege the saying of Paul, The devil doth transform himself into an angel of light. To which I briefly answer, that God doth never transform Himself into an angel of darkness; wherefore, as long as ye walk in darkness ye be not of God. But thus ye take the most shameful men by the hand, flattering them, so that they cannot return from their wickedness; whereby it appeareth that ye be not sent from God, for ye by your doctrine give occasion to the people to sin. And the Lord sayeth, If they had been in My counsel, they had turned My people from their evil ways and wicked imaginations. But, Such lips, such lettuce; Such disciples, such masters; for your chief Apollos be persecutors, on whom the blood of Servetus crieth a vengeance; so doth the blood of others more, whom I could name.* But forasmuch as God hath partly already revenged their blood, and served some of their persecutors with the same measure wherewith they measured to others,† I will make no mention of them at this time. And to declare their wickedness not to have proceeded of ignorance and human infirmity, but of indured malice, they have, for a perpetual memory of their cruelty, set forth books, affirming it to be lawful to persecute and put to death such as dissent from them in controversies of religion, whom they call "blasphemers of God."§ Notwithstanding they, afore they came into authority, they were of another judgment, and did both say and write, that no man ought to be persecuted for his conscience sake; but now they are not only become persecutors, but also they have given, as far as lieth in them, the sword into the hands of bloody tyrants. Be

* Joan of Kent, burned 1550.

† Latimer and Ridley burned 1555, Cramner burned 1556.

§ Hooper, Sermon upon Jonas, 1550 A.D.; Becon, Invective against Swearing, 1543, Catechism 1553; Hutchinson, Image of God, 1550:—"If there be any suspected to be an Anabaptist . . . give knowledge thereof to the temporal magistrates; which, for civil considerations, may punish him with imprisonment, death, or otherwise, &c.

these, I pray you, the sheep whom Christ sent forth in the midst of wolves? can the sheep persecute the wolf? doth Abel kill Cain? doth David (though he might) kill Saul? Shortly, doth he which is born of the Spirit kill him which is born after the flesh? Mark how ye be fallen into most abominable tyranny, and yet ye see it not. Thus am I constrained even of conscience to write, that if it shall please God to awake you out of your dream, that ye may perceive how one error hath drowned you in more errors, and hath brought you to a sleeping security, that when ye walk even after the lusts of your hearts, thirsting after blood and persecuting poor men for their conscience sake, ye be blinded, and see not yourselves, but say, "Tush, we be predestinate; whatsoever we do, we are certain we cannot fall out of God's favour." Awake therefore, and look what danger ye be in, and how by your poisoned doctrine ye infect the children of God, and draw them to a secure, idle, and careless life.

Now to that which ye say, "That Adam and David, even in committing of idolatry, homicide, all kind of wickedness, they be still in God's favour." Mark I pray you, how the saying of the prophet Zachariah [really Malachi ii. 17.] is verified in you. In this, saith he, ye grieve the Lord, that ye say, They that do evil are good in the sight of God, and such please Him. Can there be anything more manifestly spoken against your error? And truly it seemeth to me, that ye would entice the people by this doctrine to sin; for if "the Elect lose not the favour of God by sin," neither the Reprobate; forasmuch so ye say "[they] never were nor can be in His favour," so that they cannot lose that which they have not. Who needeth to fear, then, to lose the favour of God by sin? it is no matter then what we do! But contrary to your doctrine, we be taught by the Holy Ghost in the word, That God hateth all works of iniquity, and he that committeth sin is of the devil. And doth God favour them that be members of the devil? Paul sayeth, No unclean person hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Then was Adam, when he transgressed, not of the kingdom of God, for he was an unclean person, defiled with sin. If he was not of the kingdom of God, then was he of the kingdom of the devil, and so was he out of the Election. Even as Adam did, saith the Lord, so have they broken My covenant and set Me at naught. If Adam, in breaking the Lord's covenant, setting God at naught, was still beloved of God, then may we say with the wicked as it is written;—It is but lost labour

114 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

to serve the Lord, what profit have we in keeping His commandments? Therefore may we say that the proud are happy, and that they which deal with ungodliness are set up. Such a spirit have ye careless libertines, as your doctrine well declareth. Did not God threaten Adam, that in what day soever he should eat of the fruit, he should die the death, not only corporal but also eternal? They which forsake the commandments of God, forsake God Himself, as the prophet sayeth, They are not the Lord's, for they have unfaithfully forsaken Him. Wherefore Adam, when he forsook God, was not the Lord's, but the servant of death and sin. To whomsoever ye commit yourselves as servants to obey, saith Paul, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether it be of sin unto death, or obedience unto righteousness. And again, If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And neither Adam nor David were led by the spirit of Christ when they sinned, for the spirit of Christ dwelleth not in such as forsake Him and obey the devil. And, Except Christ, saith the apostle, dwell in you, ye are cast away. Then Adam and David were castaways, that is, reprobates, when they sinned; for neither were they in Christ, nor Christ in them; in whom the Election of God was and is.

But to what purpose should I thus contend with you that Adam did fall out of the Election, seeing in this ye agree not yourselves; for your congregation which is at Geneva, in the Confession of their faith, say, "That of the lost sons of Adam, God elected some to life, and the rest he refused." Either improve their belief, or else confess with them that all the children of Adam were lost by transgression. If they were lost, then were they out of the Election with their father Adam, from the transgression until the promise was made. Therefore, sayeth Paul, damnation came of one sin unto condemnation; and in another place, Like as by Adam all die, even so by Christ shall all be made alive. Here doth the apostle witness plainly, that we all by Adam do die. St. John sayeth, He that believeth not is already condemned, the wrath of God abideth on him. Then were Adam and David, and all such workers of iniquity, for that time that they sinned, already condemned, being void of faith. And could they be in the state of condemnation and Election both together? Hearken what followeth;—And the wrath of God abideth on him; as Adam from the transgression unto the promise felt the force of the wrath of God. Thus we see, that Adam and David and all other when they sinned, they

be out of the love and favour and Election of God; until they repent and be born anew, for otherwise can they never enter into the kingdom of heaven. Again, St. John saith, Ye know that no manslayer hath eternal life abiding in him. David was a man killer, wherefore he had not eternal life abiding in him. But during the time of his wickedness he was the child of death, as the prophet Nathan showed him, David giving judgment against himself. Without faith it cannot be that any man should please God: Adam and David when they sinned, they were without faith; then pleased they not God: if they pleased Him not, they displeased Him; so that they were fallen from the love and favour of God.

But if the Scriptures will not satisfy you, then must you be beaten with your own rod. For if I grant you that all men did not fall out of God's holy Election unto condemnation by Adam's transgression, it followeth thereupon that the coming of Christ, His precious death and passion, is superfluous, vain and of none effect. So by your perverse doctrine ye will infect Christians with the chief error wherewith the Jews be deluded. That is, they esteem it a great madness to say that Christ should suffer death for the offence committed by Adam; even so may I collect of your error. For what needeth Christ to die for them, when neither Adam's transgression, neither their own, could make them fall from God's Election? But now I will more largely dilate this argument. Election was afore the world, when there was no sin; and the promise of Christ was made since the world was created, because of sin; for had not sin been, we needed no new promise, being already just and holy images of God. Now, if the Elect did not fall out of the Election by Adam's transgression, then need they no Redeemer, being already safe by reason of the Election, in which they were afore sin, and remain still in the same: because, as you say, "the Elect neither did nor can fall out of the Election." Then seeing the Elect be safe and whole, they need no physician; neither came Christ to call the righteous, but sinners; wherefore the death of Christ, as concerning them, is in vain, they being safe already by Election. The like argument useth Paul to the Galatians:—If righteousness cometh by the Law, then Christ died in vain. If the Elect be still in the favour of God, what need they of Christ to reconcile them to the Father, in whose favour they are already? Now as touching the other sort whom ye call Reprobates, you say they can by no manner of means be saved, yea, and that Christ died not

116 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

for them. Then was Christ's death altogether in vain, for His death, you say, belongeth not to the Reprobate, and the Elect have no need of it! Is not this godly gear?

The Apostle sayeth, God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctifying of the Spirit, and through believing the truth. Here we do learn that they which be chosen to salvation, they be sanctified by the Spirit, and believe the truth. And that such may fall, it appeareth by that which is written in the Epistle to the Hebrews:—How much more suppose you shall he be punished which treadeth under feet the Son of God, and counteth the blood of the testament, wherewith he was sanctified, as an unholy thing, and doth dishonour the spirit of grace? Also he exhorteth them not to cast away their confidence, and not to withdraw themselves unto damnation.

[Here follow long expositions of Ephesians ii. 12, 19; Hebrews vi. 4; 2 Corinthians vi. 1; 2 Peter ii. 20; James v. 19; 2 Timothy ii. 25, 26; Revelation ii, iii; with the general conclusion:—] Thus it becometh us all to talk reverently of God's Election, so far only as we feel by experience the Spirit of God work in us; so that when we feel the Spirit of God increase in us, we may be assured that we are in His favour, but when we be led away from one vice to another, as David was in abusing Bathsheba and killing Uriah, let us not presume then to be beloved of Him which hated all works of iniquity.

Often times ye use this saying, " God's Election was afore the foundation of the world without any condition; wherefore, they which are Elect, they be elect without any condition by the immutable decree of God's goodness, so that they can never fall out of the said Election, otherwise God's Election were not certain." To the which I answer, That God's holy Election is, without any condition, sure and certain in Christ Jesus, without whom there is neither election nor salvation. Further, man is made sure in the Election by the promise of God in Christ Jesus; of which promise, when he is made partaker, he entereth in covenant with God; but when he breaketh the covenant he forsaketh the promise, and when he forsaketh the promise he refuseth Christ, in refusing Christ he falleth out of the Election; notwithstanding the Election abideth sure in Christ. [Proof developed from Adam, Cain, Ham, Israel quitting Egypt but perishing in the wilderness, Balaam, Saul, Solomon, Jeroboam, Judas.] All these above rehearsed, and many more, received the grace of God

in vain. And therefore did God cast them away, whom afore He had chosen, even as He did Jerusalem, of whom it is so written;—I will cast off this city of Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said My name shall be there. For though God of His mere mercy hath chosen us in Christ Jesus to be heires of eternal life, yet if we refuse Him, He will refuse us; and if we deny Him, He will deny us. And so as the prophet sayeth, Our own wickedness shall reprove us, and our turning away shall condemn us. And therefore sayeth the Lord by His prophet Ezekiel, If the righteous turn away from his righteousness and do iniquity, all the righteousness that he hath done shall not be thought upon; but in the fault that he hath offended withal, and in the sin that he hath done, he shall die.

This saying,* with many other manifest testimonies of the scriptures, ye toss and turn upside down, seeking shifts to maintain your errors; whereby you declare yourself to be of the number of them, of whom it is written in the same place, which do say;—Tush, the way of the Lord is not indifferent. Ye will not that the Lord judge according to this way set forth in His word, but of necessity by an immutable decree, to save a certain [number], and of necessity to condemn all the rest. Ye must not so read God's word, studying rather to teach the Holy Ghost, than to learn your duty of Him, seeking means rather to confirm your preconceived error than to avoid it. [So on for some 600 words].

To prove that they which be once elect can never fall, they allege this saying of Christ:—There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great miracles and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible, the very Elect should be deceived. Of this they gather, that it is not possible that the Elect should be deceived, and this conditional, If it were possible &c., affirmeth nothing. But admitting it be so, we must understand that the thing which is very hard and difficult to be done, is called impossible in the Scripture; as in that place, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for the rich to enter into the kingdom of God. This is called impossible, because it is very hard and difficult to be done; yet be there rich men which inherit the kingdom of heaven . . . Even so it is impossible, that is, it is a very hard thing, that the Elect which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, should be deceived; yet notwithstanding

* Knox prints here, "This say you," which makes nonsense.

118 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

it may come to pass. [Cases discussed of Eve, the Thessalonians, Ephesians, Romans, the man of God from Judah].

There be also many Elect which fall away, not because they are deceived, but willingly and purposely; as Judas was not deceived, but wilfully refused the grace of God. Also Ahitophel [. . . Balaam, Solomon &c]. . . . Likewise they which be sanctified by the Spirit of God, and sprinkling of blood of the testament, they may tread the Son of God under foot.

The Third Error of the Careless by Necessity.

“ God hath two manner of wills, one revealed will, and a secret will, which is only known to Himself. By God’s revealed will, men should not come to nought: but they which perish, do perish by His secret will, in respect of God’s commandment. It was not God’s will that Adam should sin: but in respect of God’s secret will, God willed Adam to fall.”

The Confutation of the Third Error.

. . . I marvel much where ye have found out this manner of doctrine, for neither Moses and the Prophets, neither Christ and His Apostles, use any such manner of doctrine. . . . How can ye say this is God’s “secret will”? If it was God’s secret will that Adam should fall, and you knew it, then it is both secret and unsecret, both revealed and unrevealed, both known and unknown . . . For who can know what the will of God is? We must submit ourselves with all humility to the Word, and there with great reverence search out such things as are written for our comfort and edification, which we cannot duly understand without the Spirit of God to teach us; as it is written, O Lord, who can have knowledge of Thy understanding and meaning, except Thou give him wisdom, and send Thy Holy Ghost from above? [Wisdom of Solomon, ix. 17] &c., &c.

“ But we know,” say you, “ even by the Word [Proverbs xxx., Isaiah viii.], that God hath a secret will, whereby He worketh all that pleaseth Him very well.” And can you prove thereby that God hath two wills? God hath revealed so much of His will as is profitable for us to know; the rest, which is neither necessary nor meet for us to know, He hath not revealed. Is it therefore another will? or is that which is not revealed contrary to that which is revealed? Then there shall be contrariety in God; which is false. If God, in respect of His revealed will, willed not that Adam should

fall, but in respect of His secret will, He willed Adam should fall; then did God will two contraries: which is impossible. Was there ever any such monstrous doctrine taught? God abhorreth a double heart, which speaketh one thing and thinketh another; and yet abhor you not to charge God with that which He cannot abide in His creatures; that is, that He should speak one thing, as that Adam should not have fallen, and think and will the contrary, that Adam should have fallen.

The reason wherewith you go about to persuade this to be of truth is very mean:—"If a man (say you) could do anything contrary to God's will, then were not God omnipotent; wherefore, whatsoever is done, it must needs be done by the will of God, whose will no man can resist." I answer, that God is goodness itself, His will is always good; yet man is apt to do, and may do evil contrary to God's will: notwithstanding God remaineth omnipotent, suffering men to do evil, whom He might destroy before he did the evil, if so it pleased Him. Pharaoh [discussed at very great length closing thus:—] God suffered the heart of Pharaoh to be hardened, or left him in the hardness of his heart; which appeareth to be as of that which is written, Exodus the tenth chapter, How long refuseth thou to submit thyself unto Me, to let My people go? By this we see that the will of God was, that Pharaoh should let the people go. Secondly, in that Pharaoh did not submit himself to God, that his mind was not conform to God's mind. Thirdly, in that he refused to let the people go, it was his own deed and act, and not God's: for if I should grant that it was God's will, that he should refuse to let the people go, then did he submit himself to the will of the Lord; which is contrary to the Word, then should God and he have been both of one mind. And the will of God is always good and just, which you cannot deny. Then "Pharaoh refusing to let the people go, did well and justly, forasmuch as it was God's will he should do so"; wherefore Pharaoh ought not to be punished for this good and just deed! These and such like inconveniences can you not escape, affirming Pharaoh's heart to have been actually indured of God.

As to the sentence which ye allege:—God maketh hard-hearted whom He will, and of whom He will He hath mercy—this place hath been very unreasonably wrested of some of you, so that thereby you have burdened God to be the cause of condemnation, who at His pleasure receiveth or

120 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

refuseth such as have either of pain or pleasure deserved nothing at all. God forbid that any man should conceive such a phantasy of God! But we must first learn how God lightened all men that came into this world; which light whoso refuseth, him the Lord by long sufferance, with bountiful benefits and fatherly corrections, doth call to repentance. But if we, loving darkness better than light, will utterly refuse light, or after we have been by the goodness of God partakers of God's grace, do forsake the covenant of the Lord, then hath He mercy on whom He will, and that for His own sake; and others He maketh hard-hearted, that is, He giveth them over to their own heart's lusts. So that the cause of their induration is not the will and pleasure of God, which doeth nothing without a just cause, but their obstinate wickedness, which will not be reformed. These suffer justly, and the other receive grace by the mercy of God, which may, when He will, have mercy on whom He will, and that besides His covenant.

That place of the book of the Kings—The Lord commandeth Shimei to curse David—I understand so: Forasmuch as God is the author of all goodness, and of no evil, He gave not a wicked mind to Shimei; but, willing to exercise His servant David under the cross, and finding Shimei a naughty and evil-minded man, specially towards David, He gave him the bridle; which being left by God, he, by the enticement of the devil, which was already in his heart, did curse David. [&c. &c.]

An argument you make in that place of Genesis, where Joseph sayeth unto his brethren, God sent me hither for your lives' sake; and thereafter, It was not you that sent me hither, but God, which hath made me a father unto Pharaoh. Of this do you gather, "that the wicked deed which Joseph's brethren did in selling him, was the Lord's deed and secret will." But for so much as the patriarchs here committed double sin, first grieved their father, and secondly they did commit the greatest kind of theft, that is, to sell a man's child from him, which by the law ought to be punished with death: therefore may we see, that this deed was not done by God's will. . . . This to be so, it is plainly proved by the latter chapter, where Joseph sayeth unto his brethren, You thought evil over me, but God hath turned it unto good, to do as it is come to pass to-day. Mark well what is here ascribed unto Joseph's brethren, and what unto God: they thought evil, and God turned it to good.

The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity 121

Then their minds and God's mind were not all one; wherefore it was not God's will that they should thus do wickedly. [&c. &c.]

Another proof bring you of that which is written, Reg. 4—God moved David to number Israel and Judah. To which I answer that which is written I Par. 21.—Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number the people. I am certain that if it were not for this manifest scripture, you would attribute the wicked provocation of the devil to God. But here we may see a great light to understand many other places of the scriptures, which seemeth to affirm God to be author of any evil; for by these two places we may see that God is called to be the author of the thing which He suffered. . . . Thus we may see a great difference between the will and the permission of God. A notable saying we have in the prophecy of Jeremiah [xxxii. 35] against this error, which teacheth that sin is committed, not only by the permission of God, but also against His will:—They have (sayeth he) builded high places for Baal to vow their sons and daughters unto Moloch, which I never commanded them, neither came it ever in My thought to make Judah sin with such abomination. Here we see that Judah committed that which was contrary to God's "revealed will"—for I never commanded them (sayeth He)—and against His "secret will"—for it came never in My thought (sayeth He). Then did they sin by the permission of God against His will:—thy ways and thy thoughts brought thee to this, sayeth the Lord. [&c. &c.]

To that which ye allege of the prophet Isaiah—harden the hearts of this people, &c—. . . . The office of a prophet was to shew them the hardness of their hearts; so that when He sayeth, Harden their hearts, it as much as, Shew and declare unto them the hardness of their hearts. The like phrase of speech have we in Leviticus xiii.,—If the priest see that the scab is grown abroad in the skin, the priest shall make him unclean. . . . So sayeth the Lord to Jeremiah:—Drive this people away that they may go' out of My sight; some to death, some to the sword, some to hunger, some to captivity. This was not the office of the prophet which the Chaldeans executed, but the prophet was here commanded to shew, that for their wickedness they should be driven away. [&c. &c.]

They which affirm and teach that "God hath ordained men afore the foundation of the world to be damned, so

122 The Confutation of the Errors of the Careless by Necessity

that by no means they can be saved, for such is His secret will," notwithstanding He declareth the contrary in His Word, they must needs have an evil opinion of God, and therefore ought all men of duty to abhor their devilish doctrine. And because I have said that they have an evil opinion of God, I have added here a description of these Careless Libertines' God, conform to their doctrine in all points, and a description of the true God; whereby it may appear even unto the simple how abominable their doctrine and opinion in this matter is.

The Properties of the god of the Careless by Necessity.

Their god's wrath exceedeth all his works, for he hath reprobated the most part of the world afore the foundation of the world. He is slow unto mercy, and ready unto wrath; for he will not be entreated to save any of them whom he hath reprobated afore, but of necessity, do what they can, they must be damned. Neither is he omnipotent, which may do and leave undone what pleaseth him; for he is bound by his own absolute ordinance and infallible foresight to do only all things as they be done. And because it so pleased him to show his power and strength, he stirred up Pharaoh and many more to do wickedly. He giveth wicked commandment and evil thoughts to Shimei and many others; and thereafter plagued them for their labour, only because they were wicked instruments to work his will; for he made them naughty vessels to commit all abomination, neither could they choose but work wickedly, being his vessels of wrath. He hath two wills, one contrary to another, for he sayeth one thing and thinketh another. He is worse than the devil, for not only tempteth he to do evil, but compelleth by immutable fore-ordinance and secret will, without which nothing can be done. He is the Prince of Darkness, for from him come evil thoughts, which are darkness.

The Properties of the True God.

God, His mercy exceedeth all His works. He hath made man like to His own image in Christ Jesus, in whom is no damnation. He is slow unto wrath and ready to forgive; He will be entreated of all, so that He biddeth all men everywhere to repent, and offereth faith to all men. He is omnipotent, and may do, and leave undone, whatsoever shall be His good pleasure. Neither is it His pleasure and will that either Pharaoh, Shimei, or any other, do sin and come to destruction;

for He willeth the death of no creature, but willeth all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He hath but one will, which is ever only good, revealed in His Word to them that fear Him and keep His commandments: neither hath He any secret will contrary to this, but will perform whatsoever goeth out of His mouth. He tempteth no man to sin; He is the Father of light, and cometh to destroy the works of the Careless Libertines' god, for He abhorreth all wickedness, and all wicked doers.

As these gods be of contrary nature, so do they beget children of a contrary nature. The false god begetteth unmerciful, proud, ambitious, and envy-ful children, bloody persecutors of others for their conscience sake, evil speakers, impatient, contentious and seditious children. And they be like unto their father, in that they speak one thing with their mouth, and think another with their heart. They can never be without filthy thoughts and wicked motions, for such poison do they receive of their father.

The true God begetteth merciful, humble, lowly and loving children, abhorring from blood, persecuting no man, good speakers, patient, and detesting all contentions, chiding and brawling. And they be like unto their Father, in that whatsoever they speak with their mouth, they think with their heart. They be always moved with good thoughts and godly revelations, for such grace receive they plenteously of their Father.

Judge now, gentle reader, uprightly. And here I commit thee to God, beseeching Him to open the eyes of thy mind, that thou mayest know the truth in this, and in all other matters necessary to thy salvation.

And as for you, Careless Men, you ought to take it in good worth, whatsoever I have said. First, because it is truth. Secondly, because ye hold that "all things be done of mere necessity," then have I written this of necessity.