

Editor’s Note: The following information has been gleamed from the 1860 edition of The Earthen Vessel and Christian Record. These and the subsequent letters were published in the 19th century but have been long out of print. The location within the Vessel is given for reference. As I noted elsewhere the July to December 1859 letters are missing. These pick up again at the beginning of 1860. I have added additional information and notes by myself. Richard C. Schadle

Letters to Theophilus on Sovereignty and Election

With extensive additional information and comments

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The Letters to Theophilus being the substance of James Wells theology:

The sovereignty of God Letter 1¹ Earthen Vessel Vol. 16 January 1860,
pages 22ff

My good Theophilus

Although there **be a** slight analogy between the sovereignty of God and an earthly monarch, yet remember that after all, the analogy is rather in the relation of government, in which God appears to man, than in the sovereignty in the abstract; for there cannot by possibility be any human prerogative like unto the abstract and absolute sovereignty of the Most High. And one object of this letter shall be to show to you, the impropriety, and I may say *blasphemy*, of judging the sovereign rights of the Most High by laws which belong simply to man; nor must you be moved by the superstition of men, who would fain persuade you that the sovereignty of God, standing in the midst of the garden of the Gospel, is a tree of forbidden fruit. We must not go near it, lest we die; this hedging off a part of God's truth, smells too strong of Rome to be listened to by Theophilus. You are made I hope of better material than that, and believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable; and even those who would forbid **us** to take all the Bible, and would try to blind us to the sovereignty of God in judgment, and would keep us looking at the side where there is only mercy, yet even these admit that there *is a* hell, that hell is eternal, and that the Most High could have prevented the fall both of angels and of men. But he has not prevented those dire events, yet we are not to enquire too far into these judgments and mysteries, and although the Bible occupies actually a *larger space* in setting forth judgments than in

¹ One or more letters on this subject appear to have been in the later half of the 1859 E.V. which I am missing

describing mercies, and the Scripture (*all Scripture*) is written for our learning, yet we must not search too deeply. Well, I must set such a sentiment down to human infirmity.

But let us leave this, and proceed with our subject, which is to show you that there is none to whom we can liken God; for it will very easily and very soon appear, that where God is righteous, man, place him something apparently analogous, would not only be unrighteous, but would be execrated by all the world, and yet in those very things God must be received with a consciousness of his undisputed right to do as he pleases, and he must in those awful matters (if we will profit by what is revealed), be spoken of with fear and trembling.

Let us then just humanize upon the fall of man, the state of the world, and the destiny of the lost.

Here then is a man with a family, but an enemy comes, and he sees that enemy coming. The enemy comes, draws them all into crime, makes criminals of them all; they are taken, tried, and condemned, and sent to the penal colony for life. But a father finds a ransom for a part of them, but leaves the others to perish, but yet he has it in his power to redeem, release, and save the others also. He sits down perfectly happy with those he has redeemed, but leaves the others in remediless woe; what would the world say to such a man? Would he not in the first be designated everything that was bad, for not preventing his children so falling? But above all, in leaving part of them, not because he has not power to release them, but simply because he does not choose to release them. What should we all say of such a man! why the worst word we could say would be too good for him; and suppose this same man should tell us that he once loved all these banished ones, foresaw their fatal, and final ruin, *loved* them, yet would not move a hand to prevent their becoming criminals. Should we believe he ever loved them? I think not.

Now my good Theophilus, the great God saw the enemy coming, knew that he would succeed, and could have prevented the fall, but did not; could release both fallen angels and lost man, but does not; not because he cannot, but because he will not, and men tell us that as the creation was pronounced good, that God once loved those finally lost, yet he has not so loved them as to hold out a particle of hope of their ever being released from hell. Yes, he did not so love as just to put forth his hand for a moment to prevent their fall in Adam; *prevention* would have been a very simple and easy act, yet man tells us that God did love once even these, but does the Bible anywhere tell us that God once loved these? Ah, no! the Bible does not tell us so; it is only proud, knowing, wise above what is written *man*, who tells us that God once loved Esau.

That then, which would be in man unrighteous, is in God righteous; he could and did suffer the fall to take place and suffer a number to be lost. Yes, he *willed* to make his power known on vessels of wrath as sovereignly as he *willed*, to show mercy on vessels of mercy. It is whom he *will* be hardens, as well as to whom he *will* he shows mercy; he shows his wrath as a matter of justice, but as to *who* the persons are to be on whom this wrath shall be shown, and the way in which it shall be shown, together with its but can you, dare you attach any blame duration, *these are matters of sovereignty*. To whom then will you liken God? The reasons beyond those which are revealed of these exercises of his sovereignty, we dare not attempt to pry into. Seeing secret things belong unto God, do not then let us suppose that because man would be condemned by the above circumstance, that we are so to deal with our Maker! No; there stands the testimony that he does as he pleases, and although it is true he can do nothing contrary to his nature, yet when men leave

his sovereignty in whole or in part out of the account, they most egregiously err as to what his nature is.

Some tell us that God in his nature is love, and that he must love, so according to this definition, he does not love from choice but of necessity; that God is love to his people, I can and do believe, and that he is love to them from choice and not from necessity I firmly hold, but the doctrine that God must love (as given by my friend Mr. Barringer, in last month's Vessel), is what I cannot exactly receive; you, my good Theophilus, must remember that he is sovereign as well as loving, and that he is just as well as merciful, but above all do not slight his sovereignty, his sovereignty is the manifestation of his absolute supremacy, he is under no external law, except those laws of truth which he has been pleased to place himself under, and if you stand out for the absolute supremacy of the Most High, they will call your decision a libel upon God. They say this to frighten you, for the real truth is, it is only their creed and not the attributes of the Most High, that you have got into collision with, and so being unable to refute you, they fall to accusing you of libeling the Being of God, and threatening the poor Editor if he allow another to speak as well as themselves. Well all this we must as heretofore set down to human infirmity.

But look again at the sovereignty of God as seen in the suffered state of the world; suppose there were a man who could by one sermon savingly convert all the world, and yet would not, not could not, but would not preach that sermon, what should we say to such a man, and where is there a minister of the Gospel who would not with infinite delight preach such a sermon? Now the blessed God could preach such a sermon, but, he does not; what then becomes in this matter of the fact that God is love? Why just this becomes of it, that God is love to those whom he has chosen, and to none others. Sin, man, Satan, make the world as to its evils, just what it is; God sovereignly leaves it under this solemn decree, hitherto shall you come, and no further, here shall your proud waves be stayed; but can you, dare you attach any blame to the Most High, in thus leaving the world to walk in its own way, he suffers it to be justly and sovereignly?

Again, suppose there were a man on earth who could release from the prison of hell all who are there, repair the injury they have done, give them new dispositions, so that they should never sin again, what should we say to the benevolence of such a one who could without injury to himself do all this, yet he chooses not to do it? Now the great God could do all this, but he does not do it, for he has sovereignly and justly willed otherwise, and who can stay his hand, or say unto him, what do you?

Thus, my good Theophilus, there can be no sovereignty like the sovereignty of God, nor any supremacy like unto his supremacy, nor any rights like the rights which belong unto him, we are but as the clay, he the potter. Let us, then, judge of him, not by what man is, but by what God is as revealed in the Holy Scriptures; and before I close these letters upon Divine sovereignty, I hope to give you some proofs of the fact that this Divine sovereignty fully admitted, is an easy key unto many things, which can be got at in no other way.

But as I have referred to Mr. Barringer's letter in the last month's Vessel, I will close this letter with one more reference, for the sake of noticing no less than four very singular doctrines, which my friend Barringer has, I suppose from oversight, advanced in his remarks on my 61st to Theophilus.

The first is, God must love; that is he loved not from choice, but from necessity. 2nd, That God must give a law to Adam. 3, That to love your enemies is inconsistent with God's hatred to Esau, so that love your enemies I suppose must mean devil and all. And 4th, that two opposites cannot dwell in one breast, that is, I suppose, that we cannot at one and the same time, love God, and hate the devil, so that God had no freedom in placing his love where he would, and no freedom in giving law to Adam, but he must give a law to Adam; I should like to know what breakable law is given to unfallen angels? and then as we are to love our enemies, God having given this law, he must love all his enemies, devil and all of course. Thus, we get rid of the sovereignty of God in the fixation of his love, in legislation, and in discrimination; he cannot at once hate one, and love another. But my friend Barrenger, does not really mean this, no, certainly not; he pushed himself into this position, by attempting to thrust aside the rock of Divine sovereignty, but I hope he will soon get right again, and help, and not oppose A Little One.

The sovereignty of God Letter 2 Earthen Vessel Vol. 16 Feb. 1860, pages 33ff

Most excellent Theophilus,

Before I go on to the sovereignty of the Most High, as shown in the most glorious truth of eternal election, a truth which will indeed strongly contrast with the dark ground over which we have been travelling; there we shall breathe freely, feel at home, and expatiate only with solemn pleasure; there we shall not perhaps have quite so many, at least of our brethren trying to pull us down. But before rising into those table lands, I must occupy the whole of this letter in a sort of desultory way; just to give you a few intimations and cautions upon several different parts of truth.

You are, then, now led to see clearly the difference between sovereign hatred, and that of condemnation; that Esau was not condemned on the ground of God's hatred to him, but (to put it in a lower and softer form than that in which the Scriptures put it,) simply this, as God was not pleased to set his love upon Esau, he left him where sin had placed him, namely, under the curse of the law: the Bible says, God hated Esau; but mind, God did not lay Esau's heritage waste, because he hated Esau; no, not because he hated Esau, for that (namely, the hatred,) was a matter settled before Esau was born. Esau have I hated. You see it is put in the past tense, Esau have I hated. Now the result was that he was (as all his mystic posterity are) left in his sins, and as Edom was the border of wickedness, God has indignation forever. Here then, you must be careful to maintain both the sovereignty and the justice of God; nor must you be moved by men telling you that this doctrine of (so-called) causeless and groundless hatred is contrary to the nature of God; for this objection is easily met by an opposite consideration, namely, that God is holy, and that therefore it would, according to man's notion of his nature, be contrary to his nature to love sinners; but he did love sinners; yet if he had taken the mere apparent natural course with them, he must have hated them, but instead of this, he in apparent opposition to his holiness loved them, and has undertaken to make them holy as Christ is holy. Thus, you must be careful to distinguish between things that differ. The reasons beyond the solemn truth that it is so, that he has hated one and loved the other; the reasons beyond the truth that God in the unfathomable deeps of his sovereignty has

so ordered it; and that in both he must be glorified; the reasons beyond this, no man knows. That it is so, we do know; but the reasons the Most High may have in his mind for so doing we do not know, for secret things belong unto God, but those which are revealed, belong unto us.

Nor must you be moved by men supposing that God himself is bound by all the laws that binds his creatures; or that he never (to use a polytheistic term) does that himself which he prohibits in others. I call this mode of speech polytheistic, because it sounds like the doctrine of a community of gods. Let us see whether he does not do that which he prohibits in others; does he not prohibit his people from avenging themselves? yet will he not take vengeance? Take then also the following clause, do to others as you would others should do to you. This is a just, a noble, a most advantageous and Christian precept when applied between man and man; but I dare not utter one word of the blasphemy into which it would lead, were we to attempt to bind the everlasting God by this law, because with him there are no others, nor does it follow that because it was sinful in the Jews to hate the Saviour, seeing they ought to have received him, as the Ninevites received Jonah, and as the queen of Sheba, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but because it is unrighteousness and wicked to the last degree, to hate the Saviour, would you, most excellent Theophilus, would you deny your Maker his right to hate one and love another, and though no cause be assigned but that of his own will? Have you never read the 9th chapter to the Romans, especially from the 18th to the 22nd verse? why, surely men must think themselves gods, or they would never suppose that God, over all, and blessed for ever more, is bound by all the laws, by which creatures are necessarily bound. It is little short of a wonder that the same important creatures do not set to, and reprobate the doctrine of causeless love, for surely there is no cause in the sinner, why God should love him? yet he does love, and that forever. 'So whom he would he has hated, and whom he would he has loved; and so has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens.' You read No. 13² of the Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit again, that sermon has had, and is still having an immense circulation.

But now most excellent Theophilus, as you must not be moved from the sovereignty of God, so you must not be moved from the holiness of God. Stand at an infinite distance from, and in immovable opposition to that doctrine which would make God the author of sin; remember that sin is a lie against God, and he who would make God the author of sin, must make God a liar. And this would be to make the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, and as whose name is holy, to make God, I say, the author of sin, would be to degrade him to a level with Satan, Satan (not God,) is the liar, for it is impossible for God to lie; besides, how can the pure fountain of truth, be the source of falsehood; how can infallible holiness be a fountain of unholiness? no, most excellent Theophilus, you will see that sin is so infinitely abhorrent to God, that none but Immanuel could reach far enough to so cast it out from his presence, that a sinner may by the blood of Christ draw nigh unto God; if then, sin in the root and essence thereof be a lie against God, what must be the state of the world? Yes, even if the professed Christian world, as sovereignty is almost everywhere railed against, the salvation counsels in their order and immutability despised, or if not directly despised are dreadfully compromised; you see how men who profess to have their hearts in the truth as it is in Jesus, you see how quietly the duty-faith error travels about, and they are not

² "The One Taken, The Other Left or, Jacob, I Loved : Easu, Hated" The PDF version can be found here: <https://www.surreytabernaclepulpit.com/files/Sermons/JamesWells/1859/THE%20ONE%20TAKEN%20THE%20OTHER%20LEFT.pdf>

disturbed by it, but as soon as the rights of the Most High are advocated, they are up in arms to cast him down from his sovereignty. And most excellent Theophilus, some of these men will hate you, as though you had put those truths into the Bible, and as though you hated half your fellow creatures, whereas you hate no one; and as though you were the author of men's condemnation; but all this you must quietly bear. Many who now kick at they know not what, will by and bye see the way of God more perfectly; they, at the present, mistake both you and your position. But you must give them time to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest. They will then be, (with the pure water and wholesome pulse; we have given them) fairer and fatter and will be of more use in the king's court and will have better understanding in matters pertaining to the king's affairs, and to the kingdom.

They misunderstand, I say, both you and your position, they think you are glorying in the awful destiny of the lost. They think that the solemn truths you receive relative to the hated, the condemned and lost, are pleasant. Never were you more misjudged. It has been a path of trembling to you, yet shall no harm come to him that trembles at God's word. Also, they think of you as though you set aside the justice of God, but you do no such thing; you know that the chief bases of the justice of God are his supremacy and integrity: his supremacy wherein he has given such laws as seemed good in his sight; and he abides faithfully by those laws. And man is condemned not on the ground of sovereignty, but on the ground of sin; man is condemned by a just process of law, and sinners are saved by grace in entire accordance with law, and justice; but nevertheless it laid with God as to who the persons should be, which were to be loved or hated, saved or lost. Thus then, most excellent Theophilus, abide in the truth, and you will be in safe-guard. I hope you will be kept from letting the enemy have any dominion over you in any sense, for you see what men are.

There is another point which I should like to touch upon, but I must leave it to some future opportunity, and that is to point out to you how you ought to encourage your humble-gifted minister. You may by right conduct towards him, help greatly to improve his gifts, and which improvement would of course make him more useful, not that you are to esteem him for his gifts merely, but for the grace that is him. I can sincerely sympathize with the humblest in the household of faith, seeing, I myself, am but A Little One.

Election Letter 1 Earthen Vessel Vol. 16 April 1860, pages 103ff

My good Theophilus,

Eternal election is one of the sanctifying saving truths of the everlasting gospel. No man is rightly consecrated to God, unless eternal election form one part of his sanctification. 'Sanctify them through your truth,' said the Saviour, 'your word is truth,' and no one chapter in all the Bible savors more strongly of eternal election than does the 17th of John, and it is in that chapter this request is made, 'sanctify them through your truth; your word is truth.' To those taught of God, then, eternal election stands manifest as one of the essentials of their salvation, and though men

who hold election unrighteously, graft duty-faith and other errors of the like kind upon it, yet this shall not make void the faith of God's elect. What then, my good Theophilus, is election? It is this, that by election you were saved before you were lost; pardoned before you were guilty; justified before you were condemned; healed before you were wounded; washed before you were defiled; made white before sin had made you black; blest before you were curst; loved before you were a child of wrath; God's son before you were Satan's servant; a king on the throne before you were a beggar on the dunghill; a prince of glory before you dwelt in dust; heaven was yours before you merited hell; your sins were, every one of them foreseen, and all, and every one of them imputed to Christ before one was committed, The whole work of Christ set to your account before old Father Time was born, and this perfection of Christ will be yours when Father Time shall grow old and die, and be buried to rise no more, but is passed away forever; while young, fresh, new and verdant eternity rolls gloriously on; for eternity can never grow old, it is always the same, and its years cannot fail.

In election, Christ became your federal head, your Mediator, your Surety, all things pertaining to your eternal welfare were given into his hands, and the will of God concerning those things was that of all he had given to Christ, he should lose nothing. Here, in eternal election God the Father has taken an eternal love, and power, and righteousness, hold of the people, and reveals unto them in due time, the nature and the immutability of his counsel; and sincerely and supremely are they brought to love him in this revelation, and to rejoice that after such an order of things, their names are written in heaven, to be blotted when some deficiency shall be found in him in whose name their names are in God's eternal book. Here it is that the Holy Spirit's testimonies are very sure, making wise the simple. Here the Holy Spirit of God works by one eternal and sure rule, all shall be taught and taught lesson upon lesson, until they come unto that great Peace, which is by the blood of the everlasting covenant; all these shall know Jehovah, they shall know him in this eternal election covenant, for the Spirit of the living creature is in these heaven-wrought wheels, these circles of eternity, and where these circles of eternity are not, there the Holy Spirit is not, for he is a Spirit of truth, even of that truth which lives and abides forever.

And how stands the Saviour here? Does he not stand first in present and eternal possession? Other sheep 'I have,' mark this, 'I have,' I have them now, I possess them as my Father's gift now. Is not this, my good Theophilus, is not this divine, and true, and great, and eternal love, to put us into such good hands, hands out of which we cannot be plucked, and then see how this good Shepherd reads out unto us his responsibilities, 'them also I must bring' I must bring, he will bring such, all such, and none but such. Men bring a great many others, but they will all be rejected, because being not his sheep they hear not (in the way that the true sheep do,) his voice, the voice of his truth. Mere men-made, mere conscience-made, mere letter Christians, glory in appearance in his truth, but not in heart, but glory rather, and show themselves more at home in the deceptive universalities they graft upon the specialties of God's truth ; they are, you can easily see, more at home in humanly-devised universalities, than in divine specialties, but the sheep of Christ will, in due time, find that such are strangers, and they will turn from them, for they approve not the voice of strangers; however charming that voice may be, they will not long follow a stranger.

Now my good Theophilus, for your soul's sake, for Christ's sake, for eternity's sake, for the good of others sake, and for the honor of God's sake, be you no more like them, than you would be like the ungodly man who makes no profession at all. Just look around at the present time and see

young and old in and out of the ministry, to whom also the words clearly apply, 'unstable as water you shalt not excel.' But again, to the order of election. I must bring them, they shall hear my voice and there shall be one fold all folded in a new covenant, true Gospel fold; and there shall be one Shepherd, not two shepherds, but only one shepherd, even that Shepherd who never invited a soul yet to come to him, and never will; he brings them by effectual command, whether it be 'look unto me, and be you saved;' or, 'come unto me, and I will give you rest;' 'whosoever believes on me.' There is nothing strictly speaking of the invitation about it; no, it is all after the power of an endless life; after the order of 'they shall hear my voice, and they shall all be folded, and there shall be one Shepherd.' But while I thus speak, I would not forget that human language is but human language, and therefore, although it is not by invitation, but effectual command that he brings the soul to himself yet through the poverty of language, we must still use, for want of a more suitable word, the words 'invite' and 'invitation;' but perhaps it would be only right to remember that the invitation is, shall I say, 'royal,' and so carries in it the authority and power of effectual command. The invitation, therefore, is invincible.

See then, my good Theophilus, how the blessed God was beforehand with sin and Satan: so whether as a sinner you were reckoned as a four-footed beast, cleaving with all your power to the earth, to Satan, and to sin, or whether you were a wild beast, a ravenous persecutor, or whether you were a high-flying pharisee or a low-flying formalist, or a singing bird in the devil's paradise, or an eagle-eyed philosopher, or ignorant as the owl: or whether you were a creeping thing, a sly low, cunning fellow, a kind of snake in the grass, a crafty, self-seeking, despicable, sneaking wretch, caring not who you injured, if you could but serve yourself; or whether you included all these vile qualities, or whether you were so benevolent, you would to buy heaven give all your goods to feed the poor; or whether you wore such a highly conscientious man, that you would give your body to be burned, rather than violate any known rule of right; be all this as it may, the great turning point in your eternal destiny did not lie with you, but with God. He it was that by eternal election put you into the vessel of mercy, even that vessel which Peter saw, and which, with all in it, were drawn up into heaven; and that which election had set apart, had sanctified, that which (not man, but) God had cleansed, we are not to call common.

This truth then, of eternal election will be one essential part of your sanctification; as it sanctified you in purpose in heaven, so it will sanctify you in person on earth. You will walk with it, bless God for it, rejoice that it is in Christ Jesus, where all its blessings are, and you will stand fast for it, suffer reproach for it, see more and more glory in it, profit more and more by it, and see that there is no salvation without it. And I hope you will next month hear a little more upon this matter, and I hope you will not despise me for being such A Little One.

Editor's Note: James Wells was very ill for some time after the above letter was inserted in the E.V. I was not until the October issue that he was able to resume. By that time, he decided to move on to a different subject (The Sonship of the Savior). Wells' brief remarks on the sovereignty of God caused something of an uproar and W. Banks was obliged to add two supplements to the February issue and even to continue on the same subject afterwards. For various reasons, not the least of which is to show the severity of the opposition to James Wells, I am adding the following appendix with the various letters for and against James Wells on this subject. The reader can tell by the page numbers when they were inserted into the E.V.

APPENDIX

A Letter to Mr. James Wells by Mr. George Wyard (Minister of Zion Chapel, Deptford³.) Earthen Vessel Vol. 16 January 1860, pages 26ff

Editor's note: I have not been able to find the letter of J. Well's to which George Wyard is responding to. It may be in the last half of the 1859 E.V., which I am missing. Enough of the truth can be known however to make this worthwhile inserting as Mr. Wyard's regard or disregard for the truth can be clearly seen. For the cause of God and Truth I'm inserting below parts of Wyard's book so the reader can reference what he is talking about. Wyard's overwhelming desire to vindicate himself and others at the expense of incriminating Wells is astounding. This same false humility can be seen in most of those who took up the pen against James Wells. With regard to Wyard's charges I have found no evidence of such things in any of the hundreds of sermons I have been privileged to post on this website. In fact, the exact opposite is evident throughout. Wyard's doctrine, on these subjects at least, is very unscriptural to say the least as I point out in my notes below. Richard C. Schadle

PERTINANT EXCEPTES FROM GEORGE WYARD'S BOOK⁴ (with my own notes)

Wyard specially refers to his full 44-word definition of sovereignty in his letter below but he does not quote it there. Here in 44 words is how he defines that word (not however the sovereignty of God but only the word "sovereignty" This is taken directly as found from page 26 of his book in Letter 3, 'On the Sovereignty of God':

Sovereignty; the literal meaning of which is, doing just as one pleases, performing what one wishes, and executing what one has willed should be; and that irrespective of what may be the will or wish of another,—not conceiving ourselves to be accountable to any, or under the control of any.

He goes on immediately to say:

³ This chapel was built in 1846. It is very said to note the George Wyard was a professed Particular Baptist and believed in closed communion. Such were in fact many of James Well's enemies. The astute reader will be very interested to learn that Mr. George Wyard was associated the Charles H Spurgeon. In 1861 he was present and prayed at the inaugural ceremonies for the opening of the Metropolitan Tabernacle on April 11th 1861.

⁴ A series of Pastoral Letters by George Wyard, London 1859. Printed by J. Briscoe, Banner St Third Ed.

And this is what all the creatures of God do, more or less, both the rational and the irrational part of creation. They are all sovereigns in their way, and all act sovereignly as far as their power of performing keeps pace with their will to do.

In the first quote we find his general definition of the word “sovereignty”. In the second and equally important quote his application of this definition, i.e., who all it applies to.

Now his stated purpose in this letter is to teach on the subject of God’s sovereignty. He starts this chapter by spending some time on an subject of “vast magnitude” (“the Sovereignty of God”). He concludes these thoughts by saying: “And indeed, wrong notions formed of the sovereignty of God 'will lead us to form wrong conclusions concerning the works of God, in nature, providence, and grace. In order, therefore, that we may profitably contemplate this tremendous attribute, which angels have despised, and men have been and are continually fighting against, let us remark upon the import of the word itself.” He then immediately gives his definition of the word itself as quoted above. This places his ‘theology’ on this subject in context.

I would now like to show the difference between his secular, humanistic, quasi scientific, and rationalistic definition with a secular but truer definition. The Merriam-Webster online dictionary first two meanings are:

- a: supreme power especially over a body politic
- b: freedom from external control

If we take the “body politic” to be all of creation and apply this definition to God it forms, even in such a partial definition, a vast contrast to Wyard’s. This gives glory to God while his drags God down to the level of even a goat or sheep, never mind to fallen mankind. Wyard goes on, line after line to talk about how man (and even according to him irrational creatures) exercise their ‘sovereignty’ but deny Gods rule over them. The only thing he actually says, at this point, about God is: “. . .who indeed is the Maker of the universe and has a right to exercise his sovereignty over all and does so in the infinity of **his wisdom and the benevolence of his nature**, independent of creature opposition.” He continues: “Of him it is attested, He hath done whatsoever it hath pleased him ‘in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.’ See Psalm 115:3; 135:6; and none have a right to say, What do thou?” We must notice how he limits Gods sovereignty at this point to “the infinity of his wisdom and the benevolence of his nature”. There are two paragraphs immediately following that I find very telling. Rather than God’s sovereignty leading creation to glorify and honor him; rather than God’s sovereignty leading to the fear of God (which is the beginning of Wisdom); rather than God’s sovereignty causing mankind to fear and tremble, he tells us that it should lead to “cheerful contemplation” and realizing that God is, to all practical purposes, at the service of and limited by his very own creation. This can be seen both by what I have shown above and what I quote here:

There is nothing so calculated to bring the mind to a cheerful contemplation of the exercise of Divine sovereignty, as a sanctified remembrance of the character of the Eternal. That he is holy, just and true, that he is infinitely wise and good, that it is

not in his nature to do wrong, that he cannot possibly err, and that, **in the exercise of his sovereignty, he will infringe upon the rights of none**, nor do his creatures an injustice; that angels, men, nor devils, will ever have to charge him with the exercise of his sovereignty in an unrighteous way.

He is not more powerful than he is wise, not more determined than he is good; and the exercise of his sovereignty is based upon righteousness, equity, truth and wisdom; so that **all the creatures of his forming** may cheerfully say, “The Lord God omnipotent reigns: let us be glad and rejoice.”

Within this narrow context he goes on at some length to show the different ways he sees God demonstrating “this holy attribute”. All of these are in the context of his own understanding of the word “sovereignty”.

I have gone to such lengths in order to clearly show just what Wyard’s teaching on this subject is. Many of those who entered the debate in the 1860 Earthen Vessel, especially C.W. Banks himself sided with Wyard and praised his doctrines as being Biblical. In my opinion Banks professed to take a middle ground but failed miserably. He opened this issue wide to those who opposed Well’s biblical teaching and gave pride of place to Wyard except for the last article from July, 1860.

On November 6th 1859 James Wells preach on Romans 9:22 in a sermon titled “Sovereignty” Undoubtedly this as well as his letters in the E.V. prompted the opposition to him. The reader can find the whole sermon at this address:

<https://www.surreytabernaclepulpit.com/files/Sermons/JamesWells/1859/SOVEREIGNTY.pdf>

For my purposes I just want to quote his introduction to that sermon here:

THE original principle thrown into the mind of man by the great enemy of our souls; namely, that of substituting the sovereignty of the creature for the sovereignty of God, is a principle that shows itself everywhere; and as Satan originally planted that principle, God alone can eradicate it; God alone can undo what Satan did. Hence, Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; and this is the original, and I may say the root of all the works of the devil, in putting the sovereignty of the creature into the place of the sovereignty of the Creator; in putting his own Satanic falsehood into the place of God’s eternal truth; and hereby the enemy has assimilated man to himself; so that as Satan is a liar and a murderer, so by nature is every man; “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” And as every man is thus a liar against his Maker, he is also a murderer. There was not one unregenerate man, not one unsanctified soul, that was not willing that Christ should be put to death, it was only those who were partakers of discriminating grace, which had delivered them from their blindness and their state by nature, they were the persons that consented not to the counsel and deed of them that crucified Jesus. And so that which fell upon the Savior has from his day personally on earth to the present day fallen more or less upon his truth and upon his people. Such then is the powerful working of this direful principle of advocating human sovereignty in opposition to the sovereignty of God; that sovereignty which is essential to our eternal salvation. At

the same time, of course, we reverentially and tremblingly acknowledge that there is a deep in the sovereignty of God, especially in that part of it we have this morning to attend to, that is altogether unfathomable; but it is put upon record by every prophet that ever lived, and by all the apostles, and by the Lord himself. Point me to one prophet that treated the sovereignty of God lightly; point me to one apostle that treated the sovereignty of God lightly; point me to one part of the Savior's doctrine, in which he treated the sovereignty of God lightly. **It was a matter of great solemnity with them all; and so, it will be with us if we are taught of the blessed God.**

What Mr. Wells said above has direct relevance to the teaching of Mr. Wyard. Wyard referred to page 42 of his book, I think it's again important to see what he actually said in context. He reveals himself to be a hater of God's sovereignty; he brings God down to the level of a mean man like creature. On page 40 under his 4th Letter titled 'On Election' he takes up the subject of Paul's teaching on Jacob and Esau in Romans 9. At the bottom of page 40 he turns to the subject of God's hatred with regard to Paul's teaching. He says:

A word or two explanatory of God's hatred as referred to above. There is God's hatred negative and positive. (In this negative sense our Lord uses the word; see Luke 14:26) God's hatred negative, is as we have said in the case of Esau, God passing by, and (page 41) not doing for Esau, what he loved to do for Jacob. This is an act of pure sovereignty, conferring a great good upon Jacob, but inflicting no wrong upon Esau: for if God do for Jacob what he was not obliged to do, his not doing it for Esau can be doing him no injury; **Jacob is bettered by what is done, and Esau is not worsted;** and had Esau continued in that state of innocence and purity in which he and all mankind were created, neither he nor they would ever have become objects of God's positive hatred, wrath, and indignation.

Ignoring the immutability of God, the omnipresence of God, the single decree of God (especially that part of which relates to the reprobation of the non-elect or as John Gill calls it the decree of rejection) as well as a host of other factors he presses on with his own false views of God. He actually says that "Esau is not worsted;" and he says that just after stating some truth about God's sovereignty. Here, in other words is truth mixed that the leaven of error.

John Gill in part of a lengthy discussion of the God's decrees and of what he calls "II. The decree concerning the rejection of some of the sons of men."⁵, speaks about the two parts of this decree as follows:

II. The parts of this decree, concerning the rejection of men; these are commonly said to be preterition and pre-damnation.

1. Preterition is God's passing by some men, when he chose others: and in this act, or part of the decree, men are considered as in the pure mass of creatureship, or creability; in which state they are found, when passed by or rejected, and in which they are left, even just as they are found, nothing put into them; but were left in the

⁵ Gill, J. (1839). A Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity: or A System of Evangelical Truths, Deduced from the Sacred Scriptures (New Edition, Vol. 1, p. 276). Tegg & Company."

pure mass, as they lay, and so no injury done them; nor is God to be charged with any injustice towards them: in this act sin comes not into consideration, as it does in a following one; for in this men are considered as not created, and so not fallen; but as unborn, and having done neither good nor evil, Rom. 9:11. And this is a pure act of sovereignty in God, and to his sovereign will it is to be ascribed; who has the same sovereign power, and greater, than the potter has over his clay, to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour, Rom. 9:19–22. This being expressed, as before observed, by negative phrases, is, by some, called negative reprobation.

2. Pre-damnation is God's appointment, or pre-ordination of men to condemnation for sin; and is what is spoken of in Jude 4, There are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; and who are described by the following characters, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and or even our Lord Jesus Christ; which, when observed, is sufficient to clear this decree of God from the charge of cruelty and injustice: and this, by some, is called, positive reprobation. The word κρίμα, translated condemnation, in the above-quoted text, some render judgment, and interpret it of judicial blindness and hardness of heart; which appeared in the persons embracing and spreading false and pernicious doctrines spoken of; and this is, indeed, what they are fore-ordained, or appointed to, as a punishment of former sins; for this hardness, &c. presupposes former sins, and an obstinate continued course in them; either against the light and law of nature, which they like not to walk according to, and therefore God gives them up, pursuant to his decree, to a reprobate mind, to do things not convenient, Rom. 1:24, 28; or against divine revelation, precepts, counsels, and admonitions, like Israel of old, hearkening not to the voice of the Lord, in his word, nor paying any regard to his instructions; and therefore he gives them up, as he determined to do, to their own hearts' lusts, and to walk in their own counsels, Psalm 81:11, 12; and this is the sense of the word in John 9:39. God hardens some men's hearts, as he did Pharaoh's, and he wills to harden them, or he hardens them according to his decreeing will; whom he will he hardens, Romans 9:18; this he does not by any positive act, by infusing hardness and blindness into the hearts of men; which is contrary to his purity and holiness, and would make him the author of sin: but by leaving men to their natural blindness and hardness of heart; for the understanding is naturally darkened; and there is a natural blindness, hardness, and callousness of heart, through the corruption of nature, and which is increased by habits of sinning; men are in darkness, and choose to walk in it; and therefore God, as he decreed, gives them up to their own wills and desires, and to Satan, the god of the world, they choose to follow, and to be led captive by, who blinds their minds yet more and more, lest light should break in unto them, Eph. 4:18; Psalm 82:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; and also God may be said to harden and blind, by denying them that grace which can only cure them of their hardness and blindness, and which he, of his free favour, gives to his chosen ones, Ezek. 36:26, 27; but is not obliged to give it to any; and because he gives it not, he is said to hide, as he determined to hide, the things of his grace from the wise and prudent, even because it so seemed good in his sight, Matt. 11:25, 26. Hence this blindness, hardness, insensibility, and stupidity, are represented as following upon non-election; not as the immediate effect of it, but as consequences of it; and such as

neither judgments nor mercies can remove; and bring persons to a right sense of sin, and repentance for it, Romans 11:7–10. The sin and fall of Adam having brought him into a state of infidelity, in which God has concluded him: and he does not think fit to give to every man that grace which can only cure him of his unbelief, and without which, and unless almighty power and grace go along with the means they have, they cannot believe; whereby the decrees, predictions, and declarations of God are fulfilled in them, John 12:37–40; yea, as Christ is said to be set, or appointed, for the fall of many in Israel, Luke 2:34; so many are appointed to stumble at the Word, at him, the Stone of stumbling, and Rock of offence, being children of disobedience, and left as such; when, to those who are a chosen generation, he is a precious Corner-Stone, and they believe in him, and are saved by him, 1 Peter 2:6, 7; hence we read of some, who, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, to them are sent by God strong delusions, and they are given up to believe a lie, that they might be damned; not that God infuses any delusion or deceit into them, but because of their disbelief of and disrespect to him and his Word, he suffers their corruptions to break forth and prevail, not giving restraining grace to them; so that they become a prey to them that lie in wait to deceive; and being easy and credulous, they believe lies spoken in hypocrisy; which issue in their damnation; whilst others, beloved of the Lord, and chosen from the beginning to salvation, obtain the glory of Christ, 2 Thess. 2:10–14. But though all this is a most certain truth and is contained in the decree we are speaking of, yet condemnation, or everlasting punishment, seems to be meant in the passage quoted; or however, this is what some men are foreordained unto.⁶

Wyard then immediately continues by making inferences based upon his human reasoning and human time as opposed to God's.

We have in these two individuals, Jacob and Esau, an elucidation of the nature of election with regard to mankind generally. As, before the children had done good or evil, God had chosen Jacob and passed by Esau; so, out of the pure mass of creature-ship God had chosen some in the Person of his Son Jesus Christ, and constituted them his sons and daughters, and pledged himself to be their Father, loving them with the love of paternity, which is a love infinitely beyond that of creative love, but passing by, or not loving others with that love of paternity, with which he has, and does, and forever will love the election. The rest not so loved must become what their Maker never made them, (namely, sinful) before they can be objects of his positive hatred: for it is impossible for the Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God to hate what he has created in his own image; yet in the image of God created he man. It would be unnatural in God not to hate what is morally defective, it would be equally unnatural in him not to love what he had created in his own image, and therefore morally upright. Man was created in the image of God, and consequently an object of his delight; for God cannot deny himself. So long, therefore, as man continues in his creative purity, so long he is an object of his Maker's creative delight. All mankind were created in Adam, and consequently were the objects of

⁶ Gill Vol 1, pp. 278–280

God's creative delight. When man, therefore, fell in Adam, (and [page 42 starts here] all men did,) they became the objects of his creative displeasure. It would argue a change in the nature and character of God if it were not so: for God cannot love unholiness; his ceasing, therefore, to love and delight in objects whom he has loved and delighted in, is no proof of his changing: for the change is in the creature and not in the Creator. Hence God may cease to love those whom he hath loved, without being justly charged with mutation. See Hosea 9:15.

In order, therefore, to account for his choice of some, and that as the effect of his love of them, we must distinguish between his creative and paternal love. With the first of these he may be said to love all mankind in Adam; with the second of these he loves all the election in Christ, and in him he declares, "I will be a Father unto them, and they shall be my sons and daughters, says the Almighty and this he does in purest sovereignty, and simply because he will.

The truth is that God never loved the reprobate in any sense of the word. God's revelation to us in the Bible knows nothing of a "creative love" to all creation. It's a figment of Wyard's debased imagination. If it were to exist it would be the same for all of creation, birds, bugs fish etc. for God saw that what he created was good. Again, if he were to exist what benefit would it provide to the non-elect in hell other than torment them even more? It would lead to a God who failed in his love in the same sense as free-will universal atonement advocates believe. The unchangeable God would have changed as he asserts in his continued comments below.

Now be it observed that the medium through which creative love flowed ceased to be what it was, and all loved through that medium ceased to be what they were; but the medium through which paternal love flowed has never changed, therefore, that love continues and abides: for he is the same yesterday, today and forever. All the wrong, therefore, that has been done to creative and legislative love through the election's fall in Adam, the common parent of mankind, has been especially regarded and met in the obedience, suffering, and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, therefore, that is only loved with the love of God creatively may cease to be an object of his love, simply because he ceases to be what that love made him: but he that is loved with the love of God paternally, is loved unalterably, simply because God would give him an unchangeable existence and standing in Christ: and from which love the apostle declares there is no separation. See Rom. viii. 39. It is said "God is love" But God is love (part of page 43) agreeably to the relationship in which he stands to the object loved. If God would make, God must love what he makes; for he could make nothing unlovely. If God would beget, he must love what he begets, for he could beget nothing but in his own likeness. He that is born of God sins not, and cannot sin, because he is born of God. Therefore, God will never cease to love the election; for they are all destined to be born of God.

I hope that this clears the air as it were and helps to show the correctness of what Mr. Wells preached and taught.

We can now return to: A Letter to Mr. James Wells by Mr. George Wyard (Minister of Zion Chapel, Deptford .) Earthen Vessel Vol. 16 January 1860, pages 26ff

TO THE EDITOR OF THE EARTHEN VESSEL.

My Dear Sir, Your Correspondent, who signs himself 'A Little One,' has been pleased to allude to me by name; you must therefore in courtesy permit me to reply, although I be less than 'A Little One,' and far more obscure than he. It is, I believe, pretty generally known by your readers, that 'A Little One' is Mr. James Wells, of the Surrey Tabernacle, at any rate, I shall take it for granted that it is so and shall therefore address myself accordingly to him. There are many things I should, like to say, but I can only say a few.

- I. Some things to him, by way of rebuke.
- II. Some things of him, by way of caution.
- III. Some things for him, by way of commendation.

I am not certain that our good friend James will take the few things I may have to say, in as kind and as good a spirit and feeling, as I think what I say is dictated. However, that I must leave; I know my own motives, and he is informed hereby that I only intend the vindication of truth, and the character of the God of truth, together with a right spirit, and conduct of all that profess to receive the truth in the love of it.

Having premised these things, Mr. Editor, you will, I am sure, permit me to speak through your Vessel, to Mr. Wells, by saying,

Dear Brother Wells,

I scarcely think you have done me justice, either in what you say by way of quotation, your way of arguing upon what you have made me to say, or in the reflections and insinuating manner in which you have referred to me and my position, with other poor unfortunate things like myself, who have not been so successful in the ministry as you have. You seem to forget that every man's work is measured. But a word or two of this by and by.

With respect to the quotation made. You have not quoted fully. **My definition of the word Sovereignty, is contained in forty-four words**⁷, whereas you have made it consist of five words only. This is not fair, James. Should you think well to quote again, it will look more like straightforward dealing, to give the number of the page, that your readers may read and judge for themselves. Yet short and concise as my definition is of the term Sovereignty, you express your approval of it. I am glad I please you in some things, though I do not see now a man professing to take the word of God for his guide, as to matter of belief, could do otherwise than be pleased with my definition, seeing it is in Scripture terms, Psalm 115:3, also 135:6; the 'Laconic' style is, perhaps, the best; for if we can say much in a little, why use many words? The wise Spartans, who

⁷ Please refer to the quote at the being of this appendix

inhabited the province of Laconia, (which gave rise to the word laconic) in Peloponnesus, were noted for using few words. A few words well said is better than many blunderingly said. A bushel of words to a thimble full of thought, is only calculated to bewilder and confuse; hence there is difficulty in understanding what some people mean, simply because of volubility of expression. Excuse me, dear brother, but this, in the particular we have in hand, viz., the Sovereignty of God, is your fault. You have said and unsaid, so that it is difficult to come at your meaning. You have said that my definition of the Sovereignty of God is good, I am glad you think so, as I take it for granted you mean what you say, you ought to do so at any rate; though there is a feeling that steals over my spirit, that it is but a pun upon my words, and you are but passing a joke, and mean rather to convey that my definition. is ludicrous and insignificant. Well, be it so, I am. willing to abide by the definition given, believing it to be perfectly scriptural, and perfectly applicable to the whole conduct of God; whether he create, or govern, save, or destroy, bless, or curse, pardon, or punish, choose, or refuse, elect, or pass by; yes, in all these he will do as he please ; but O my satisfaction of feeling, and pleasure of delight, arise from the fact that he will never please to do contrary to his own, **or another's right**. I wish I could say of your definition of Sovereignty, as you have said of mine, 'it is good?' but I cannot in conscience say so, because I do not think so; I think it anything but good: and I think your arguing or reasoning too upon my definition, anything but good or just. Let us, however, examine it.

You say that supremacy is the basis of Sovereignty. Are you quite right in this? Is it not rather the seat, the origin? The emanation of it? And the higher the Supremacy, the wider and more extensive the Sovereignty whether it be good or bad. The throne is the seat or center of Supremacy and has a right to act. The throne is established in equity, or in iniquity. God's throne is established in justice and in judgment, and his Supremacy overall, and sovereignty emanating therefrom is exercised in, or based upon righteousness, equity, truth, and wisdom. Surely that must be what the Holy Ghost means in Psalm 89:14. Permit me to insert it, 'Justice and judgment, are the habitation of your throne, mercy and truth shall go before your face.' How beautiful and sublime the language. The marginal rendering of the word habitation is 'establishment.' Justice and judgment are the establishment of your throne. the meaning of which is, God will never exercise his sovereignty contrary to his righteousness, equity, truth, and wisdom. No creature in the vast empire of God will ever have just cause to complain of God's dealing unrighteously by him. I do not see, therefore, that my logic is so very bad; it appears to me to be what is Scriptural, and lands us in the truth, and therefore lands us in safety. Let Mr. Wells pass his jokes as he pleases.

But we are told it is bad divinity. We'll let us see where this bad divinity appears. I perceive in our friend James's statement in the Vessel, there is either some misprint, or else there is a great deal of ambiguity in his way of showing up this bad divinity of mine. Whatever, therefore, Mr. Wells means by what he says, which is very difficult to get at, I am quite certain that no rightly disposed person, or kindly inclined brother would come to the conclusion he has respecting my definition of Divine Sovereignty, that is, that God would not have acted righteous, &c., if he had not chosen as he has, &c. And brother Wells seems to have some smiting's of conscience at these his daring sayings, for he says, 'Of course Mr. Wyard does not mean this' My dear sir, how came you to know what I did not mean, if my definition were not sufficiently plain to inform you of what I did mean? And if you know what I did mean and properly understood my hypothesis, how dare you draw such inferences from premises which you know, in your conscience, could not be deduced there from? James! this is not honest, this is not doing as you would be done by. Never, sir, try to

make a man speak what you know he does not mean. I, therefore, only know the badness of my divinity by your unbrotherly and reckless reasonings, at which I am more grieved than ever I expect to be harmed by them.

No, it is not my bad logic, but your bad reasoning. Would any man accustomed to think, argue so foolishly as you have done? You dare to say, that because my logic insists upon God's acts always being based upon righteousness, that therefore it would have been unrighteous in God not to have chosen as he did. Fine reasoning, certainly this! You must have got up some morning earlier than common, and before you were wide awake, and sat down to write with your night cap slouched over your eyes, when you penned that beautiful bit of reasoning. To show its stupidity, I need only refer to the following, 'It was righteous in God to make the world; he would have been equally righteous had he not made the world. God is righteous in choosing, God would have been equally righteous had he made no choice at all.' Do not, my dear sir, let your partiality to this strange doctrine of yours, this crotchet of yours lead you contrary to your better judgment into such wild vagaries.

With respect to the reflections made, and the insinuating manner in which you have referred to me and others, I think perhaps you would not have made them, if you had a proper sense of your obligations to God, for your attainments and position in society, and in the church of God. I wish you understood the doctrine of Sovereignty better than you do. There has been always a difference, there is a difference now. There were captains over fifty, and captains over a hundred; it is so now. Have you ever thought who it is that makes us to differ? This boasting spirit was rife in the Apostle's days, but how promptly he rebuked it, (see I Corinthians 4:7) it is true we have not all such large congregations as you have, but I would venture to say, and that without egotism, on behalf of myself and brethren, whom you unwarrantably reflect upon, that we all preach as much truth as you do, and preach it according to the ability God has given us, (1 Peter, 4:11) You seem to forget, brother, that promotion comes not from the east, nor from the west, but from the Lord. It is not truth simply that attracts, there are other things that attract and induce persons to go to one place of worship rather than another; and all of us have not those kind of articles at command. All of us are not facetious, witty, and humorous; all of us can't be funny and create roars of laughter: all of us have not the daring to pass puns and jokes on the most solemn occasions and make people grin when perhaps they ought rather to weep. Some of us are remarkably sedate and do not think any man is justified in stooping beneath the Gospel to deal in things not connected therewith, and of which we have no instance in the conduct of our Lord, or his disciples and apostles. Many of us would not think of saying from certain portions of Scripture that which we have heard others say; the interpretation has been far too fanciful, and what could never be substantiated by the best rule of interpretation, viz, comparing Scripture with Scripture. When, therefore, brother, you contrast your position with others whom God has not been pleased to honor as he has you, guard against self-applause. Nebuchadnezzar talked very haughtily and proudly when he said, 'Is not this great Babylon that I have built?' I would not, brother, predict the same end concerning you as befell him, but this your boasting is very grieving to many of us. Be thankful that Sovereignty has done for you what it has denied to others, and never forget that to whom much is given, much is required. As I am speaking to you, and venturing to rebuke you, permit me to say I have heard you some few times, and heard you most blessedly, but I have not always thought you have given the sense of the Holy Ghost in the Scripture you have taken to explain: and what has pained me most is, that I have been obliged to think you have known that you have not given the sense of the Holy Ghost

as contained in that Scripture, but that you have rather studied to please than to profit, to create wonder and *eclat* rather than admiration of and reverence for the Great and Eternal Lord God. I have sometimes said after hearing you, what a pity we could not have all those great and precious things without so much that is only flesh-pleasing, and what only the carnal part of man can feed upon. But alas! alas! it is after this latter that hundreds run; and I excuse me, dear sir, if I say, I believe James Wells knows it, and is ensnared by giving way to it. It is well to get people under the word, but I do not know that it is safe to adopt measures to obtain that end, which will not bear reflecting upon in a dying hour. My dear sir, if I did not esteem you, I would not thus write you.

But one word more let me say to you. I think you have misrepresented me when you say what I will pray against and what I will I preach against. I have not said I will do these things against God's Sovereignty, against your impression of some of the acts of God's sovereignty, and you here must in as 'laconic,' that is, in as brief and as concise a way as possible. Now, sir, you know we may sometimes discover better the wrongness of a position, by examining very carefully where it will unavoidably lead to; that if we admit such and such a doctrine, we must necessarily admit such and such an one too, the monstrosity of which will appear to all, and sufficiently convincing of the untruthfulness of the former. Now let us try your hypothesis by this rule. You say '*that God hates without fault?*' Now to hate without fault, is to hate without a cause; for nothing but fault can be the cause of hatred justifiable, for as I have said in my book (page 42), the creature must become what its Maker never made it, before it can be the object of his positive hatred; for God cannot hate what is made in his own likeness, unless he hate himself, and surely you will not admit that, yet you must to maintain your own hypothesis. Oh! my dear sir! do consider. In my own apprehension it is a fearful thing, and however you may think me too cautious and wanting in boldness, I think you are far too venturesome, and wanting in reverence for the Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God. I have said that to hate without fault, is to hate without cause, that is, understanding the term hatred in the sense in which you use it, though I do not believe that is the Scripture sense of it (see as above p. 42). But if it must be taken in that sense, then let us see the awful and fearful conclusion we must necessarily arrive at. Permit me to put it in the following form, God hates without cause, but to hate without cause is wrong, and unrighteous, and much to be lamented, and was lamented and complained of by our Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 35:19, also 38:19, also 69:4 but (according to your statement, for it is not mine through favor), God hates without cause; therefore God is wrong, unrighteous, and may be justly complained of.

O! my dear Sir, it cannot be right what you say, my heart all but palpitates while I think of it. It is this fearful matter, sir, that I intend, God helping me, to write, and preach, and pray against. I hope never to be left to seek popularity at such a fearful price. Better to preach to a few with a clear conscience, and that our places be thinly attended, than that they be crowded with persons who can applaud such fearful representations of the Just and Merciful Lord God, who has devised means by which he can consistently with His holiness pardon the guilty penitent, and who is too righteous and just either to hate or punish the innocent. Let a man prove his innocence and he need not be apprehensive of God's hatred. Let a man feel, repent, and lament his guiltiness, and he need not despair of pardon, for to whom God gives repentance He gives remission of sin. Sin repented is sin forgiven.

God will not censure in others and yet how could God be judge the world if that were the case? The innocent are not to be judged as the guilty; to hate without cause is contrary to law and Gospel. If, therefore, the finally lost are in perdition as the effect of God's I hatred, then every finger in hell might be pointed to the Great Eternal with unutterable scorn and contempt, while every voice would be raised to thunder forth the God dishonoring fact "*He hated us without fault!*" O my soul, this is dreadful! Can any good man read it and not shudder? Yet I do not think I have drawn the picture too strongly, or arrived at any false conclusion, but what is necessary and natural from the premises laid down by Mr. Wells.

I have only one word more to say to you, dear sir, and that is respecting the influence of this doctrine, as set forth by you in your sermon on the memorable words, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated."⁸ I mean the influence of this doctrine on some of our young sprigs in divinity, the rising ministry. I was told the other day of a young blustering minister taking this said sermon up into the pulpit, flourishing it over his head, and vociferating to the effect, 'Ah this sermon is as true as the Bible. I believe every word of it. I believe that God does hate some of you, and that He always will I do what you will He will hate you, whether you believe or not, whether you pray or not, whether you repent or not, God hates you and will hate you.' O sir, would it not have been much more like a Gospel preacher to have proclaimed after the Master, 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out;' or after the Apostle, 'Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins and that by him all that believe are justified from all things,' &c.; or 'Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved?' This surely would have been speaking more in accordance with the Master's directions, viz, 'Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.'

Having said this much, I say no more at present; though there are many things I thought of saying. But perhaps this is more than will or can be admitted into the Vessel unless the Editor's sympathies are greatly moved towards less than 'A Little One,' and thinks that he ought to be heard.

George Wyard, Sen.
Zion Chapel, Depford.

P.S. Perhaps something commendatory of Mr. Wells may appear another day, if less than 'A Little One' should be permitted to speak a second time.

THE GREAT DOCTRINE OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY Earthen Vessel Vol. 16 February 1860, pages 38ff

⁸ There are at the very least five sermons by James Wells on Romans 9:13 and possibly many more. I do not know which one he is referring to but none of them evidence what he is accusing Wells of. See the index for Romans at: <https://www.surreytabernaclepulpit.com/WellsSermonsIndex.html>

A note by Walter Banks

The number of letters written—and the large amount of interest excited by the epistles of ‘A Little One’ Mr. George Wyard’s criticisms and other communications, have compelled us to issue two supplements, one with the January and another with the February numbers. In those supplements are given the minds of many good men on a subject of vast moment; we have published them, not because we love abstract controversy, but because we feel bound to act impartially in those matters with which the honor of the eternal God, and the edification of the people, are so deeply concerned. Besides, the clearer development of Divine truth is one of the noblest labors of our existence; we, therefore, send these letters forth, with a firm persuasion that the Lord will thereby stir up many hearts to look more closely into the beauties, the glories, and the innumerable mercies and blessings flowing from the Gospel of the grace of God.

There has long been a sore and bitter division among many who will be found around the throne of God. If we, instrumentally, could lessen, weaken, or in any measure remove this division, it would be a rich reward for all our toils and trials. We are determined, God helping, to try. The following letters are not given in the supplement, but in the current number, for reasons which will appear.

Mr. Barringer’s note on Mr. Wells’ REVIEW OF HIS FIRST EPISTLE

Dear Mr. Editor, As an act of common justice, you will, I trust, insert this note in your next issue, as Mr. Wells appears to have a most unhappy mode of distorting not only the Scriptures, but the opinions of those who differ from him.

Mr. W. asserts, I have advanced ‘four singular doctrines,’ which he very charitably concludes are oversights. From these points he draws his own conclusions which are most fallacious.

First. ‘God must love.’ I should suppose if His nature is love He must love. The act must flow from the heart. The persons loved are according to His own choice. The necessity is that He must act according to His nature, and that nature is love. Is this wrong?

Second. ‘God must give a law to Adam.’ Can Mr. Wells find a creature without a law? Is such a thing possible? Can we by any flight of fancy suppose a created being with no law to guide him? We might as well suppose a planet without an orbit. If all are to glorify their Maker, then it must be by yielding obedience to the law of its existence. I therefore maintain Mr. Wells was wrong in asserting that ‘God need not have given a law to His creatures at all!’ (letter 61).

He need not form the creature at all, but when formed it is formed for a certain end, and that arises from the law of its being. God, therefore, must give a law to Adam because of His existence as a worshipful Being, to whom all creatures must bow. Mr. Wells does not argue fairly or logically when he enquires what ‘breakable law was given to angels?’ when I plainly stated that the nature of the law was entirely from the will of God. Is this a singular doctrine?

Thirdly. More unfairness still, What has my love to enemies to do with God's hatred to Esau? Mr. Wells himself affirmed that when a law was once given, even God would reckon himself unrighteous to depart from it (see letter 61). I reminded Mr. W. of a positive law given in these words, 'love your enemies,' and wished him to reconcile it with his own statement. It is merely blotting the paper to write of loving the devil. We have no command for this.

Fourthly. Two opposites may dwell in our breasts, we being imperfect creatures; but in the one Jehovah, all-perfect, there cannot be two opposites, or He must cease to be. Mr. Wells may very freely have the labor of proving this if he can, but I fear he will burn his fingers if he tries, I love Divine Sovereignty as much as Mr. Wells, because mercy and goodness are its constant products, Isaiah 16:6. Having noticed other ideas of Mr. W.'s in a letter last month, which I find you had not room to insert, I need say no more. If Mr. W. condescends to notice my letter at all, he will be kind enough to do it fairly and by sound scriptural arguments; it may be a benefit to others, and a credit to himself. Yours's, dear Sir, in the love of the Gospel, W. Barringer⁹.
11, Albert Terrace, Richmond Road, Bayswater, Jan. 9th, 1860.

Young Hopeful's review of Mr. George Wyard's letter.

Dear Mr, Editor. Will you be so kind as to allow me a little space in your February number, as I feel constrained to say a few things to you and your readers, to vindicate (from my own personal knowledge) the character of that most faithful servant of Christ, Mr. James Wells, of the Surrey ' Tabernacle, whom your correspondent, Mr. G. Wyard, of Zion chapel, Deptford, has thought fit to abuse, and I think very unjustly. The great God has in His sovereign will and mercy made J. Wells the instrument of plucking me as a brand from the everlasting burning, and I should think anyone who had real love for such an honorable servant of Christ, could not peruse your January number without feeling very much hurt at the gross misrepresentation made by Mr. Wyard, respecting the manner of his preaching, and also what he preached. First, then, as regards the manner; he says, 'all of us are not facetious, witty, and humorous; all of us can't be funny and create roars of laughter:' so much for Mr. Wyard's definition of his manner of preaching. Now, sir. I have had the privilege of hearing Mr. Wells at his own, and other chapels, for nearly two years, and I never heard one roar of laughter from the congregation assembled, and I am sure, if there had been, I must have heard it, as when the Lord leads my feet to Zion's courts, to hear His most blessed word, He also gives me an ear to hear, so that I am not at all deaf as to what is being preached, neither am I ignorant of the manner. But, alas, sir, there are men who profess to be preachers of the Gospel, who, I fear, never knew the real value of that Gospel in their own souls, or they would, I am sure, preach more and more fully, and truly, and fearlessly, which they profess so much to love. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks, and if the blessed God has enriched the heart of his faithful servant, J. Wells, with his glorious Gospel, he cannot but preach what the Lord has put in his heart; and thus said the high and lofty One, whoso honors me, I will honor; and bless His holy name,' He has faithfully promised, therefore it must come to pass; yes it has already come to

⁹ I have not been able to find out very much about Mr. Barringer. The Baptist Magazine for 1861 mentions him twice: referring to him as Rev. W. S. Barringer. Mr. C. H. Spurgeon was, at the time one of the Editors of that magazine. This is an important fact.

pass, for go into the Surrey Tabernacle and there you will see the promise fulfilled, 'whoso honors me, I will honor.' So, you see it is not the wit nor the humor that draws the multitude to hear him; no, sir, but it is this, because he preaches the unsearchable riches of Christ, and it is after those things that the poor and needy will run. So then, all I can say as to the manner of his preaching to your correspondent is, go and do you likewise. Second, as regards what he preaches, Mr. Wyard charges Mr. Wells with perverting the Scriptures, and that willfully, for he says when he has heard him preach, he has thought he has not given the meaning intended by the Holy Spirit, and that instead of preaching to profit the people, he has only tried to please them, oh, sir, what a dreadful libel on such a faithful Christ-exalting servant in the Gospel kingdom; but what surprises me most is, however Mr. Wyard can call a man his dear brother who has, he believes, willfully perverted the Scriptures, I would remind him that the Scripture said, 'cursed is he who preaches another Gospel,' and surely he also is cursed who wishes them God speed who do preach another Gospel, and is not wishing him God speed to call a man your brother who preaches another Gospel? Oh, I think so. Oh Mr. Wyard, I suppose you are afraid of offending Mr. Wells, so you think to smooth it over by saying dear Brother Wells. It was your duty, Mr. Wyard, as a professed minister of the Gospel, to rebuke your Brother Wells at the time you heard him, or as you think you heard him pervert the Holy Scriptures, and not have left it till now. This does not show brotherly love on your part to him, but however, Mr. Wells does not require any words from me to justify him. Oh dear no. He, I am sure, has a clear conscience before God from all the false charges Mr. Wyard has brought against him; and therefore, dear editor, I hope you will not think me too tedious in bringing this little grievance before you. I felt it my duty so to do as a lover of Zion and her faithful ministers, trusting, sir, you may be kept by the power of God unto salvation; so that you and all God's faithful ministers may come to Mount Zion, the city of our glorious king Jesus, and there to sing His most worthy praises and ascribe salvation to God and the Lamb for ever and ever. YOUNG HOPEFUL

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Mr. JAMES WELL'S DUTY-FAITH HIS ROD FOR THE LAZY – HIS CRUMB FOR THE HUNGRY

The church in the Canticles is described as calling for the north wind, as well as for the south; and although unto established and deeply settled believers controversy may seem unpleasant, yet to those who are coming out of obscurity, and see but very dimly, there does frequently arise much instruction by the thorough sifting and shaking of men's minds; by knocking their heads together, as it were, and thereby bringing out from their sluggish minds a few grains of that holy knowledge which the Spirit of all truth has implanted within. We are not fond of controversy. We love unity in the faith; fellowship among the saints; communion with a triune Jehovah; and a blessed alliance among the ministers of the cross. We delight in Gospel purity, and spiritual peace; but in this checkered and changing state of things, it is often interrupted.

The heavy tide of correspondence which has of late set in upon us, has compelled us to issue a few supplementary numbers. This is the second; in which we have given a little of the surplus matter which has crowded upon us. Before we come to the letters themselves, we would briefly notice

one or two of Mr. Wells' sermons lately issued: because these sermons appear to us to contain most conclusive evidence that Mr. Wells does not believe, does not preach, does not hold, any of those so called awful doctrines which some have supposed; which supposition has arisen from some almost unintelligible sentences of his in letters and sermons. We have had no private interview, nor authority; but anxious to promote a good feeling in the hearts of the brethren, we ask them to read these prefatory words, before they further proceed, In No. 61¹⁰, Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit, we have the following plain affirmations:

“I am no advocate either of infidelity or of irresponsibility. I am no advocate, I say, for infidelity. I believe it was the duty of the Jews to worship their Maker; as his creatures to render that homage to him, as far as they could understand his supremacy. I believe it was the duty of the Jews to worship God, and to honor him, according to his command. I believe it is the duty of all men, where ever the gospel comes, to believe that gospel, to believe in Christ, and to repent, and to conform to that dispensation, regarding the holy Sabbaths of the Lord, and all the outward ways of the Lord. It would turn one and every nation upon the surface of the globe who thus repented, and thus reformed, and thus believed, it would turn the nations of the earth into a comparative paradise. And I believe that men will be punished according to the nature and the amount of their willful sins. I hold that it is the duty of every man, a duty which the natural man can perform, to believe in the Bible, to repeat of his sins; and that every man must appear at last before the holy bar of God; and that man who is not a saved man will have to give an account for all his sins. but not one more, he will not have to give an account of sins that he has not committed, but he will have to give an account of sins which he has committed. But at the same time, while I hold firm this doctrine of duty, this doctrine of human responsibility; while I hold this, I dare not set this down for regeneration; I dare not say it is the duty of any man upon the surface of the globe to believe to the saving of his soul; that is another thing altogether; the two are as distinct as two things well can be.”

There is nothing in these words to “set the Thames on fire.” No; we really begin to think we have been more frightened than hurt. However, some things did require explanation; and although it has come in rather an indirect way, we are glad it has come. We only add the following short notice of another Sermon. It is entitled “*A Rod for the Lazy, and a Crumb for the Hungry.*” No. 63¹¹ of “The Surrey Tabernacle Pulpit.” Mr. Wells, the preacher of this sermon, has for nearly fifty years, been a hard-working, energetic, and industrious man. He has reaped, and is reaping a large harvest, mentally, ministerially, spiritually, and providentially, as the result; and this discourse is a powerful proof that although no man can rise higher than he does in a bold declaration of doctrines, there are few who come down to a more persevering course of practice. Nature has given him a wiry and powerful frame. God has given him an ingenious and rapidly working mind, the Holy Ghost has endowed him with much heavenly knowledge; the Gospel has given him thousands of

¹⁰ This sermon can be found at this address:

https://www.surreytabernaclepulpit.com/1860vol2/1860_Sermons.html (A Word of Instruction for Duty-Faith People)

¹¹ Please see the web address given above.

real friends; and there he stands the envy of many; the instrumental joy of not a few. We can only give the following sentence:

“I declare, that if I had to get my living by sweeping a crossing, if I would not sweep it as tastily as I could, make it look as nice as I could, keep my broom as nice, and myself as I could; so that I do believe that people when they saw me in the distance, would come to the crossing for the sake of giving me something. There are some good people who get into a lazy, dawdling, mumping sort of spirit, as though they could not move; they are like stagnant pools; they want someone to rout them up well. I wish I had such persons where I could keep them under my eye for a week or two, or a month or two; I’d give them no peace until they found out that what they want is just to have plenty to do. I speak from experience; I have worked hard myself; I was but seven years old when I was turned out into the world; and I never wanted a bit of bread from that day to this; anything I could get to do I did it; and the consequents was I got on pretty well; at least as well as it was good for me to get on; and here I am now, above fifty years old, and a better man than some of you that are hardly thirty; because you have been afraid of work, and I have not.”

MR. WELLS’S VIEWS OF SOVEREIGNTY ANALYSED

To the Editor of the Earthen Vessel:

Dear Sir, Our brother Barrenger has, I am happy to find, taken up the sword of the Spirit against the extravagant doctrines now so repeatedly asserted by Mr. Wells; and although I have not been a correspondent of yours since the suppression of my reply to Mr. W. in 1855 (who, as “Job,” took what I still believe to have been a false view of Mr. Spurgeon’s early ministry in London), I cannot forbear, on the appearance of still stranger sentiments, contained in his 62nd letter to the “good Theophilus,” to put in a little protest against the truth and tendency of “A Little One’s” logic and divinity.

Mr. W. seems to feel a difficulty in finding either goodness or justice in God’s treatment of the condemned sinner; for I judge he includes himself when he says that “no one” can make the awful facts of the fall of man, the entailment of Adam’s guilt, and the eternal punishment of the wicked, “lie straight” with any human rule of right or wrong, or with the moral perfections of God; and that it is mere custom that causes “no one” to dispute these things as facts! No, he positively asserts, that neither the goodness, justice or holiness of God, can explain the matter, and that the punishment of the hated is just only because He appointed it. What is the necessary deduction from this? Verily that God may do anything, even evil, but that His doing it constitutes it good! Homer makes his gods evil workers, but never draws from their conduct such a license to sin as this. Mr. W. should know that he has not yet measured the power of every believer’s sight to perceive, not the holiness alone, but even the goodness of God in dealing with impenitent sinners.

It is not a new thought, that the Lord has acted in that tremendous affair as he has in a multitude of lesser matters, permitted a great evil that its results and punishment may be a sign, a warning, and preventive of a greater. Every afflictive chastisement has somewhat of this nature in it. The

overthrow of the rebellious in the wilderness, the ten-fold plagues of Egypt, and the repeated captivities in the days of the judges, were at the same time punishments justly brought on by transgressions, and warnings against the repetition of an obstinate disregard of the Lord's voice. Did not the Babylonish captivity (in which doubtless were many innocent sharers) effectually punish the guilty, and cure succeeding generations of idolatrous practices?

We have been accustomed to hear of sin as an infinite evil against an infinite God. Does it not "lay straight with" divine justice to award it an infinite duration of punishment?. "A Little One's" words appear to imply an unmeasured punishment; but the doom of the ungodly is nowhere thus represented, but according to the measure of guilt, the knowledge or ignorance, the malice or the provocation, &c., that the iron scepter of the King of kings sovereignly descends in judgment. It must be a very short sight, and a very hard heart not to see and acknowledge the goodness of God also in suffering long, in reproof often before inflicting the stroke. In meliorating and preventing providences and influences too, we trace a sovereign hand, but not a sovereign only. Oh, what fearful increase would prevail in the ultimate misery and punishment of the wicked, if sovereignty, without this wisdom, justice, and goodness, were the "pure" moving principles of the Lord's doings!

If Mr. Wyard's logic is bad, surely Mr. Wells' must be worse, in laying down such a rule of argument, that necessarily infers sovereignty, basing its acts upon righteousness or any other attribute, would cease to be sovereignty. Is not the throne "established by righteousness?" I say we must not do such violence as to divide asunder the supremacy and personal attributes even of our Queen, and God forbid that with Him we should dare to attempt it! No, they reign together, unitedly. There abides much of our happiness as a nation. Here consists all our triumph as believers. It is because the Lord is supreme in his righteousness that he acts rightly; supreme in his love that his eternal choice prevails; supreme in his mercy that his mercy reaches us. Is there "pure" sovereignty, or rather mere sovereignty in the sweet truth, affording "everlasting consolation," that "it is impossible for God to lie?" Is a thing right simply because God does it? Then what confidence could I have in his keeping his own promises? If this were sound logic, He might break them, and that would be right because He did it, but I am sure this would be very unsound divinity. Rome indeed dogmatizes thus of her head the infallible Pope! And what springs from this doctrine that the church cannot err? Why, indulgences for sin, and the convenient political maxim, that "the end justifies the means."

I must not conclude without adverting to Mr. W.'s not very brotherly or modest hint as to thin congregations, which is surely a weapon as sharp at back as in front, cutting indifferently both friend and foe; and if indeed "a Little One" mean this test seriously, then he must pronounce the much battered teachings of the Music-hall "sound as a bell."

I do not know, Mr. Editor, that your own closing remarks call for much comment, seeing it is hardly possible to discern from them which way your judgment leans. You "fear your writers are going too far." Do you mean Mr. Wells, Mr. Barringer, Mr. Wyard, or who? You say Mr. Wells has astonished many with his broad statements. I do not know whether you are one of the many, certainly many have been pained, grieved, and shocked, at what they believe to be (not broad, but) narrow, unworthy, and injurious views of the God of Glory. You have "thought that his words did not convey his meaning." Surely this is no subject for speculative or mystifying verbiage. Let us

keep close to “thus said the Lord,” “to the Word and the testimony;” and God give us grace to “leave ourselves in his hands, and with burning love and zeal go boldly on to preach to others as freely as we ourselves have received.”

I am, dear, Sir,
Yours faithfully
SAMUEL K. BLAND.
New Cross, Dec. 12, 1859

To the Editor of the Earthen Vessel.

Dear Sir, Some would say, that the sense of the word “hated,” as applied to Esau, is merely “preference” of Jacob to Esau. That it is a Hebraism. Be it so. But in either acceptation are not the results to Esau precisely the same? Could Esau be more than eternally lost, under this supposed more equitable and less abhorrent view of the matter?

If the human mind can entertain the faintest conception of what Jehovah is as infinite, yet definite in his nature and relations; it follows that from his unchangeable nature he cannot indulge or exert choice or preference among objects or things, or as among plans to certain ends, such plans being of various and uncertain value, in the same sense as we exercise the faculty of judgment and comparison to the ends we propose. Results flowing from a creature to a creature are widely discrepant in their character and as to their certainty of accomplishment, from results which have him for their author who is the Almighty, seeing before his omniscient eye “one eternal now whose mere volition is sufficient to cause, alter, or prevent the occurrence of any supposed future event. And here the teachings of revelation are in accordance with the conclusions of the soundest metaphysical reasoning when we speak of what occurs under the righteous government of an infinitely powerful yet infinitely good and omniscient being. “Causation” is not an equivalent idea to that of “permission,” when we speak of men and their actions. But when we speak of the outgoings of the infinite sovereign, we are on a new platform, and need a new vocabulary.

From the poverty of language, we are unfortunately apt, because driven, in our uselessly unpractical and abstruse speculations, incorrectly to apply to the Deity terms derived from their only possible source, namely, human passions and feelings, and to use them in parallel acceptation, thus justifying the reproof “you thought I was altogether such a one as thyself” to be weighed in the balance of a mortal.

We hear much of the danger likely to arise from the existence and use of such terms as “hated,” as applied to the infinite Sovereign, and that such expressions can only engender “horrible” ideas respecting him who is undoubtedly a God of love. Such words are said to be “abhorrent to every right-minded person.” But my imagining in my depraved, limited, purblind, and necessarily imperfect conception of the Deity, that a thing is “horrible,” does not inevitably constitute it horrible in the conception of him whose opinion is alone of any correctness or value. He is the self-constituted judge of his own acts, and we know they are righteous. And it is little use shifting a difficulty one step backwards. “Abhorrent to every rightly constituted mind pray what is the standard of right-mindedness? For the Unitarian thinks the Deity of Christ to be abhorrent to rightly constituted intellect.

God (I humbly conceive) acts in sovereignty simply from his own nature, which is INFINITE PERFECTION, immediately and directly, and not from any rule of self-imposition, for that implies restraint from any other supposed possible course, as less wise or good. Not from any rule, implying a law of either justice, equity, or any other separate or combined attributes. In a word, that he ever acts, or must act in consonance with his eternal and infinite attributes, but not from them. Otherwise, he is a subject, and the rule of obedience implies a higher or extrinsic authority, which in the case of the Infinite and Supreme is absurd.

I think there is sad confusion and hasty misapplication of words and terms in this controversy. I hope Mr. Wells will be directed by the Spirit of God to the use of sound, discreet, and well-considered words. Churches are not to be advised, in the defense and pursuit of truth, to “go ahead or if they follow out literally the practice of the boiler-bursting, racing steam-boats of the Mississippi, it may be discovered too late that between steam-boats and churches there has no parallel been instituted in the word of God.

Sir, yours in the hope of the Gospel, JOSEPH A. SMITH.
71, Clarendon-street, Oxford-st., Manchester, Dec. 31, 1859.

To the Editor of The Earthen Vessel.

Dear Sir,

I have felt deeply interested in the discussions in the “Vessel” on the subject of Divine Sovereignty; and, as for years my mind has been strongly exercised on this subject, might I be allowed to say a few words?

There is much in the Great and Blessed God that is, to us, incomprehensible. But Divine Sovereignty does not appear to me to come within this category. Jehovah has been pleased to set himself before us in different capacities: and, I think, if this be attended to a little, it will help the servants of Jesus Christ to see the subject of Divine Sovereignty with greater clearness. The Great Jehovah is glorious in every character which he bears, as Supreme, Governor, &c. But some of his Sovereign acts are the only basis of hope to sinners. Hence the preeminent importance of the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty. The sovereignty of God arises from the infinite perfection of his nature, from whence also arises his supremacy. Therefore, in God, supremacy and sovereignty do not necessarily involve each other, as in the case of an earthly sovereign. The sovereignty of God is, God acting in his private character; or, doing as he pleases, so as that there be no infraction of law.

As a Sovereign, God spoke all things into existence. As a Sovereign, he instituted a system of moral government, by which the Divine conduct became judicial. Jehovah had sovereignly bound himself and the creatures by a law; holy, just and good, which could not be broken with impunity. And when, in the exercise of prescience, he saw that every man from Adam, down to his youngest posterity, was a rebel against his holy, just, and good government; while he left some to the consequences of the rectitude of his government, which their judgments will eternally approve, he

resorted to his private character to devise a plan whereby he might be Just and the Justifier of the ungodly, whereby his law might be infinitely magnified, and made honorable on the part of his subjects. And it is in accordance with this that the children of God often raise their joyful anthems and sing

“Hail sovereign love that first began
The scheme to rescue fallen man;
Hail matchless, free, eternal grace,
That gave my soul a hiding place.”

This act of high sovereignty necessarily involved another, viz., that those on whose behalf the scheme was devised should be visited with direct Divine influence by which they should be made to appreciate the unspeakable gift of God. Sovereignty delays the penal inflictions of the wicked: and sends those salutary visitations which are intended as a benefit, and by which Jehovah supplies a testimony concerning the first Adam, and the importance of another and a better. Adam, the Lord from Heaven. Sovereignty is good to all, although in different degrees. It sends the shining of the sun upon the evil and the good; but it cannot act contrary to government, and therefore, the penal consequences of rebellion against the Divine government must proceed from the just Governor, and must necessarily alight upon the transgressors, or an adequate substitute.

From these considerations does it not appear that God in his private character is all goodness, and that government is the occasion, not the cause, of all the real calamities of mankind; and that the cause of these calamities is opposition to the Divine government?

Ashton Clinton. T. Avert. Jan. 7th, 1860.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD, A GLORIOUS THEME

(To the Editor of the Earthen Vessel.)

Will you allow me through the medium of your excellent periodical, to publish a few remarks on the letter of “a Little One,” contained in your last number?

The Sovereignty of God is a glorious theme: “He does his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.” And what he does is good because he does it. Sometimes the agreement between his operations, and the benignity of his character is clearly apparent but at other times it is not so. Some of his ordinances are hard to be understood, but others such as those regarding conjugal love and parental affection are perfectly consistent with our notions of what is right, and just and good. It is true that his way is in the sea, his path is in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known. But then as a kind Father, he has told his children that for the present they only know in part, and when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. The candles and the lamps go out at the rising of the sun, and soon our imperfect knowledge shall give place to the perfect light of everlasting day. Till then let us trust God where we cannot trace him, and adore him where we cannot understand him.

It is true, as “a Little One” has said, that the sovereignty of the Queen rests on her supremacy, and not on the amiability of her character. But then we cannot safely reason upon the character of God by comparing him with an earthly sovereign: the fact is, that all such analogies can only hold good to a certain extent; carry them to any length, and they will break down. Now, for instance, God is love, and therefore to say with Mr. W. that his sovereignty rests upon his moral character is much the same thing as to say that it rests on his supremacy, because God’s supremacy is the supremacy of love. He never can deny himself, or act inconsistently with his own blest name of love.

Now to say that God created men in order that he might damn them, that in this world, and in the world to come they might wake up to the dreadful reality, that between them and salvation there was a wide and impassible gulf which from all eternity he decreed that they should never be able to pass, would not only be contrary to the character of God, but would be contrary to the notions which he himself has given us of the nature of love. It would be God contradicting God.

One thing has struck me very forcibly with regard to this subject, and that is, that we should speak of it very modestly and charitably. “Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth,” “but the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be patient to all men.” Even “a Little One” might well say with regard to this sovereignty, “such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it,” and we are all too little to reach a theme so exalted, and so intimately blended with the incomprehensibility of Almighty God.

May I suggest to “a Little One,” or even some great one, to speak more frequently upon plain subjects, such as those found in the sermon on the mount. Many high flown professors talk loudly enough on certain abstruse subjects, while they are sadly deficient in the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto the praise and glory of God. Heaven is a blood bought free reward, and salvation is all of grace; but it is not wrong to say, “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life,” &c.

Let no one cry out in derision, “’tis all do, do, do, a duty-faith man, a free-wilier, a yes and no minister.” Such slang ought not to be put into the “Earthen Vessel;” for hard words and nick-names prove nothing except the want of brotherly kindness and charity in those who make use of them.

Yours’s in the Gospel, PHILIP CATER, Baptist Minister.
Peckham, Dec. 8, 1859¹²

MR. SPURGEON'S VIEWS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND SOVEREIGNTY A LETTER FROM JOHN WESLEY TO THE REV. B. DAVIES

Dear Brother Davies. In your letter, bearing the date June 28th, 1859, you wish me to get and read Mr. Spurgeon's sermon on “God’s Sovereignty and Man’s Responsibility,” and to give my opinion upon it. After a deal of trouble to procure it, I have it through the kindness of a friend who lent it

¹² It seems that to Mr. Cater the sovereignty of God is an “abstruse” subject and not at all like the sermon on the mount. He feels free to insult Mr. Wells as he likes but calls upon no one to call him by his true colors (a duty faith man etc.)

to me. I have read it over, and considered it, and now make an attempt to answer your request, by way of showing my opinion.

I have wished there was something more in it than there is, so that I could have spoken or written better of it. He certainly has the form of the doctrine of sovereign grace in it, and as much of the power of it as any intelligent mind might attain and be altogether carnal. However, I believe I may say with truth, that I knew the doctrine of sovereign grace further than Mr. Spurgeon has gone into it in that sermon, when I was as dead in sin as a stone is too natural or animal life. Yes, I believe I knew that doctrine, and contended for it because of its truth when there was not the slightest pulsations of spiritual life in me. The truth is, if Mr. Spurgeon has no better testimony to the power of sovereign grace, in his own soul, than he has given in that sermon; I believe it is quite possible he may be like King Saul, have another heart, but not a new one. Both he and you too, must remember that gifts are not always accompanied with grace. And I do think that if Mr. Spurgeon knew the power of sovereign grace to any great degree in his own soul, he would not have been so bigoted as to say, "there were men he knew preaching it who were doing ten thousand times more harm than good." Nay I even believe if it was proclaimed pure as it is in Scripture by one of the vilest characters living, even another Judas, accompanied by the power of God, it would be productive of the best results. How can the preaching of the truth do more harm than good? I mean the truth by itself, the unmixed seed of God's sovereign grace.

Has he forsaken the counsel of the old men and consulted with the young men that have grown up with him. See 1 Kings, 12: 6 to 12? Seeing he has condemned the mature thought of Huntington. For, says he, "I can go as high as Huntington in matters of salvation; but question me about man's responsibility, and you will get quite a different answer." Of course, Mr. Spurgeon is the best judge. But has he gone high at all? O yes, you'll say; certainly he has; for he says its all of grace, grace. Even so might anyone say who believed it in the mere letter of the truth. This I say, and am able to prove it, that he has gone no higher in his sermon on that doctrine than any intelligent man might attain to that gives his mind up to the study of theology from the mere letter of the Word.

Dear friend, I shall leave you to think what you will of the gaudy coat of mail he has put upon the Apostle's testimony of his conversion; and chose the simple testimony as recorded in Scripture for myself. I hope I shall not offend you; you must bear with me, and correct me where I am wrong, I don't pretend to infallibility you know.

Well again, he says the truth in his opinion, lies at the two extremes, and not between. I should like to know what he would call them. Does he mean to say that absolute sovereignty is one, and man's freewill the other?

In my opinion, let the truth lie where it will, man has nothing to do with it (no more than he can make it serve his purpose) until God implants it within, and then neither the devil nor ten thousand freewill preachers can remove it. Because God prepares better soil for it to grow in than depraved human nature. Everyone must be born of the Spirit before truth will grow within. And truth without, or only in the head, never will save any man. And with respect to this "being born again," I say that man is not active no more than he is in his natural generation; but only passive. But as soon as God the Holy Ghost has brought forth a new creature, (for, be it remembered, that it must be begotten of God, as well as born of God, therefore it is the work of God alone to bring forth a

new creature, which shall be saved eternally,) it will show signs of life; for there are none of the children of God still born, by crying out for the breasts of Zion's consolations; the same as a natural child will cry for its mother's breast. So, I bid adieu to the two extremes.

Now dear friend, what must I say about his doctrine of contradiction, as he calls it. This I say, I believe he would leave his hearers in as dense a fog with regard to the doctrine of their responsibility as they were before, unless the Holy Spirit taught them what Mr. Spurgeon neglected to do.

I wonder what Mr. Spurgeon would say if he was told that the heathen had got a great image built on a great rock in which was a great cave capable of sheltering them from the burning heat of the torrid sun, and a safe refuge from all sorts of wild beasts and hurtful things, and besides it was well stocked with provisions, an inexhaustible supply! And, this image is built in the attitude of a man with his arms stretched out, and was daily crying out Come unto me, come unto me, to a lot of poor helpless creatures, bitten with serpents, yea bitten so badly that from the crown of the head to the sole of the consequently could not move a joint. What sort of a Saviour would such an image prove to these poor creatures so destitute of power to move? Suppose in addition to their present misery there are a host of enemies in all shapes, some in the shape of parsons too, exerting the utmost of their power to keep them away. And what is worse, they themselves are determined not to go. Now I consider this is precisely the state of all men by nature. They are said to be dead in sin, and have no soundness in them, and that salvation is not of the will of men, but that all men by nature are led captive by the devil at his will. Now Mr. Spurgeon says that God stretched out his arms daily to save them (the Jews), and yet he didn't save them, which I say is positive proof in itself, that he did not stretch out his arms to save them. I also maintain that such a saviour would not be a degree better than the image I have given for an illustration, which could neither move itself, or give power to those to whom it was crying come, come.

Now, dear friend, I ask you why need there be so much contention about man's responsibility, seeing that it is so plainly set forth in Scripture, that he who runs may read, and the wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein. Does not the Apostle in the seventh chapter to the Romans tell us that we are all by nature married to the law our first husband, and that we are responsible to our first husband as long as he lives; but when our first husband be dead we are at liberty to be married to another man, even Christ Jesus, and then we become responsible to our second husband Christ Jesus, whoever lives not to condemn us, but to make intercession for us, and whose commandments are not grievous. But I should suppose according to the tenor of Mr. Spurgeon in that sermon, that one husband (the law) is not enough for natural men now a days, to be responsible to; although he (the law) requires truth in the inward parts; and I feel persuaded that man cannot get it there himself.

Will Mr. Spurgeon make his little finger thicker than his father's loins? Will he chastise us with scorpions instead of the whip? see 1 Kings 12:10. I hope he will not go over to Popery, for I see he has been to the absolution in the Church of England Prayer Book for the word 'rather,' and quoted it with the Scripture text. Ezekiel 33:11, and so makes it appear that God is foolish for neglecting to do something he would rather have done.

Now, dear friend, I have a few words to say about his conversion to God, and then I shall conclude for this time. He says, "I sought the Lord four years, and then I found him; and I think I began to commend myself for the good success I had made; till one day I was walking, and the thought struck me. How came I first to seek the Lord?" &c? Was the commendation due to him? For the word says, 'I was found of them that sought me not, I was made manifest to them that asked not after me.'

As it has been requested that this letter should be published, I would beg of all who read it to beware lest they condemn the innocent. I am not an enemy to Mr. Spurgeon. No, in no wise. Neither do I wish to lessen his popularity. But it was a request made to me by a friend in the ministry near London, and a friend of Mr. Spurgeon. And as the truth and honour of God is at stake, I have consented to its publicity, and do hope that by God's blessing it may be productive of much good, by causing a more diligent search for, the real truth as it is in Jesus. May God add his blessing, is the prayer of your brother and advocate for the unadulterated truth of the Gospel.

JOHN WESLEY
Lticester, January, 1860

JAMES WELL'S DEFENDED

Mr. Wells says, "My Good Theophilus, this punishment eternal was, (on the ground of sin) sovereignly appointed."

One of the Least says, "This is an Antinomian sentiment." I say no, and affirm, fearless of contradiction, that it is the language of the Bible. Might I venture to ask the writer a question? Is not eternal punishment for sin? And was not eternal punishment sovereignly appointed? Reprobation does not damn a sinner; it only leaves him: it is his own sin that damns him: hell is the just reward for his iniquity. If this is Antinomianism, thank God it is the Antinomianism of the Bible.

Secondly. The writer says that "Mr. Wells cannot give the readers of the Vessel, chapter and verse for such a sentiment. Would the writer humble himself to read the following scriptures:

"In the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die," i.e., every form of death. Genesis 2:17. Romans 5:12. Is not this eternal punishment on the ground of sin? and was not this eternal punishment sovereignly appointed?

Again, the apostle says, "For the wages of sin is death." Romans 5:23. Galatians 6:7. James 1:15. Revelations 21:8. Many more Scriptures might be quoted, but these are enough to testify, that eternal punishment, (as Mr. Wells says,) "is on the ground of sin; that damnation is for a fault; that a man's own sin merits his own punishment." "One of the Least" ought to have put on his spectacles and read carefully.

RICHARD BICKELL, Preacher or the Word,

Lew Down, Denon.

MR. GEORGE WYARD, AND MR. JAMES WELLS:
THEIR DIFFERENCES CALMLY CONSIDERED.

Earthen Vessel February 1860, page 63ff

[There was a difference between Paul and Barnabas. Paul was a red-hot shot man: Barnabas was hardly so firm and determined. There was a difference between Peter and John; but it was more constitutional than evangelical. There is a difference between our brethren James Wells and George Wyard; but, in all things which make for the salvation of the Church of God, they are the same. We love them both; we pray that their usefulness in the gospel may more and more increase; and that, in the gospel, they may be like Jonathan and David, "Loving one another with a pure heart fervently." These are not times for men of truth to be divided, we have no strength to spare. We heartily wish that every heaven-taught man of God, could practically unite together for the spread of the puke gospel of God's Electing, redeeming, calling, sanctifying, justifying and preserving grace! Brethren, do not give the enemy occasion to laugh at us; let us be "terrible as an army with banners." Ed¹³.]

Editor's note: C. W. Banks above is exceedingly ignorant on the sovereignty of God and deceitfulness of men. The same can be said of his pacifist attitude toward the vast difference between Wells and Wyard on the gospel. It reminds me of similar minded people who looked kindly on the rise of Adolf Hitler: seeking peace at any cost. There can be no compromise between truth and error. Mr. M. M. below is like Banks seeking peace at the expense of truth. We should always heed the word of God though the wise man: "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding." Proverbs 23:23 - Richard C. Schadle

Dear Mr. Editor,

I have no doubt it grieves your generous spirit, the dissention of Messrs. Wells and Wyard. If you think the following observations will act as oil to still the agitated waters, you will give them a place in the Vessel. I must not put all the blame on one side, let me first direct Mr. Well's attention to one or two passages that may arrest his noble spirit. "Take heed that you offend not one of these little ones." The parable of the unforgiving fellow servant. I'll quote no more, a word to the wise is enough, "A good man is of an excellent spirit." I know he can better instruct me than I can him, yet I am emboldened to give my thoughts, because of examples of a like kind. For instance, a little maid, an observer of things around her, counsels a great general how to get a cure, and his servants corrects his judgment, and he gets the benefit by listening to their advice Mr. Wyard has said some pithy things about who qualifies and gives success and appoints to this or that field of labor. But I do not think Mr. Wells meant for one moment to vaunt and boast of himself and his doings, though I must confess, the implications of Mr. Wells's remarks were calculated to irritate and provoke. After all, the whole affair may be looked upon as we look on a large family where there are various temperaments; some slow and quiet; others quick and vivacious, or rather hasty. Here's James with his flow of spirits gives John an ugly push, and says wake up, don't go to sleep. And John takes it so much to heart, that he disturbs the whole family to help him to be avenged on James for

¹³ Charles Walter Banks

his rough and hard usage and insult. Well now, would it not have been better had James used gentler methods to arouse John to a sense of anything he saw desirable for him to be more awake too. Then again, had John's reflections ran in this channel, have I not given some cause for this hasty burst of James's temper. I know he is a good brother, and means well in general, I'll see him alone and make all right. Would it not have been better than nourishing his wrath, and seeking to enlist all he can to be avenged, by making such a serious matter of it, as if the interests of the whole family were at stake? I cannot help suspecting, in spite of all the solemn tirade of John's, in last Vessel, on it, and his apparent concern only for truth's sake, and James's own particular good, not forgetting his concern for the great interests involved to all the family, that John's dear own self lies close at the bottom, and that the revenge is intended to be far worse severe and damaging than the affront. With reference to the great truths involved in the misunderstanding, John and all he enlists to help him, will have a difficulty to prove James wrong in the main. Who put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent? Are there not two distinct seeds? However, my object is not to enter into this part or the dispute. "Who by searching can find out the Almighty?" "What we know not now we shall know hereafter." Yet I have no wish to muzzle the Lord's ox that treads out the corn. We all know that however beautiful Zion's King is, and condescending and kind to instruct his people in heavenly mysteries, yet all will not be revealed in this time state. A good man and learned Editor has been lately expatiating on the eternal Sonship of Christ. I doubt not with the purest motives, and to the edification of many, but when such a statement as this is made, "The Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, and the Holy Ghost is eternal." Ergo, the Father is no older than the Son, nor the Holy Ghost; for the Son is as old as the Father, and the Holy Ghost, of course. This clashes with all our finite comprehensions, but you must not dispute this, or you detract from the Person of God the Son. We are told now we can comprehend that where there is a Son there must be Three Persons; and here we find Three Persons; a Triune Oneness. And, we can understand, that a natural son is not inferior to his father; his nature the same, so that he is in no way inferior, and we can conceive of a father, mother, and son, all exactly of one mind; harmony and concord to preclude the possibility of discord or disarrangement, and of father and mother so delighting in Son, and to put all things under him. Thus, if it were possible, rendering the Son the greatest of the Three. And we can understand that our nature is as old as Adam's, and that we existed in him. But I must forbear this digression.

I will cheerfully join any good, well-meaning men to take the Papal Bull by the horns, to prevent him devouring and destroying Zion's provisions. And, sure I am, good men, men of truth, must sink their little differences, and jealousies, and join heartily to oppose Rome's aggressions in this land.

Mr. Editor, in conclusion, let me direct your attention and your readers to Dr. Campbell's noble efforts to do battle against this common adversary, for which purpose I have sent you a copy of his *British Ensign*; see in it an article on Napoleon and Victoria, and may Zion's true soldiers buckle on their armor and go forth, as in days of old, to encounter this dangerous, aggressive foe.

M.M.

THE DOCTOR AND THE DIVINE

Dear Sir,

I perceive you have inserted my letter to “a Little One” in this month’s Vessel (supplement). I am free to confess that my letter was not written in that spirit of courtesy it ought to have been, and for which I am sorry; because many will suppose that I am totally opposed to him in doctrine, whereas such is not the case, but on the contrary, I highly respect him as a great and good man, and bless the Lord he has raised up and made him so useful; nevertheless, we cannot endorse every sentiment a great and good man may write or declare. As you truly remark “they are men,” fallible men, neither are they inspired as the Apostles, who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost in penning the canon of Scriptures.

It appears I have misunderstood the meaning of “a Little One,” about sin being sovereignly appointed, as in page 273 of last month’s Vessel, but I think nine persons out of ten would have understood it as I did. The printer has not even put a comma after the word sin. If the words “on the ground of sin” had been put in a parenthesis (as they ought to have been) all would have been clear; however, I am glad to find in the cover that the writer repudiates such a doctrine most heartily. To tell the truth, had it not been for that line or two, I had not written at all, but was perfectly astounded that such a long and such a strong champion for free and sovereign grace should advocate such a monstrous doctrine. However, am glad to find it is not so, but certainly think, as it stands, it is very ambiguous, and very liable to be misunderstood. I beg to offer him an apology for having misrepresented him and feel sure that he is generous enough to forgive me.

You have not inserted all my letter, especially that part where I highly approve of Mr. Barrenger’s interpretation of the word “hate,” and hope you will allow me to quote a few words of what Dr. Gill says upon it. I do not know that we can have a better authority than such a good and learned man. On Romans 9:13, he says, “Everlasting and unchangeable love is the true cause and spring of the choice of particular persons to eternal salvation, and hatred is the cause of rejection, by which is meant not positive hatred, which can only have for its object sin and sinners, or persons so considered, but negative hatred, which is God’s will not to give eternal life to some persons I and shows itself by a neglect of them, taking no notice of them, passing them by, when he chose others; so the word hate is used for neglect, taking no notice, where positive hatred cannot be thought to take place, in Luke 14:26.” I think this definition is good.¹⁴

¹⁴ I can see no reason for “One of the least” to give this quotation except to add confusion to the debate. He wants to give the impression the Mr. Barrenger’s thoughts are same as Gills while Wells is against both. The fact is that Mr. Wells doctrine agrees perfectly with Dr. Gill. Here is a quotation from Well’s sermon “The One Taken The Other Left”
(<https://www.surreytabernaclepulpit.com/files/Sermons/JamesWells/1859/THE%20ONE%20TAKEN%20THE%20OTHER%20LEFT.pdf>)

Mr. Wells states in part: "I will not say that God did positively decree the fall; but I will say, and challenge any man to contradict me, that God did negatively decree the fall; that is, he determined not to prevent it. Now then, what but an infinity of hatred could leave a soul in the state into which we are brought by the fall? There we are lost; that is, they who are left there are lost. I take that fact as evidence the second. First, I have the testimony of God that the hatred is sovereign; secondly, I have the circumstance of the fall; and I look upon the lost being left in that fall, as the evidence of God’s hatred to them; they are left there; just as I take on the other hand this great testimony, that the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world; and if you ask for whom he was slain from the foundation of the world, the answer is: that he was slain from the foundation of the world, for those that were

There is much that is good and solemn in Mr. Wyard's letter to Mr. Wells, one part of which I wish he would take to heart, which has been very painful to thousands of the Lord's people, in hearing Mr. Wells i.e., uttering puns, jokes and witty sarcasms in such a sacred place as the pulpit.¹⁵ If one place is more sacred than another upon earth it is the pulpit, Such things are not becoming a Gospel minister, at any time, as may be fully proved from 2 Peter 3:11, "What manner of persons ought you to be?" &c. By omitting such language, he might starve the swine, and they might go away, but the sheep would be better satisfied. It is a common thing in my neighborhood to hear people say, "We'll go to hear old ---- to-night, we shall have some rare fun." Half the time is spent in laughter, in which the Preacher joins audibly, and when the service ends many may be heard saying, "It is as good as a theatre." And all this done by a man who preaches the doctrines we believe in. Is it not awful? Is it not enough to make us say with the old patriarch, "O my soul, come not you into their secret, and unto their assembly mine honor be not you united." I am not charging Mr. W. with going to this excess, I know he does not, and I feel sure he does not believe the sentiment Mr. Wyard charges him with on page 28, or seems to charge him with, "if, therefore, the finally lost are in perdition as the effect of God's hatred, &c." A man must be a monster indeed (and worse than an antinomian) to believe such a doctrine as that, and one I should be totally averse and repugnant to my feelings to own as a brother. He appears to have drawn the picture far too strong here, and which I hope and trust he will be sorry for ere long. If we differ as brethren, let it be done in a good spirit, and mortify the old man with his deeds. I must not further trespass on your pages or patience, and as a low stool is a safe place (if not the most honorable), you must still allow me to subscribe myself,

One of the Least

SALVATION AND SEPARATION OR, THOUGHTS ON DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

By 'A Son of Peace.'

Brethren, Ministers, and Members, of the Particular Baptist churches in and around London, It is with unfeigned regret, in common with many others, I find that, for some time past, there have been some unhappy differences of opinion between you relative to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. As in other cases of difference, these have engendered strife, personal ill-feeling, hard speeches, aspersion of motive, and division. Satan has got an advantage over you, weak believers are laid open to his temptations thereby, your hard thoughts and hard words of one another make their tender hearts bleed, 'Aha, aha,' is shouted in the camp of the common enemy, Arminians

ordained to eternal life. "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." And therefore, your being taken out of the fall, is an evidence that God has loved you; the others being left in the fall, is an evidence that God has hated them; and nothing but infinite hatred could ever leave a sinner in that direful, that woeful condemnation."

¹⁵ This is outrageous and untrue. Nothing in Well's sermons warrants such abuse. Banks must have be aware of this yet he allowed "One of the Least" to propagate this falsehood.

misrepresent and triumph, infidels chuckle, and 'Discordans' smiles with fiendish delight. Hear a word from a Son of Peace.

Concerning the absolute sovereignty of God, you are all at a point. You seem principally at issue on the basis of it, and the manner of stating it. Grant me, brethren, a patient reading of what follows, remembering that my object in addressing you is your hearty union in the truth.

To God, then, we say belongs supreme, absolute, and universal sovereignty. How know we this? By the testimony of his own word. One testimony is as good as one thousand. 'I am the Lord,' he says, 'and there is none else; there is no God beside me.' What is the interpretation of his sovereignty? Hear him, 'I will work, and who shall let it?' But the basis, what can the basis be but supremacy? Surely nothing, nothing but supremacy, and that too in the very simplest form we can entertain the idea of it. 'I am God, I will work.' No doubt the sovereignty of God is always exercised in justice and judgment; do doubt it is matter of highest comfort and satisfaction that supreme sovereignty is in the hands of Him who is holy, just, and good; but what is the ground of our confidence that the sovereignty of God is ever exercised with justice and judgment? Is it some foregone conclusions formed of the character of God independent of his word? This would be fallacious ground. Is it a power we possess to comprehend the justice of his ways according to human notions of the principle of justice? Impossible; our knowledge of the ways of God is utterly insufficient to enable us to pronounce upon them. They are to us a great deep, an inscrutable mystery. What then is the ground of our confidence that the sovereignty of God is always exercised in 'righteousness, equity, truth, and wisdom?' Simply this, the testimony of his own word. It is, and while we see through a glass darkly it must ever be, as much a matter of faith in the divine testimony, as that 'the worlds were framed by the word of God.' Associate with your thoughts of the Divine Being, his goodness, his knowledge, and his power, and take but one step back beyond the creation of Adam, and you will find that the very lightest evil which ever afflicted mankind, to say nothing of the awful solemnities of hell, is a mystery no human mind can explicate, and a subject about which no satisfaction can be found, save only in the Scripture testimony of God's sovereignty, and the righteousness of that sovereignty. Our brother, then, was no doubt in error when he said that 'righteousness, equity, truth, and wisdom' are the basis of divine sovereignty. He mistook the rule for the foundation. But might not another and a kinder method, with other and kinder words than 'very bad logic, and worse divinity,' have been chosen to correct him? And, moreover, the logic employed to correct his bad logic, and worse divinity, is perhaps not faultless. Does it necessarily follow always that if it is righteous and wise to do a certain thing, that it must be unrighteous and unwise not to do it? Might there not be equal righteousness and wisdom in doing or in not doing the same thing? We are not, be it remembered, speaking of a judicial, but of a sovereign act. Certainly, we may speak of the righteousness of God's sovereignty without just cause of rebuke; and when we so speak of any of his sovereign acts, we resist the inference that his not doing any of those acts, which we may say are done in righteousness, would logically imply unrighteousness.

You differ in your manner of stating the doctrine of divine sovereignty, and the consequences involved. One advances the proposition with the highest confidence that 'God hates without a fault' while another shudders at it as 'dreadful.' But when God hated Esau, he was not yet born, and consequently had done neither good nor evil. Where then was the personal fault? But perhaps some of you will say, Esau was hated on the ground of God's foreknowledge of his fall in Adam, and of

his own personal transgression. "Where is the Scripture for this fancy? If such were the case would not God require some grounds whereon, he might love Jacob? My brethren, notions like these are a replying against God, and deprive him of his absolute sovereignty. The truth is, the doctrine of God's hatred, like every other doctrine of the Scriptures in some respects, is immeasurably above the level of our little capacities, and we may each 'tremble at his word' which reveals it: but other testimony of his word which we have is a sufficient preservative from shuddering. Some commentators, to soften the difficulty, have adopted the 'love less ' theory: and to be consistent with themselves, they ought to explain divine love to Jacob by hate less. It is vain for us to attempt to explain God's conduct herein according to human rules of wisdom and right. We can only fear God in the matter by faith. Leave, brethren, the exposition of what is dark to a brighter day. It is the truest wisdom to be ignorant of much, yes, of everything which God has .not revealed. Who, according to human notions of justice, can explain even the righteousness of that wondrous act of divine sovereignty, the substitution of Christ? No man. Some of you may perhaps tremble for the credit of the Scriptures and the doctrines of grace with the world. You may, if your thoughts lie that way, safely leave God's honor, and the credit of his Scriptures, in his own hands; he needs not for himself, nor for his word, any of our apologies. He will rather receive any apologetic interference from us as a gratuitous assumption, and an officious meddling with what does not belong to us. If we suppose we shall gain for him and his word an increased acceptance by any toning down process, we may easily undeceive ourselves by the testimony of Christ. If the world will not receive him and his word as he has revealed himself therein, neither would they were one to rise from the dead to enforce the acceptance. The infidel will be infidel still, after you have done all to shape the word to his liking. You have heard the story of the Catholic priest on shipboard, who, when a Protestant had fallen into the sea, bargained with the drowning man to rescue him if he would recant. The miserable Protestant recanted, you know, and the priest reasoned that then was the best time for him to die, and so drowned him. Make your Bible recant, and the world will despise and burn it as much afterwards as before. Numberless pious attempts on every hand have been made to make the Bible as rational, and acceptable to the enlightened minds of piously disposed persons, who would feel otherwise an unconquerable aversion to the book. The learned Mr. Horne has given a remarkable specimen of this softening meddling in his interpretation of the hardening of Pharoah's heart. He has put the Hebrew language on the rack, and made it speak most softly; nobody knows what is in the subjunctive mood, but he has shrewdly ignored Paul's stubborn Greek, and has left that intractable witness to bear its un-twistable testimony without a single question in cross examination. Brethren, when God speaks, hear what he says, and leave him to account for his own testimony when he pleases.

But the consequences involved. God, in the exercise of his divine sovereignty, loved Jacob and hated Esau. To put it in no stronger terms, he permitted the fall of both, but he made a sure provision for the redemption of Jacob. But what of Esau? He left him to be 'judged according to his works.' In a few words that is the sum. He who contends for a consequence of sovereign hatred beyond this is unwarranted by the testimony of God. The decrees of sovereignty relative to the non-elect are nowhere in the Scripture represented as the cause of their damnation. Judgment proceeds not on the fore appointments of divine sovereignty, but on the righteousness or unrighteousness of the judged. Death is the wages of sin, life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. If I say, God loves the elect, and therefore they shall be saved; and, God bates the non-elect, and therefore they must be damned; I may be speaking that which is incontrovertibly true, but I am-neither using a sound nor a Scripture argument, nor am I speaking on these solemn matters

in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches and am, moreover, entirely forgetting what are revealed in the Scriptures to be the meritorious causes of both salvation and damnation. Far better is it, brethren, to abide by the words of the Holy Ghost than to syllogize unsoundly and unscriptural, and volunteer for God damnatory statements founded on his sovereign purposes.

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even so, prays.

Yours, faithfully,

A Son of Peace.

THE SOVEREIGNTY AND JUSTICE OF GOD, AS MANIFESTED TOWARDS THAT PART OF MANKIND NOT CHOSEN IN CHRIST TO EVERLASTING LIFE¹⁶. July 60 pages 189ff

By Mr. James Tann¹⁷, Pastor of the Baptist Church, Yarmouth.

It pleased the great and ever-blessed God, of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things, to give visibility to his infinite perfection, first in creation, and then in Christ. And in order to bring about this supreme end, of manifestation, creation was called into existence, with every part thereof, from the meanest to the most magnificent, bearing the impress of his mighty hand. Man, its noblest part was placed at its head, dignified and distinguished from the rest by an immortal soul, and an erect posture of existence, with his face “looking up” to his Maker, as the word *Anthropos*, (for man,) signifies. Besides being thus dignified in being, set over the creatures, he was made, as to the external form of his body, a figure of him that was to come, in whom the highest manifestation of God was to be made. “The invisible things of him, (said Paul,) from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.” Romans 1:20.

Though creation showed forth his eternal power and Godhead, and man its noblest part being made in his image and likeness, and brought to commune with him through the medium of the creatures in which the beams of his Godhead shone, and being glorified hereby, in that he was known and worshipped by a rational creature, yet it did not please God to rest his glory here, but to give a further and fuller manifestation of it in the person of his dear Son, in whom it was destined to abide forever. In him, I may say, the glory of God found its resting place, like the ark did in the temple, where the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

¹⁶ It is interesting that Walter Banks placed this article on Reprobation in the *Vessel* months after the second supplement. Perhaps he realized that he had been unfair to Mr. Wells.

¹⁷ Mr. Tann was the minister of this particular Baptist church for 14 years. He died on May 29th, 1861

And as it pleased God to manifest himself in his grace, love, and mercy in his beloved Son, so it pleased him to have a people to see and enjoy himself in these manifestations. He therefore takes out of mankind which he had formed, a people for himself; and to secure to them a state immutable, a holiness unblameable, and a happiness immortal, he chose them in his Son, and blessed them in him with all spiritual blessings. With all the blessings of glory in holy and lasting fellowship; and with all the blessings of grace to meeten them for it and bring them to it.

This manifestation of God in Christ exceeds every other manifestation of himself in creation. Here all God's attributes and perfections terminate and stand for ever to the open view, of his elect. And if the engraving of the image of his Son on the hearts of his saints, contains a more illustrious display of his perfections than all creation put together, how much more illustrious must his perfections appear in Christ who is the image of the invisible God?

This supreme end of manifestation, God sought and wrought for in the unbosoming of himself, in the infinitude of his love and mercy. On account of this end, which was so desirable in his sight, he permitted the fall to take place. Not that he ordained the fall as a means to it. For all means that are employed to reach an end, must have a tendency in them to that end. Now the fall had no such a tendency, therefore could not be a means to it. The tendency of the fall was to death and destruction. Notwithstanding, God permitted it, and took occasion from it to pour out his abundant mercy upon his elect in Christ Jesus. Hence, they are designated vessels of mercy, for by mercy they are raised from the death and destruction of the fall, and brought to that eternal glory, which was first cast upon them by electing favor.

But the enquiry naturally arises, that if God has chosen only a part of mankind, what becomes of the rest? On this important enquiry, I will, with God's blessing, offer a few thoughts.

There are three righteous acts of God manifested towards that part of mankind not chosen in Christ to everlasting life. The first is an act of pure sovereignty, and respected their creation state; the second, is an act of sovereignty and justice, and respected their sinful state; the third, is an act of pure justice, and respected their eternal state.

I. The first act is an act of pure sovereignty, and respected man in his creation state as he lay before God in the womb of his eternal purposes. It pleased God in the exercise of his sovereign authority over mankind, laying thus in embryo before him to make one part into vessels of honor, and the other part into vessels of dishonor; to raise up one part to a supernatural state of blessedness, and to leave the other part without such an honor put upon them. And God in making such a choice out of mankind of a people for himself, and leaving the rest in their creature state, showed his absolute right to dispose of the whole, as should best set forth his glory. "Has not the potter power over the clay, said the apostle?" Romans 9:21. Is there any unrighteousness in God, in leaving out of his electing favor a part of mankind? Does he owe the creature anything? Or has he, in not raising them up to a Paradise of unsullied bliss with his elect, robbed them of anything? Does God's leaving them out of his favor, lead them into hell?

We have an illustration of God's leaving apart of mankind, in the case of Jacob and Esau. Both lay in the same womb, having done neither good nor evil, and yet it is said, "Jacob have I loved, but

Esau have I hated,” Romans 9:12. There was no good wrought by the former to merit the love; nor evil committed by the latter, to deserve the hatred. This was a pure act of sovereignty in God, to choose the one, and leave the other; to love the former, and hate the latter.

But with respect to the word hatred something must be said. We cannot suppose for one moment, that God hated Esau in the sense that we commonly understand the word. God did not hate Esau, as Esau hated Jacob. Ill-will, and ill-feeling, have no place in God. Hatred is not an attribute of the Almighty.

God’s hatred of Esau was negative, that is, not loved him, It is not a loving less, but a not loving at all. God fixed his paternal and eternal love upon Jacob, but not on Esau. It is said, (Genesis 39: 30, 31, that Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah; and when the Lord saw that Leah was hated, that is, not loved, for it is manifest that Rachel had Jacob’s best love. In Ephesians 5:29, it says, “no man hates his own flesh, that is, so as not to care and provide for it.” In the many places in which the word hate occurs, the sense must be determined by the connection.

God’s hatred of the non-elect, represented in the collective term Esau, could not be positive, because there was nothing in them, (simply in their creation state) inimical to his nature and perfections. They being with the rest of mankind, the production of his power, wisdom, and goodness, must necessarily contain everything in them agreeable to those perfections. Positive hatred with reference to God, supposes something existing that is contrary to his holiness; and what is that something, but disobedience, the thing that God positively hated? Yes, disobedience is the very womb in which sin was born. God drowned the old world, laid Sodom and Gomorrah in ashes, and swept Jerusalem with the besom of destruction; and what for? Disobedience. Sin is the transgression of the law; and man’s stepping beyond the holy boundary of that law, is the sole cause of God’s displeasure and eternal punishment.

Man, simply as a creature, is not an object of positive and eternal hatred. To say so, is to justify that old assertion inferred by some from predestination, that God made man to damn him. If man, as he came out of the hands of God, had been an object of his displeasure, without any reference to his disobedience, then his damnation had been founded in his creation. And we might naturally infer therefrom that man’s damnation was the end which God sought in his creation. But this must be rejected with abhorrence. God made man upright in righteousness and holiness. Man made himself a sinner, and for his sin God appoints him to wrath.

This first act of God, in leaving a part of mankind out of electing favor, is a pure act of sovereignty. He was not obliged to do otherwise. And in doing so, he made no alteration whatever in their creation state, but simply left them in it.

It is of no use for poor creatures of yesterday to fight against God, because of these, his doings. He will do his own pleasure, and fulfil his own counsels, notwithstanding all their replies and dictations. “Who has directed the spirit of the Lord? With whom took he counsel? Behold the nations are as the drop of a bucket. All nations before him are as nothing, and less than nothing and vanity,” Isaiah 40:14. It is perilous work to dispute with the Almighty. It is running upon the thick bosses of his buckler. And who has resisted his will?

II. The second act of God towards those not elected in Christ, is an act of sovereignty and justice, and is manifested in the withholding of mercy. This act of God respected them in their sinful state, as lying under the sentence of his righteous law which they have broken. The withholding of mercy from them in this state is an act of sovereignty with reference to God himself, in that he is not obliged to grant it; and it is an act of justice towards them, in that they not only do not deserve it, but deserve the contrary, that is to say, wrath. So, God withholds mercy, sovereignly and justly. Reprobation, then, which takes in this second act of God, is an act of sovereignty, with a thread of justice running through it.

But some may object, and say that sin foreseen in the non-elect, was the cause of mercy being withheld from them. But that cannot be, unless their sins had been of such a nature as to be unpardonable, and beyond redemption. But their sins were as pardonable as those of his own elect; and God could have provided a pardon for them had it been his will to have done so. Seeing then, that their sins were no bar to mercy, and the condition of the elect was not against it, as being less sinful, for they were children of wrath even as others; it must follow that it was God's will to leave them in their sins, and not grant them mercy unto everlasting life.

III. The third act of God towards the non-elect is of pure justice, and respected their eternal state, and is manifested in appointing them to wrath on account of their sins and transgressions. It is an act of pure justice, I say, because they having broken God's righteous law, deserve it. God would not send any man to hell, if he did not deserve it. Hell was prepared for sinners; it is their wages. Though there is nothing in the sinner saved to move God to save him, yet we cannot say there is nothing in the sinner condemned, to move God to damn him. Sin is the cause of this condemnation and appointment to wrath. "Wherefore, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so, death passed upon, all men, for that all have sinned." Romans 5:12.

Adam's sin makes us all guilty before God, and every actual sin that we commit, swells that guiltiness and augments the weight of punishment in hell. I do not say that less actual sins lessens the duration of punishment, for the sentence of the law is eternal; but they lessen the weight of it.

Some do not believe in degrees of punishment in hell. A person in conversation told me that he believed God would make no difference, all would be punished alike. But our Savior makes a difference between Capernaum and Sodom in the day of judgment Matthew 9:23. What! will the Judge of mankind pour out his Almighty wrath upon men indiscriminately, and regardless of the sins they have committed? Will he drive souls into hell headlong, like Satan drove the swine into the midst of the sea? Would not this be to destroy every idea of justice instead of establishing it, which is the great end of the judgment day? Everyone that goes to hell, will undoubtedly feel that his sentence is just. The over-pouring conviction effected by the great Searcher of hearts, will be such as to satisfy the sinner convicted; that his sentence is no more and no less than his sins deserve, and that God is just in passing it, and appointing him to wrath. The duration of this sentence is eternal. There is no such a thing as a universal restitution of men and devils from hell, which some would have us believe according to their criticisms on the word eternal.

The authority of the law which men have broken, is infinite. This is God's righteous rule in judgment by which he measures their every sin and binds them over to punishment. And so long as the law retains its authority, so long will sinners be retained in the prison of hell.

Having offered these few thoughts on the sovereignty and justice of God, as set forth in the threefold state of that part of mankind not chosen in Christ, that is to say, in their creation state; their sinful state; and their eternal state; let me further say, that though these things are so, the ministers of God need not be slack in their work, but go on publishing mercy, and preaching Christ in the glory of his Person, and in the triumphs of his cross. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

That there are marks of a reprobate state, no doubt exist; but let it suffice, that all those who are convinced of sin, and led to the fountain of Christ's blood for pardon and peace are not reprobates. Some of God's elect live many years in sin, and ignorance, before grace arrest them; so that none who are concerned about their immortal souls, though advanced in years, need despair. "God saved one thief, (said Augustine,) that none might despair; and but one, that none might presume."

God's elect have nothing to boast of, in and of themselves, over them which are lost, for they deserved hell as much as the reprobate. All their boast must be in the free and unmerited love of God, who provided them a substitute in the Person of his dear Son, on whom all their sins were laid, and borne away by his sufferings and death, so as never to be brought back again, nor remembered any more. The grace of God in its operation in us, begets a sympathy towards our fellow creatures, on whom can we look and say, that man deserves hell more than I do? Or if we look from the precipice of time down the dreadful chasm of endless despair, what prevented our feet from falling therein?

It cannot be that any who are partakers of grace, can rejoice over the lost. A sense of mercy will not beget this joy, nor will the sight and sense of God's sovereignty. The sovereignty of God rightly understood, will soften the heart, and humble the spirit before him. I remember about six weeks after I was brought into the liberty of the gospel, while passing through a field, on my way to see an aged parent, I had such a sight and sense of God's absolute dominion, as the Great Potter, as affected me very much. My parent, whom I loved much, laid heavy on my mind. And the consideration of her being damned forever, humbled me down before God, in whose sight I had found grace. Natural affection strove hard, but the sense of God's greatness and righteousness strove harder and prevailed.

The sovereignty of God is a branch of truth dear to his saints, and as dear to God as his being. Its basis is founded in his independency. His sovereignty or supreme dominion naturally arises out of his eternal independency. Were God dependent, his sovereignty would be limited. The sovereignty that Joseph exercised over the Egyptians was not supreme, because the basis of it was dependency. "By your word," said Pharaoh to Joseph, "my people shall be ruled, only in the throne will I be greater than you;" hence, Joseph's was but a deputed sovereignty. God sits upon a throne, over whom none rules, and his independency establishes his sovereignty forever.

What ado has there been between earthly sovereigns about their sovereignty! What wars has there been! And what blood has been shed about a foot or two of earth, and a little honor not duly paid! And may not God assert and maintain his supreme dominion? If mortal princes, who are but petty rulers under God, contend for their rights, may not God contend for his, who is over all, God blessed for evermore?

May the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, command his blessing on these few thoughts.

Yarmouth, March 9th, 1860.