

807
THE

PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER,

OR ORIGINAL SERMONS BY LIVING MINISTERS IN THE PRES-
BYTERIAN CHURCH,

ON

THE IMPORTANT DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY,

PRESENTED IN A CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE MANNER, FOR THE INSTRUCTION
OF THE PRESENT AGE, AND IN DEFENCE OF THE TRUTH.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.—PSALMS.

EDITED BY S. C. JENNINGS,
PASTOR OF A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

VOLUME V.



PITTSBURGH:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM ALMINDER.
1837.

Received 1874.8
65
1836-37

ANDOVER-HARVARD
THEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

CONTENTS.

VOLUME V.

- SERMON LXVII. BY SAMUEL MARTIN, D. D.**
GIVING MORE BLESSED THAN RECEIVING.
Acts 20:35. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Page 1
- SERMON LXVIII. BY JOSEPH WOOD, A. M.**
THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT ON DIVINE TRUTH IN THE WORK OF SANCTIFICATION.
2 Thess. 2:13. Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. 11
- SERMON LXIX. BY RUFUS W. BAILEY.**
THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.
Matt. 16:18, 19. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 21
- SERMON LXX. BY RUFUS W. BAILEY.**
THE WISDOM OF GOD ILLUSTRATED IN THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING.
1 Cor. 1:21. For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. 30
- SERMON LXXI. BY R. M. CUNNINGHAM, D. D.**
THE DUTIES AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.
Acts 20:24. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 37
- SERMON LXXII. BY GEORGE G. POAGE.**
THE REDEMPTION PURCHASED BY THE SON OF GOD.
Gal. 4:4, 5. But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. 48
- SERMON LXXIII. BY THOMAS CLELAND, D. D.**
THE CONSERVATION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.
Psalms 37:28. The Lord forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever. 53
- SERMON LXXIV. BY JAMES H. THORNWELL.**
THE GRACE OF GOD SECURES THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.
Romans 11:29. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. 70
- SERMON LXXV. BY JOEL STONEROAD.**
CHRIST THE GLORIOUS BUILDER OF THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE.
Zech. 6:12, 13. Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory. 77

SERMON LXXVI. By JOHN MATTHEWS, D. D.

THE MORAL STATE AND CHARACTER OF INFANTS.

Luke 18:15, 16. And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Page 85

SERMON LXXVII. By SAMUEL C. JENNINGS.

THE PROPER ACQUIREMENTS IN FEMALE EDUCATION.

Psalms 144:12. That our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace. 97

SERMON LXXVIII. By SAMUEL MARTIN, D. D.

CHILDREN ARE AN HERITAGE OF THE LORD.

Psalms 127:3. Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord. 101

SERMON LXXIX. By WILLIAM M'MILLAN, D. D.

'ON THE SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY.

1 Cor. 9:14. Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. 113

SERMON LXXX. By STEPHEN BOVELL, D. D.

CHRISTIAN ELECTION EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.

1 Thess. 1:4. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. 117

SERMON LXXXI. By BENJAMIN LABEREE.

DUTY OF SUPPORTING THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

Luke 10:7. For the laborer is worthy of his hire. 133

SERMON LXXXII. By ELISHA P. SWIFT.

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

Psalms 68:28. Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. 149

SERMON LXXXIII. By ANDREW WYLLIE, D. D.

THE DANGER AND DUTY OF THE YOUNG.

Psalms 119:9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. 165

SERMON LXXXIV. By S. G. WARD.

ON THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

Romans 13:11. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep. 175

SERMON LXXXV. By THOMAS D. BAIRD.

SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

Acts 2:38, 39. Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. 181

SERMON LXXXVI. By THOMAS D. BAIRD.

MODE OF BAPTISM.

Acts 8:30. "And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him." 191

THE
PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

Vol. V.

PITTSBURGH, JUNE, 1836.

No. 1.

SERMON LXVII.

BY SAMUEL MARTIN, D. D.
OF PENNSYLVANIA.

GIVING MORE BLESSED THAN RECEIVING.

Acts 20:35. It is more blessed to give than to receive.

WHEN Paul uttered these words, his heart was full of sorrow. On his way to Jerusalem, he had sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, that he might have the pleasure, and that they might have the improvement, of a parting interview. When they had come together, he faithfully warns them of the dangers to which as a church they were exposed. He commends them to God and the word of his grace. He reminds them that he had labored with his own hands, while with them, for his own subsistence, and for that of those that were with him. To convince them that he sought not their gold nor silver, but that he sought themselves; though he was justly entitled to the means of life and comfort, as the reward of his labors for their souls; he gives them an example of generosity and self-denial which he enjoins that they imitate. He then enforces the duty with the words of Christ: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The devotion, the purity, and sincerity of affection, with which this parting scene was marked, is worthy of universal admiration. He had told them, that "the Holy Ghost had borne him witness in every city that bonds and imprisonment awaited him." He had told them "that they would see his face no more." His heart was full of desire for their future welfare. On bended knees he pours out his soul before God on their behalf. "He kneeled down and prayed for them all." Their hearts gave full vent to sorrow. "They fell upon his neck and kissed him." How melancholy and affecting was the sentiment, "ye shall see my face no more." How could they bear the thought? Shall we never again see that face, on which all the anxieties of thy soul for our salvation were so strongly, and so faithfully represented? Shall we see that face no more, over which the tear of compassion so often flowed, while thy lips pronounced those solemn warnings by which we have been excited to escape from hell and sin? Shall we never again be blessed with beholding that brow expanded with the heavenly joy which thy heart felt, when our souls were brought from

sin to God? See the face of him no more, who was our light and our guide on our way to heaven? Solemn and affecting was the occasion! If ever words were spoken with honest seriousness by mortal man, these words were so spoken: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

To inculcate with success, this sentiment on minds of a certain description, I am well aware, is a vain pretension. Arguments, opposed to dispositions and habits long cherished and indulged, are thrown back upon their author, with all that violence of contempt which is due to an invader of rights and property. Persuasion, too, which seldom fails of success, with hearts where sensibility remains, or where humanity, through exorbitancy of passion, has not been converted into mere ferocity of temper, falls on them as unimpressive, as musical sounds on the deaf Calypso and her nymphs. The love of gain, their darling passion, is all their soul. They cannot be perceived to possess a different quality. Shrivelled and contracted, their minds perform their revolutions in an egg shell. But I trust, I do not address an audience, who never knew the pleasure of a generous action. I address those who know how to be charitable, and liberal, and kind; who have felt so much of human misery, as to take a share in another's wo. I address Christians, whose Master has taught them to feed the hungry, and to clothe the naked. They have heard and admired the benignity of Jesus in preaching the gospel to the poor. They need not be told, that Christians possessing the ability, are bound as instruments of Providence to perpetuate the blessing. In yonder cottage, you discern a little group; dark in visage through exposure to a burning sun; coarse their fare, and coarse their manners. Their chair and their table the rude earth. If not naked, they are covered with rags. The rude winter, regardless of their defenceless condition, assails them with unmitigated fury; half petrified with cold they cling to each other around their little ill-warmed hearth. Are they unimportant beings? Look within them! There lives a soul capable, through grace, of enjoying heaven! There dwells a spirit liable to the burning of eternal fire. Turn your eyes to the wilderness—consider the condition of the untaught savage. He reads indeed of God; but it is upon the surface of the cloud gathering storm! He sees of God; but it is in the glare of the lightning and the ruin of the storm! He hears of God; but it is in the roar of the thunder and the tempest's crash! The broad pages of the books of creation and providence, show no where written upon them the blessed name—Jesus Savior. The still, small voice that invites the lost and wandering home to heaven, the poor heathen has never heard. He has never breathed in the fragrant atmosphere; where are the pastures on which the Savior feeds his flock. Surely to give for their relief is more blessed than to receive.

The principle which my text embraces is materially the same with that which has been extolled in every age. It is this that inspires the patriot's breast, when he offers on the altar of public good his farm and his well-earned wealth; his home, and the companions of his youth; his wife, and the domestic circle: the faint, though only traits of an earthly

paradise, which have escaped the ruins of the fall. 'Tis this that inspires the Christian when he forsakes all, takes up his cross, and follows Christ. It is this that inspires you, when you give of the fruit of your labor to procure the means of salvation to the destitute.

Receiving, in the common use of the word, is the acceptance of the mere debt of sheer justice from the cold fingers that cannot help it; since he that gives, gives because he cannot withhold. And receiving in this case proceeds or can proceed by compulsory process. There is not a passion which a virtuous bosom would desire to cultivate, which moves on the occasion. The miser indeed may grin his smile over the glittering metal, as he lays it in his coffer for a long repose; but his very smile is a painting of the shrivelled soul that impels it. If this be blessedness, it is a blessedness which no heart governed by the laws of religion, or warmed with the love of Jesus, either desires or envies.

The receiving, of which my text speaks, is of an opposite description. It is receiving from the hand of charity what she freely gives. Receiving in this view of it, is connected with circumstances of a mortifying kind. It is the receipt of the pittance that allays the cravings of hunger, and resuscitates strength, declining through lack of food. Or it is the acceptance of warm clothing in exchange for rags, that they may be defended from piercing, pinching cold. How mortifying the abject condition which this indicates? How humiliating to hang upon the charities of men, whose tender mercies are so often cruel! How painful and depressing the thought, that when nature's demands are renewed, and hunger and cold again press, they may not find another benefactor; and that the present bounty may be but the suspension of wo. The gratitude which the needy express, by their words and smiles, will indeed bless the generous giver; and the gift received will serve as a cordial to drooping, fainting nature; but the poor man's condition undergoes no change; he still is poor! he still is dependent. To whatever the insolent, the haughty, and unfeeling may please to subject him, he must submit. He possesses neither the means of resistance nor escape. Besides this, the poor, who are the receivers in this case, are doomed to the common calamities of life, heightened and embittered by their destitute and unprotected condition. Humanity would seem to dictate, that poverty alone is a burden sufficient for man to bear. But no! The poor must feel disease; they must suffer, agonize, and die. Their scanty means will not furnish them cordials, nor healing balms, nor medical assistance. If there be a friend to sympathize and mourn, he is the companion of their poverty, who has no tribute, but tears to give. How distressing! how heart killing, a condition of this kind! If some heart seasoned with grace, and expanded with that noble generosity, which a saving relation to the infinite Benefactor inspires, should stretch forth to them the bounty which their case demands; behold, what blushes a sense of their low estate spreads upon their meagre countenances! Gratitude and mortification are mingled in their souls; and while they rejoice in the gift and bless the giver, their hearts bleed anguish. Contrast this with

the state of a generous giver, and answer me? Is "it not more blessed to give than to receive?"

Again: giving is a voluntary deed, and of course is pleasing. The motives to our choice are derived from the objects of beneficence. Poverty can make no demands on the principle of civil right or claim. The addresses which she makes are to humanity, where religion has not induced the pliant feelings of Christian charity. Nor are her addresses, to the honor of human nature be it spoken, in this case even in vain. The melancholy picture, which the lower grades of human wretchedness presents, often melts the human heart to tenderness and pity, when supported by resolution to the contrary. Importunity arising from necessity, has overcome hearts steeled with crime. The unjust judge and the importunate widow afford a case in point. The history of human miseries and human charities, presents many cases, in which the Author and Ruler of providence, has caused the wrath of man to praise him by prompting the wicked to help the needy.

Poverty, to the heart warmed with charity, tells the tale of wo, and founds and enforces her plea upon the authority and example of the infinitely benign Giver. She asks for God's sake; and the righteousness of her claim cannot but be admitted. Or what is still more grateful; charity anticipates the call, and the wonted supplies are provided and conferred before they are asked for. Charity makes misery from whatever quarter it comes, her own; and with all the relief which she administers to others, procures relief. The comforts which she affords to others, bring her joy. Charity thou hast come down from heaven! Thou art, in the human bosom, the brightest feature of him who is love! If a trace of earthly origin appears upon thy blessed face, it is the shade which distinguishes finity from infinite. Charity put on thy beauty; expand every bosom, and thou wilt convert this exterior dungeon of hell, into the outer court of heaven; and thy breath shall fill this vale of tears within, with the fragrance of paradise.

Again: "It is better to give than to receive;" for giving improves the mind of the giver in the graces and virtues of godliness. What is there in man more amiable than the strong feeling of compassion for the unhappy; for the exposed to danger and misfortune! Can any thing else so clearly indicate a just sense of our own exposure to like evils, of our deserving them, or of God's goodness in preventing them. It is a sense of these things that begets and heightens that ingenuous sensibility which "mourns with them that mourn, and rejoices with them that rejoice." From this sympathy for the suffering, all our motives to charitable deeds arise; and while we yield to the impulse and give, we cherish and improve the virtue that prompts them. What will be more likely to mould our souls into the resemblance of him, "who maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and who sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust," than the liberality which my text inculcates. The soul inclined to relieve the miserable, surely possesses something of that mind that was in him, who while he might have laid upon us a heavy hand of vengeance, freely forgives our crimes, and raises us to a felicity as full and perfect as though we had

never offended. How godlike is it, to wipe away the falling tear! to stretch out the hand that sustains and relieves declining nature! and to shed the light of salvation upon those surrounded with the thickening shades of eternal death. To cultivate this divine generosity, is to employ the best means of preventing the world and the things of it, from rising into competition with God and the things of heaven. It attempts the soul to a love of the world proportioned to the good which is to be derived from enjoying it. The Lord too delights in a liberal giver. He will bless him in his basket and his store. "His barrel of meal shall not waste, nor his cruse of oil fail." In this life he shall receive an hundred fold, and in the world to come life everlasting. Is it not more blessed to give than to receive?

Did the pleasure of giving only exist during the short period of the performance of the generous action, the transitory nature of the enjoyment might be employed as an argument against it. But be assured this is far, very far from true. Reflection bringing the whole lovely scene in review before the mind, will at pleasure produce a repetition of the enjoyment. By this, the gloom of many a tedious hour in life will be dispelled. This will steal from the grasp of sorrow many a feeling of the heart, which otherwise it would most successfully wound. Take as a case in point the pious Job, properly called the afflicted. While he compares his former prosperous, with his present afflicted condition, his soul rises in triumph above his sorrow. The recollection of his prosperity, and of the overflowing of a generous and noble spirit robs his disease of more than half its bitterness. "O that I were as in months past; . . . when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; when I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; when I went out to the gate through the city; when I prepared my seat in the street: the young men saw me, and hid themselves: and the aged arose, and stood up. The princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth. The nobles held their peace and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me: because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy." Let us, dear friends, imitate this noble example of generous beneficence; and our deeds of charity will gather around us in our distressful moments, and sustain and comfort us.

Christians look towards yonder wilderness. Extend your thoughts beyond your cultivated fields and polished cities. Forget for a while the order and tranquillity of civil life, adorned and enriched with the spirit and prospects of true religion, and contemplate the inhabitants of the wilderness. What multitudes! Erect in form; marked with symmetry of proportion; of mien and majesty common and proper to man. Though thus adorned, and partaking of a rational and immortal spirit; yet they differ from the beasts of prey that prowl around them only in the possession of souls exposed to eternal wretchedness; and without

hope. Their utmost effort to construct the bow, to render the arrow obedient to the string, to direct its deadly flight, and to feed upon the victim of their art. His road to preferment is the murder of his species. Unconscious of the danger of eternal misery, and uninspired with the hope of immortality, unless an immortality to be spent in savage cruelty or brutal pleasure, he hastens to the brink of perdition endless, and falls to rise no more. Look again and behold the glory of our species the brightest piece of nature's work, in Christian places the help-meet of man, the tender female, subjected to the most cruel slavery by the man whose alliance to her implies favor and protection. Driven from the delicacy of her sex, she toils and labors for her husband. Scorched with a burning sun: shrivelled and exhausted she reaches eternity unheard of, unknown, where there is no rest for her day nor night: "For there their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." What a moral wilderness. There, nothing but the wrath of heaven revealed upon sinful polluted man, is seen. And are there means provided for turning this wilderness into a fruitful field? this desert into a blooming garden? Is there a hand that can be shown them that can change the lion into a lamb? Is there a course that can be pointed out, by which they may escape from hell and go to heaven? Who that feels as man should feel? who that thinks as man should think? who that hopes as Christians hope, will not give? And who that gives with the hope of saving souls so lost, so ruined, will not give vent to the good feelings of their hearts in exclaiming: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Christians fear not to give: you have present rewards, but how glorious those that are future? With what splendid crowns will your heads be adorned, who shall take your place in the heavenly kingdom with heathen by your side, who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb by means of your charities. Again I say, hold not your hands, stay not your liberalities, until the eternal Son shall obtain the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. Amen.

SERMON LXVIII.

BY JOSEPH WOOD, A. M.
OF ALABAMA.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT ON DIVINE TRUTH IN THE WORK OF SANCTIFICATION.

(Published by request of the Presbytery of North Alabama.)

2 THESS. 2:13. *Because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*

THESE words imply a preparatory work in the soul, of the greatest importance. A work, without which we cannot be saved. A work which, when effectually wrought, secures our salvation. This work is called sanctification. It commences at the period of what is usually denominated regeneration, conversion, or the new birth. That is, at the period when the first germ of holiness is implanted and springs up in the soul. It may be considered as the continuance and growth of that work; just as the plant is the expansion and enlargement of the germ. So our Savior has compared it to a mustard-seed; small in its beginning, but growing to a vegetable of no inconsiderable magnitude. It is, too, like the plant, slow and imperceptible in its progress; yet constantly, though not equally advancing toward maturity. It is like the plant again, hastened in its growth by the storms of adversity, and checked by the calms of prosperity. Still, in the storm and in the calm, in adversity and in prosperity, its progress is onward—its growth if not equal is sure and permanent.

We have said that this work is saving in its nature. Where it is performed, there is holiness in the soul. Where it is not performed there is no holiness in the soul. Am I asked what is meant by holiness in the soul? I reply, a prevailing disposition to consecrate all its powers to the glory of God. Without this, there is no salvation. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

How important, then, that we should be correctly informed in regard to the nature of this work. How important that we should avoid mistake, in a concern of such moment. If we feel such an interest in the subject as its importance requires, we shall ask with solicitude, how is this work to be performed within us? To what source shall we look for its origin? By what agencies is it produced? By what evidence is it known? How shall we become partakers of it? The answer to *one* of these inquiries will furnish a key to the rest, viz., by what agency is the work of sanctification accomplished? This question we think is answered in the words of the text; "Through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth."

The doctrine contained in these words appears clearly to be this: There is a united agency of the Holy Spirit and of divine truth, in accomplishing the work of preparation for heaven. But as the former

is an intelligent, and the latter an unintelligent agent, it is obvious, that the former is the *efficient* and the latter the *instrumental* cause. From the text, then, we deduce the following proposition:

IN THE WORK OF SANCTIFICATION, THERE IS AN EFFICIENT AGENCY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND AN INSTRUMENTAL AGENCY OF DIVINE TRUTH.

In the present discourse it will be our object,

- I. *To prove this proposition, and,*
- II. *To deduce some practical inferences.*

First, then, the proof.

1. The first class of arguments which we adduce, will be drawn from the Scriptures.

The former part of the proposition is conclusively proved by the following passage from the gospel of St. John. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The meaning of this passage is plain and can scarcely be mistaken. It is evidently this: as the natural offspring partakes of the corrupt and depraved nature of the natural parent, so the offspring of the Spirit, or those born of the Spirit, partake of the holy nature of the Spirit. The immediate and efficient agency of the Spirit, in fitting the soul for future felicity, is here unequivocally declared. That this is the case in every instance, without any exception, is expressly asserted, in another place, by the same evangelical writer. These are his words: "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." That is, no one without baptism by water can be admitted into his visible kingdom; and no one without regeneration by the Spirit, can be admitted into his invisible kingdom. Were there no other passages in the Bible by which the same doctrine is taught, these would be conclusive. How can a different conclusion be drawn? Will it be said that the words are figurative? What if we admit, that they are not to be taken in a strictly literal sense. Still, they are full of meaning, and teach us important truth. And what is this truth? Surely nothing less than that a radical transformation of moral character, wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit, is indispensable in every son and daughter of our race, to the attainment of salvation. That none without such a work of the Spirit of God in the soul, can finally be saved. But will any objector resort to another subterfuge and deny the existence of the Holy Spirit as a personal being? Let him remember first, that the word is written as a proper name, having a capital letter for its initial, and must therefore be intended to represent a personal Being. Second, that the properties of intelligence and action ascribed to the Spirit, can belong to none but a *personal* Being. But if this does not satisfy the objector, let him say what the word does mean. Will he tell us it means a divine attribute? Let us then substitute this phrase in its place. The passages above will

then read, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and that which is born of a divine attribute is a divine attribute; or, if you choose, of the nature of a divine attribute. "Except a man be born of water," and of a divine attribute, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Are we baptized in the name of a divine attribute? Does Paul pray that the communion of a divine attribute may be with the church? Does he exhort men not to resist a divine attribute? not to quench a divine attribute? not to grieve a divine attribute? Are Christians exhorted to be filled with a divine attribute? to walk in a divine attribute? But enough. Hundreds of passages might readily be adduced, in which the substitution of the term attribute, or any other term, would render the sense equally unmeaning and absurd. And what, let me ask, does the objector gain, by rejecting a glorious truth on account of its mysterious nature, and adopting in its stead, a palpable absurdity? He gets rid of no difficulty, he solves no mystery—on the other hand, he throws the damps and darkness of night, on a subject beaming with glorious, though incomprehensible truth. What is this, but to "darken counsel by words without knowledge?" We envy him not his heartless, lifeless, useless system; but pity his want of experimental acquaintance with the illuminating, converting, and sanctifying, power of the Holy Spirit.

Although we consider the point already proved; yet, as we would present a blaze of overwhelming and irresistible evidence, we must be indulged in adducing a few more passages.

We are told by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, that "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the spirit. So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Believers are here said to "walk after the Spirit;" that is, they yield to his influence—follow his guidance. They are said "to be after the Spirit;" that is, to have his moral impress—to participate of his holy nature—to mind the things of the Spirit; that is, to yield attention and obedience to the things which he teaches and enjoins. They are in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in them. As we are surrounded by the air and receive a portion of it within us by inhalation, so the Spirit by his special presence is in and around his sanctified ones. To "have the Spirit;" that is, to have communion with him—to enjoy the sensible manifestation of his real and favorable presence. Now could all this be said, if the Spirit by a real and immediate agency, had nothing to do in the formation of the Christian character? Could believers be said to "walk after the Spirit," to "mind the things of the Spirit," to be "after the Spirit," to be "in the Spirit," to "have the Spirit," and to "have the Spirit dwelling in them," if the Spirit had no agency in their sanctification? I can conceive of but two ways in which a contrary conclusion can possibly be drawn. The one is, that the word Spirit means, holy nature, in opposition to the carnal nature. The other is, that it means the word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit.

But these suppositions are both completely refuted by a single passage from the same chapter. "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

By quickening their mortal bodies is evidently meant, raising them from the dead at the final judgment. Here, then, we find the same word, and evidently used in the same sense, accompanied by an attribute which could belong to none but a divine Personage. It is the attribute of omnipotence, for nothing less can raise the dead. The same agent, then, that was just before represented as being with them, dwelling in them, leading and guiding them, is now represented prophetically, as raising them from the dead. "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken your mortal bodies *by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.* That the expression means a real, intelligent, personal, and divine agent, we think is incontrovertibly established; and this being true, every other supposable meaning of the term, must be erroneous. That the Spirit is ever present with the people of God, and exerts an immediate and effectual agency in carrying on in them the work of sanctification, is, in these passages clearly taught.

But again, suffer me for a moment to call your attention to a few of the declarations of our Savior to his disciples: "I will pray the Father," says he, "and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. The Comforter which is the Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth. He shall receive of mine and show it unto you." Grant that these passages refer primarily to his immediate disciples and the miraculous gifts of the Spirit; still as a line of distinction is drawn between the world and those who were to receive the gift of the divine Comforter, and as he was to abide with them for ever, there can be no reason to doubt, that all the disciples of Christ in every future period were included in the promise, and that the guiding, the teaching, the admonishing, and consoling influence of this divine and heavenly visitant was pledged to them, as his miraculous power was pledged to his immediate followers.

Another passage clearly establishing the point under consideration, is found in the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Again, in Ephesians, "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

To be washed, to be sanctified, to be strengthened in the inner man, are terms denoting the process by which the soul is fitted for heaven, and this is said here to be done by the Spirit. Christians are said farther to be "led by the Spirit," to be "sealed by the Spirit," to "pray in the Spirit," to have "the fellowship of the Spirit," to "worship God in the Spirit," to "possess love in the Spirit." They are said to be "builded together as a temple of God through the Spirit." Admonition

is given against grieving the Spirit, quenching the Spirit, resisting the Spirit. Most of the Christian graces and duties may be found we apprehend in some of the above expressions in which the agency of the Spirit, in the formation of the one, and the performance of the other, is asserted or clearly implied. His awakening influence upon the impenitent, in the last quoted passage, is also, plainly implied.

Lest we should be tedious, we desist from farther quotations. We have selected but a few, out of a great variety of passages, which might be adduced to establish the truth under consideration. We now consider the position which we assumed, as fully established, viz., that in the work of sanctification, there is an immediate and efficient agency of the Holy Spirit. We come now to the other part of the proposition, which is, that in the same work, there is an instrumental agency of divine truth.

St. Paul seems to consider this as a plain and admitted doctrine, when he says to the Romans, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." This declaration is general; it intimates no limitation—speaks of no exception. On the other hand, the contrary declaration seems to be expressed in the interrogatory sentence introduced in the same connection. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" How shall any, at any time, in any place, believe savingly in Christ, in whom alone is salvation, when they have never heard of him? The power of God to work a miracle for this purpose, Paul does not deny; nor will any, I suppose be disposed to deny it; but he teaches plainly by inference, that a miracle for such a purpose, is not to be expected. That God has adopted a different method, that he has chosen the ordinary channels of communication to the mind, as those through which he has seen proper to impart his grace and salvation. He has ordained in the scheme of redemption, that to be saved we must believe, to believe we must hear, to hear we must have an exhibition of evangelical truth. There is no infringement upon the common functions of the mind or senses. Truth is presented, and by the divine assistance already stated, elicits attention, convinces, persuades.

The same truth is clearly taught in the exhortation to the Ephesian Christians, to take the "sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." A sword is an instrument of defence and of victory. But without one to wield it, it would be only a useless piece of polished metal; and without a sword, the most skilful warrior would be weak and powerless. It would be only by a miracle, that he could gain the victory over an armed and embattled host, or defend himself from their hostile attacks. So, without the instrumentality of the word of God, the Holy Spirit must work a miracle to convert and sanctify the sinner. That is, he must operate upon him in a manner contrary to the established laws of mind. On the other hand, the word without the agency of the Holy Spirit, would be but a dead letter, without any saving efficacy in any instance; just like a sword without a warrior to wield it. Such an interpretation, we think the structure of the phraseology not only justifies, but suggests as the plain and obvious meaning.

Our Savior compares the word, to seed sown in different kinds of

soil; some was devoured by the birds, some withered by drought, some was choked by thorns, and some bringing forth fruit. This doubtless represents the different state of mind under which divine truth is addressed to men. Unless the soil is prepared by some agency, it will be unproductive, and the seed and the labor of the cultivator will be lost. On the other hand, however good, and however well prepared the soil, unless the seed is properly sown, there can be no produce. The application is easy, and needs no comment.

Again, in his address to his disciples as he was about to leave them, he uses this language, "Now are ye clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you." That the word is here represented as the outward means, or instrumental agent in their cleansing or sanctification, is too plain to require a moment's consideration. In his last prayer in their behalf, which we have on record, we have this remarkable language, "sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." That the word of God, here called by way of eminence, the truth, as being infinitely above all other truth, is represented as the means of their sanctification, none can doubt for a moment. God the Father to whom the petition is addressed is indicated as the author of the work. This at first view, may seem to involve the subject in some obscurity; since to the first Person of the Trinity, is never ascribed the office of sanctification. A key to the solution is found in the repeated declarations, that the Spirit should proceed from the Father, that the Father should send the Spirit, &c. The Father in sending the Spirit is the author, the Spirit is the efficient agent, and the word is the instrumental means, of this glorious work of preparing the soul for eternal bliss. Paul tells the Ephesians, that "Christ loved the church, that he might cleanse and sanctify it with the washing of water by his word." St. James tells us, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." And St. Peter, "seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." Nothing can be more obvious than the sense of these passages. They are plain as if written with a sunbeam. They show beyond all doubt, that divine truth, or the word of God is the instrumental agent in the conversion and sanctification of the soul. The number of passages proving the same doctrine, is numerous beyond what any one who has not examined the Scriptures for this purpose would naturally suppose, and might be introduced to almost any extent. But if those introduced do not convince, we should despair of producing conviction.

It may be objected that Cornelius was converted without any knowledge of Bible truths. This however is a mistake. Hear Peter; he will correct the error and set all right: "The word," says he—he is addressing Cornelius and his company—"the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ, (he is Lord of all,) That word I say *ye know*, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached." We have here Peter's own declaration that Cornelius had previously been favored with a knowledge of gospel truth. There is

no reason then to suppose that his conversion was effected without its agency.

2. We introduce a second class of arguments from revivals of religion.

The first revival of which we have any account after the Savior's ascension, was on the day of Pentecost. The circumstances of this revival show us that there was an immediate agency of the Holy Spirit in producing it. The adherents to the Christian cause were few, dispersed, despised. Only the twelve associated to pray and consult on measures to propagate the new religion. On what natural principles can we account for the sudden and immense increase of their numbers on the day of Pentecost. There is no account of any new movement or uncommon effort, only that the little band were united in heart and affection, and engaged in fervent prayer. Suddenly they are endued with the gift of tongues. They address the multitudes that assemble in strong and pathetic appeals. Thousands, not only listen and are convinced, but become deeply concerned for their souls' salvation; and strange to relate, on the very spot where the greatest hostility had lately prevailed against this new religion and its adherents, three thousand become suddenly its decided, warm, and undaunted advocates. What produced the mighty change? No natural power can account for it. The only rational solution is furnished by Peter on the occasion, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye see and hear." There was a manifest display of divine power. Yet this was united and in perfect coincidence with the outward means—the declaration and subordinate agency of divine truth.

Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, though a mere emblem, may here be properly introduced. The bones were very many and very dry. He was directed to prophesy to them. Hopeless as the task might seem, at the divine command he obeys. The bodies are re-organized but have no life. The wind—emblem of the Spirit—must blow upon them, and immediately they are endowed with all the powers of life and activity—arise and become an exceeding great army. The combined agency of the divine Spirit and divine truth in bringing the impenitent to the Savior, is here forcibly though emblematically shown.

Revivals among us, present similar facts, which admit only of similar explanations. Why so sudden and unexpected in their appearance? Why at one time limited to a small compass, at others bursting out and spreading in one direction, in several or in every direction, baffling all human calculation? Why often stop so suddenly and sometimes without any assignable cause from natural things? Why sometimes appear under the same exhibition of truth, and the same apparent effort, and sometimes not? The only satisfactory answer, is, that when the means of grace are accompanied with the special influences of the Spirit, religion revives; when they are not thus accompanied, it declines; that both these agencies combined are necessary in their production and continuance.

The frequent instances of special prayer for an individual, by two

persons uniting and claiming the promise for this purpose, resulting in the conversion of the individual, are a convincing proof of the doctrine under consideration. Such cases are numerous, and are familiarly known in the history of religious revivals.

3. Instances of remarkable conversion prove the same truth. How can a change of heart and of life, like the one related of the memorable Colonel Gardner, be accounted for, but on the supposition of the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, acting through the medium of divine truth previously imparted to the mind! A veteran in the indulgence of almost every kind of sinful pleasure; unaccustomed to any restraint in the gratification of any natural propensity; while actively prosecuting the eager pursuit, and thinking of nothing less than reformation, or an abandonment of his course, he is suddenly surprised by the loud and irresistible remonstrances of an accusing conscience. Listen he must, reflect he must, reform he must, change his course of life he must. We find him through the remaining portion of his earthly existence, a sober, temperate, humble, self-denying follower of Christ; and though a soldier and an officer in the army, he wears the Christian badge, maintains the Christian character, and boldly advocates the Christian cause. But this case is not singular. Demonstrative evidence of the power of the Holy Ghost is furnished in the conversions of John Newton, William Wilberforce, William Cowper, Henry Kirke White, and multitudes of others.

But we need not go to the page of history to learn this fact—we have witnessed it ourselves. We have witnessed the sensible manifestations of the power of the Holy Ghost in the reformation of our neighbors, our friends, and relations. They have felt this power and acknowledged it too. They believe and rejoice in this truth, and no ingenious sophistry, no “philosophy falsely so called,” can make them believe that it is an illusion of fancy. What though some of them have gone out from us. It is “because they were not of us. They went out from us, that it might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” Yet this circumstance does not prove, that even themselves, much less, that others, have not been the subjects of the influences of the Spirit. On the other hand, it rather establishes the truth of the doctrine, by furnishing those exceptions to his *saving* operations, called common influences, which we are foretold to expect in cases where he is resisted, grieved, quenched. And their latter case becoming worse than the first, is a still farther confirmation of its truth, because we are taught by holy Writ, to expect that it will be so.

Nor let the counterfeits of the Spirit's influence be brought up as opposing testimony against this doctrine. A counterfeit supposes something real and genuine to be counterfeited. There can be no imitation without something to be imitated. Thus God by Moses and Aaron wrought a real miracle, when their rods became serpents. This Satan could imitate through the magicians. But the counterfeit is soon detected. The serpents formed of the rods of Moses and Aaron, swallowed the serpents formed of the rods of the magicians. So counterfeit conversions and revivals are evanescent and soon disappear, while

those that are genuine, are permanent, and will prevail over all falsehood and error.

Am I asked how the Spirit operates upon us in performing this work? I reply in the language of the Shorter Catechism, By "convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and in renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel." Attention is exerted, conscience is awakened. The consequence is, we see and feel ourselves to be lost sinners. Our minds are enlightened to discover the way of salvation. This is conviction. Our wills are renewed; that is, as I understand it, our moral inability, or inability of will, is taken away, so that we are persuaded and enabled, as there is no other hindrance, to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel. This is conversion; and the continuance of the work thus begun is sanctification. And as we have now sufficiently shown, is accomplished by the united agency of the Spirit and word of God.

II. We shall briefly conclude with two inferences.

1. It is contrary to sound doctrine to teach, that the influences of the Spirit are sufficient to guide us into the knowledge of truth and duty, independently of the aid of the inspired word. We do not mean to deny his power to impart truth supernaturally to the mind now, as well as anciently to the inspired writers. What we deny is, that this is in accordance with the divine economy. The Spirit does not operate without the instrumentality of the word; not because he cannot do it, but because another method has been chosen. Is the proof demanded? The proof is at hand. 1. No one will dare to affirm that he teaches by the Spirit what is contrary to the Bible. For then his own mouth would condemn him. 2. No one will venture to affirm, that he teaches by the Spirit more than what is in the Bible, for then this holy book would denounce upon him the plagues written in it. 3. No one will, I presume, undertake to affirm that he teaches by the Spirit precisely what is in the Bible, unless he has learned it through the Bible, since this would be acknowledging at the expense of his own industry, the performance of a work by the Holy Spirit, which is admitted to be unnecessary, and which it belonged to himself to perform—or in other words, that the Holy Spirit has been kind enough to perform his work for him, because he was too indolent to perform it himself. This surely every one must see to be too derogatory to that divine Personage, and too degrading to himself, to be admitted for a moment.

Besides, we are told not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they be of God. Now how can we try them? By the word of truth; the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Set up an inspiration independent of this, and you have no advantage over the Brahmin, the Boodhist, or the Mohammedan. You have nothing to teach him that your religion is true and his false.

But farther: it is called the sword of the Spirit. When the soldier goes forth to the victory without his weapon, then, and not before,

may we expect that the Spirit will accomplish the victory over sin without the word.

How important, then, that the minister of the gospel should be thoroughly furnished from the treasury of the Scriptures, that he should be able to teach others. That he should go to the fountain head, study in the original, and use all the lights and aids which may unfold their true sense and render him a workman not needing to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

How important that Christians should study the Bible, teach it to their children, and render it what it is intended to be, the instrument in the hands of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the soul.

2. They are in a fatal error who hold and teach that the inspired Scriptures, without the immediate agency of the Divine Spirit, are sufficient to accomplish the work of sanctification. If we have not proved from the Scriptures that in every instance, there is an immediate influence of the Spirit in converting and sanctifying the soul, we may despair of producing proof or conviction of any truth. If we cannot see the kingdom of God without being born of the Spirit, can any knowledge of the word without this, be sufficient for our admission into that kingdom? Surely not. And why, let me ask, is the Spirit called holy? Not because He possesses holiness; for this belongs equally to the first and second Persons in the Trinity. But because it is his office to produce holiness in us—that holiness without which “no man can see the Lord.” This we have abundantly shown, he does mediately by his word, but immediately by his direct and special influence. If any remain yet unconvinced, we should despair of their conviction, even though one rose from the dead.

The subject is full of comfort and encouragement to Christians. Does the Spirit convert and revive his people? He is accessible by prayer; He is moved by prayer; He has placed his own influence in their power by prayer. Have we ungodly friends, neighbors, parents, children? The Spirit’s power is attainable for them by prayer. Does the spirit of piety seem almost to be “clean gone forever?” Are revivals few and far between? Are the times portentous? Is there a feverish excitement through the civil and religious community? The Messenger of peace can revive us again, bind the jarring materials together, and infuse a spirit of harmony and love. Christians, behold your privilege, behold your power, behold your duty, your responsibility. Heaven is moved by prayer. Where two are united as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be granted. How much more when all unite! Oh! how great your power! How awful your responsibility! Away then with “unlearned and foolish questions, which gender strife.” Wrestle in one united petition for the bestowment of the Spirit upon the church and the world, and the windows of Heaven shall be opened, and a blessing poured out, that there shall not be room to contain it. For sorrow we shall have comfort; for division we shall have union; for despondency we shall have hope; for complaining we shall have rejoicing; and for the sighs of dejection we shall hear the songs of salvation. Amen.

THE
PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

VOL. V.

PITTSBURGH, JULY, 1836.

No. 2.

SERMON LXXIX.

BY REV. RUFUS W. BAILEY,
OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

MATTHEW 16:18, 19. *And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

Jesus of Nazareth had been accredited by many infallible testimonies of his divine character. He had been celebrated as the Messiah at his birth by a multitude of the heavenly host. He had been acknowledged by a voice from heaven at his baptism. He had wrought many public miracles, and given a clear exposition of his doctrines, in language which could not be misunderstood. He next took measures to bring the minds of his disciples to a more full examination and acknowledgment of his character, and gradually prepared them for his ignominious death, and for all they were to suffer in preaching Jesus Christ and him crucified.

After all this, the Pharisees and Sadducees required of him an additional sign from heaven in attestation of his Messiahship, and were rebuked for their inconsistency and unbelief. When he was retired with his disciples, he drew from them an account of the various conjectures entertained of him, and then demanded of them their own opinion. Peter, with his usual promptness, answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This declaration drew from the Savior the words of our text. We will,

I. ATTEMPT AN EXPOSITION OF THE TEXT, WHICH WILL SHOW WHAT WAS THE POWER HERE CONFERRED UPON PETER.

II. INQUIRE WHETHER IT WAS CONFINED TO HIM, OR GIVEN IN COMMON TO ALL THE APOSTLES AND MINISTERS OF CHRIST.

1. *We are to interpret the text.* Peter was one of the first called of those who followed Christ as his disciples. He was the most zealous and decided of the whole. He always appeared most deeply interested in the doctrines of the gospel. He was the first who preached them to the Jews, and the first who preached them to the Gentiles. It was probably in reference to his stern and inflexible character that the Savior gave him the name of Cephas, which in the Syrian language means a stone or rock, and Peter in the Greek, which means the same.

When the Savior asked the disciples who they thought he was, Peter was the first to answer; and in that answer he asserted the DOCTRINE, on which the church was built; the FACT that *Jesus*, in whom all the prophecies centre, the archetype and substance to answer all the types and shadows of the law, and to supersede them by the sacrifice of Himself, *was the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of sinners*. Jesus then declares that this truth is a revelation made to Peter by the Father, and follows it with the words of the text.

The first difficulty in the interpretation of the text is found in determining what is the proper explication of the term *Rock*, on which the Savior declares his church shall be built. From the fact that the name of Peter means rock, some have referred it to Peter as the head of the church, and the vicegerent on earth of Him in whom all power resides. The great objection to this is that Peter was a fallible man, while the work imposed is that, which demands whatever of power can be exerted in favor of man. We need only to change terms to show the absurdity of this interpretation. Peter was a man, and with this fact in view the passage is reduced in the hands of these interpreters to this absurdity. Thou art Peter, and on this man I will build my church. The Savior might have said that he would make Peter an eminent instrument in building up his church on earth, and so he was. But to make Peter the foundation of that church is a flat absurdity. *How* is the church built upon Peter? Was Peter crucified for us? Or are we baptized in the name of Peter? It is absolutely absurd to call that a foundation, on which the structure does not and cannot rest.

Let us turn, for a moment, to other parts of the Scriptures, and see if we can find any help to the interpretation of this passage. Do we any where else find instructions respecting the foundation of the church? In the song of Moses, recorded in Deuteronomy 32, God, the Almighty, is repeatedly spoken of as the Rock, on which His redeemed people rest. "Israel forsook God, which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." And he is accused in the following words—"of the Rock that begat thee, thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee." And again—"How should one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?" The same term is applied by Paul in a similar sense to Christ in 1 Cor. 10.4—"For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." Isaiah, predicting the Messiah, says by inspiration, 28:16—"Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." And again, 8:14, "He shall be for a sanctuary, but for a stone of stumbling, a Rock of offence." Hence the Savior, in his sermon on the mount, likens those who heard his sayings and kept them, to the "man, who built his house upon a Rock." And Paul also represents those, who are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, as "built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." He then proceeds, in an impressive strain, to represent the whole building as depending on Christ. Why then should we seek any different explanation for the text? The connection does not require it; on the contrary, it favors our exposition. The Pharisees and Sadducees had just required a miracle, or sign from heaven, and were reprov'd for their unbelief in his divine character, already accredited by miracle and prophecy. This formed the absorbing subject of conversation when he retired with his disciples, Peter had just declared that Christ was the Messiah or Rock, the corner stone of the church. This is part of the work of Christ, to found a church; the confession of Peter was a leading doctrine, on which this church was to be gathered, and in which Peter was to perform a distinguished service. Is it credible that the Savior should turn the conversation from his own character, and substitute

that of Peter! He commanded Peter to go and preach this leading doctrine of the gospel, Jesus Christ and him crucified. About to receive this commission, it seemed natural that the Savior should give him encouragement. This he does in the declaration that he would build his church on this rock, this truth, this doctrine, that he was himself the Christ, the Son of the living God, and would prove the doctrine by accomplishing the promise.

On this interpretation, the import of what follows is very apparent, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The word here rendered hell, is not that which signifies the place of torment for the wicked, but the grave, or the place of the dead in general. This is enough. The kingdom of Christ was promised to be an everlasting kingdom. The church he was to found, was to be numerous and splendid. But he well knew that before the vain expectations of his disciples respecting a temporal kingdom should be fully disappointed, and before the promised church should begin to be known, or show itself on earth, he should be taken away by death. This, he well knew, would have a powerful influence to discourage his disciples. In anticipation of that event, this promise for their encouragement was evidently made. Though their leader be removed by death, the disciples still have the promise that the gates of hell, or death, shall not prevail against the church. As the prophecies were gradually opened to their view by this very event, and they saw it was necessary that Christ should suffer, all this would appear the more plain, and excite the greater confidence and zeal. They might proceed, therefore, to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified, *knowing*, that although it would be to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, it should yet prove the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation, to all who believed.

The same promise supported them also in view of their own dissolution, and the ravages of death, which should soon lay them all in the grave. It connected the view of a future resurrection with the promise of Christ's perpetual kingdom, which were soon after both demonstrated when he rose from the dead. This promise also presented to their minds, and his resurrection subsequently verified the fact, that he would assuredly give success to his word, and preserve a seed to serve him on earth, while those who were in successive periods, the living members of the church, should be removed to their seats in heaven. Christ has overcome death, and demonstrated, when he rose from the dead, that the gates of hell should not prevail against his church. He has also "overcome him that had the power of death, that is the devil." Hence it is equally true, that the powers of hell or the devil shall not prevail against him. The grave has lost its victory—death is robbed of its sting—hell is despoiled of its candidates, and the power of the devil was broken, when Jesus came forth from the tomb, rose triumphant to the right hand of God, received all power, showed himself the conqueror of man's mightiest foe, and "delivered them, who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage."

When man had apostatised, he was turned out of the garden, and the door of heaven was shut upon him. When Christ the Son of God appeared, by a victory over the powers of death and hell, he procured the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and prevailed to open the door. He was the only Being who could do it. When the favored apostle, in apocalyptic vision, saw the sealed book in which the fate of man was written, no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book; but the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, prevailed to open the book. Consequent upon this victory, an innumerable company of redeemed sinners fill all heaven with praise. These sinners, "redeemed at once," are "born by degrees," and prepared for their "purchased possession" by a system of moral means and in-

strumentalities. Therefore, when the Savior "ascended upon high, leading captivity captive and receiving gifts for men, he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." It is, therefore, through the ministrations of those, whom he has delegated, that the door of heaven is set open, and sinners redeemed are continually entering. "And I will give unto thee, said the Savior to Peter, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

As the use of the term rock is here figurative, so is that of the keys. Peter had just acknowledged and asserted a fundamental doctrine of Christianity—that, on which all true religion was built—that Jesus was the Christ. By him the kingdom of heaven was opened to man, who had excluded himself, opened not literally by the rise of keys, but opened by his own blood shed for sin, to satisfy the law, and obviate the insuperable difficulties which lay in the way of man's salvation. To Peter, a knowledge of these doctrines was revealed. The first had already been revealed to him, so that he was able to pronounce that Jesus was the Christ. The doctrine of justification through faith in him, and remission of sin through his blood was opened, it seemed, to his mind earlier than to the rest of the apostles; for he was the first to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified both to the Jews, and the Gentiles. Since the way to heaven is discovered only through these truths, and Peter was made a preacher of them, it may be emphatically said that he, in the official announcement of the truth, condemned or acquitted according to the decisions of the judgment day; bound or loosed on divine authority.

The confession of Peter, asserting the divinity of Jesus, was the great doctrine, on which he insisted, on which the church was built. Whenever he preached the doctrine of Christ crucified, he opened the door of heaven, and only then. This was emphatically the doctrine, which produced conviction in the hearts of sinners on the day of Pentecost, and on other subsequent occasions. As fast as men were prepared to confess this truth, that Jesus was the Christ, and believe in him, they were gathered into the church. Peter himself was a fallible man. He is not, therefore, a perfectly safe example for us. He denied his Master. We must in this avoid, not imitate him. It is only in the doctrines of the gospel, which he preached, and in his practice of them, so far as he followed Christ, that we are to regard him as the honored instrument of opening to us the way to God's right hand. He cannot dispense mercy, but declares the terms, on which God dispenses it. He cannot pronounce judgment, but teaches the doctrines, on which God awards it. That Peter was not in himself a safe man, is apparent from many infirmities, which he betrayed. He knew not what was in man; for he did not detect the hypocrisy of Simon Magus, until he thought to buy the Holy Ghost with money, a passion which would have exposed his hypocrisy to any other Christian; as it would have also betrayed in Peter the deepest hypocrisy to have sold the pardon, which was the price of blood. When he preaches the truths taught him by the Savior, or inspiration, he is to be implicitly confided in, and only then. How absurd then the conclusion that Christ really constituted Peter the rock, or foundation of his church, by conferring extraordinary powers or vicegerency. How contrary to the fact is the position assumed that he was made infallible, and that in matters of faith and doctrine, this infallibility was transmitted to his successors.

If any thing were wanted to give additional testimony to the Scriptures against this doctrine of supremacy, it might be found in the tyranny and oppression, with which this assumed authority has been exercised; in the

notorious and pre-eminent wickedness of many of those who have exercised it; and in the absurd, ridiculous, and monstrous doctrines and practices they have taught and attempted to enforce. They have exchanged the spirituality of the gospel for more than pharisaical forms and human inventions. They have not only insisted on the meritorious worth of good works, but have even offered to dispense pardon, thereby selling the Holy Ghost, for money! Such successors of Peter effectually shut the door of heaven on the sinner. They do more than withhold from him the means of salvation—the employ against him the means of damnation. They flatter him down to perdition by a show of mercy, which is fatal if they trust in it, and which diverts the mind from Christ as the simple object of faith, the only foundation of hope. Whenever this is done, the keys of the kingdom of heaven are withheld, and the soul cannot enter.

Take a sinner in agony under conviction of sin, and writhing under its anguish, asking for the way of life, and you attempt in vain to draw the arrow from his soul, or heal the wound, until you preach Christ crucified. You may give him moral lessons forever and his soul will sink deeper in despair; you may demand his earthly goods or his service and life as the price of his soul; he makes the sacrifice in vain. No light comes until he receives Jesus as the Christ, and perceives the connection between his blood as a price, and the pardon of the guilty. When Peter struck on this chord in the harmony of divine truth; when he sounded the name of Jesus, Savior—then and not till then, as if by talismanic power, the sinner is loosed from his bonds, he leaps for joy, he is redeemed, not with silver and gold, but by the *blood of Christ*. When the apostle preached **THIS TRUTH**, although in the feebleness of a man, he opened the door of heaven. He turned back the bolt which the strength of angels, mighty in power, could not move, he loosed the bonds of the penitent, and rivetted the chains of those, who either reject or pervert the doctrine of the cross. He simply stated the only condition on which the sinner, bound in the chains of Satan, could be set free, and defined the principles, on which the decisions of the last day would be pronounced. Whatever, therefore, he bound on earth was bound in heaven, and whatever he loosed on earth was loosed in heaven.

2. We are to inquire, *Whether the power, here conferred on Peter, was confined to him, or given in common to all the apostles, and ministers of Christ.* In the view we have taken of the subject, this is precisely the power given to the other apostles and to all who are called to preach the gospel. To the assembled disciples, he said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." What is this more or less than the Savior said to Peter. Go, preach the gospel. What then? It shall be the principles, on which men shall be judged. It is the key to the kingdom of heaven. Those, who follow you, embracing the doctrines you preach, shall enter the door—the others shall be excluded. These shall be the principles, on which men shall be bound or loosed. This is the way, in which the church was built up; and on the belief and reception of the gospel, was engrafted a moral character, which prepared for the happiness and employment of heaven. Pardon is not dispensed in an arbitrary manner, irrespective of moral character. The righteousness of Christ, which procures a release of the sinner, does not screen an obstinate rebel. While it turns aside the operation of the violated law from the rebel, it pervades the soul, which it defends, and sanctifies what it saves. Hence we cannot perceive how the powers bestowed upon Peter differ from those of any other gospel minister. It is the same truth preached by both, utterly powerless in the ministry of man, irresistible always and only, under the Spirit's agency.

The church of Christ is now built up in the same way it was in the beginning. The same means are employed, and his ministers are endowed with essentially the same powers. They preach the same doctrines. Sinners are converted in the same way, and this same process is to go on, till all the redeemed are gathered in heaven. Invested with the ministry of the truth, the power and authority of every gospel minister is great; and on the same ground it is said that the church, in the exercise of discipline over its members, binds on earth that which shall be bound in heaven, and looses on earth what shall be loosed in heaven.

We have now given the interpretation of the text, defined the power here given to Peter as consisting simply in a revealed knowledge of gospel truths, and in the authority to preach them; and have explained the same power as committed to all the other apostles, and all the ministers of Christ of every age. Several practical reflections and inferences are obvious.

1. We are led to admit *the essential equality of ministers of the gospel*. The ministry was instituted for one object—to gather and edify the church. The duty is one, to seek the salvation of souls in imitation of the Savior himself. Ministers are to apply themselves laboriously to this great work. As they, therefore, have a common employment and a common object, their honor, and station, and sphere of influence, are essentially the same. The Scriptures nowhere give supremacy to any one minister or class of ministers under the Christian dispensation. The Savior sharply rebuked his disciples, when they contended who should be the greatest, and taught that the greatest among them should be their servant, and that there could be no superiority except what consisted in superior labors, services, and self-denials. He showed also that he was willing to set them an example in this doctrine, and condescended even to wash their feet.

We do not find that Peter either assumed or sought any superiority over the other disciples on account of the manner in which the Savior addressed him in the text. He labored equally, and with the other disciples. In the council at Jerusalem, he neither attempted nor exerted any important influence. Indeed another Apostle dared to blame him to his face. He appeared in no respect elevated above his fellows except by a more ardent zeal. If therefore an inspired apostle did not exercise the pretended authority delegated to him, how shall his successors dare to do it! In every society or association of men, ecclesiastical or civil organization is necessary to order and business; but in the church of God, we believe the gospel has given to no minister any official pre-eminence above his co-presbyters.

2. We are naturally led in this connection to notice *the nature of the ministerial office*. Christian ministers are an order of men appointed of God for the edification of his church on earth. They are separated from secular duties, and set apart for the ministry of the sanctuary. They are subject to similar wants with others, and are therefore to be sustained in their office, while they minister to others in spiritual things. It is not intended that ministers should have no regard to the temporal interests of their fellow men, but that they should avoid all interferences, which may interrupt a supreme devotion of themselves to the duties of the ministry.

They are to minister at the altar in holy things—therefore, it is required of them that they be holy. They stand between the living and the dead—therefore, they are called to be serious. They are the messengers of God to sinners, and the advocates of men at a throne of grace—therefore, they need to be prepared for their duties by much prayer, and a lively faith.

They are debarred by the nature of their office from entering into political cares and responsibilities; they are, therefore, to have no concern with political governments except to pray for them, to pay tribute to whom tribute is

due, to preach the gospel to rulers and ruled, and teach them, from that authority, their respective duties to themselves, to each other, and to God. They may, in the discharge of official duty, apply the principles of religion to the action of civil government, but are not permitted to engage in those parties, where ambition kindles the fire of discord, and worldly policies conflict. Still, ministers of the gospel are citizens, like other men, must feel an interest in every event that transpires; must exercise a kind concern for every public and private interest of men, and they always have the right to an honest opinion on every subject. But the Savior has taught us by example how these rights may be exercised.

The interference of the church of Rome with the political affairs of men, and an attempt to influence or control them, has probably, more than any thing else, served to corrupt and debase her. Wicked and ambitious men have perceived that the most direct way to political power and influence was through the favor of the church. The ambitious man, therefore, who desired to be a minister of state, would first seek a cardinal's hat, and court intrigue occupied his attention more than the care of souls. Her policy, in this way, became almost entirely secular, and the interest of true religion became with its official defenders, a secondary object, or was entirely disregarded. It is necessary that while the ministers of religion feel and express an interest in every thing that concerns the happiness of men, they should be so far separate from any necessary connection with the affairs of the world, as may enable them to direct their entire energies to the duties of their office; and that they should be so far removed also from any necessary participation in the functions of the government as will repress all motives of ambition; that they should be so far raised above want as will preclude the necessity of labor for the means of subsistence, and so far limited in their pecuniary perquisites as will remove the ministry, as a profession, from one of avarice, personal interest, or ambition.

As the ambassadors of Christ, his ministers are to imitate his example, to live and labor as he did, to be conversant with the men of the world but separate from their sins, to understand well the institutions of men but to confine their influence to that which will exert a moral effect on society. They sustain to society the character of teachers, and ought therefore to be well instructed. They are judges, as they are expounders of the law by which men are judged, and therefore should well understand the book of the law. They hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and when rightly dividing the word of truth, they bind on earth what shall be bound in heaven; and loose on earth what shall be loosed in heaven.

3. We are led to consider *the appropriate influence of the Christian ministry*. The minister of religion is the expounder of the law of God. He speaks in the name of the Lord. His instructions, therefore, are authoritative, not by reason of his own wisdom or power, but because he speaks in the name of the Lord. He is clothed with authority by his office, and it is the truth, which is imperious in its claims. When he appeals to the law and the testimony, there is no higher authority on earth or in heaven—it is the authority of God. He lays open and enforces those principles on which the decisions of the last day will proceed. He divides the congregation into two classes. He appeals to the conscience till it rises, and comes forth in its power. The separated companies stand trembling before him, while he pronounces, the blessing of acceptance on the one, and the sentence of rejection on the other. When this is done under authority of the word of God and approved by it, it is authoritative, and ought to have a decisive influence on every heart, not to drive to despair, as it will do the wicked in the last day, but to excite to effort, for the sentence here is not final. With every decision and appeal of this kind, the minister of Christ is authorized to propose terms of reconciliation.

He always attends the announcement of the sentence with the offer of salvation, a favor which cannot be extended in the last day. As a minister of reconciliation, it is moreover his duty to press the acceptance of pardon, to enforce the command of God—"to repent," and do it without delay. This duty is imperious, binding on every soul. The influence of a gospel minister, therefore, in the pulpit, ought to be without limit when his communications are confined to the word of God. When he speaks the truth, he is setting the seal to the sinner's damnation. He presses the signature of his death warrant. But from the same instrument he reads the offer of pardon and eternal life, to which it will become the credentials and security, if he repents, and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence it is said, "He is to some the savor of life unto life, to others the savor of death unto death."

When a commissioned ambassador of Christ stands up in the pulpit to announce to sinners the word, and administer the ordinances, of God, he is entitled to the utmost attention for his "work's sake." Angels view it as one of the most interesting and eventful scenes. God is speaking in his word, and this word cannot be rejected without the most fatal effects on him who rejects it. The messenger is honored by what he bears. His person, the height of his stature, the elegance of his manner, the tones of his voice, the rhetorical accuracy of his speech, are all secondary objects. It is *the truth*, which is to "kill or make alive," on which the attention should be centred. Angels or devils rejoice at the result.

A minister of God, thus commissioned and endowed, and uniting to a serious discharge of his duties in the pulpit, an affectionate personal intercourse with the people of his charge, will stand in the community where he lives and preaches, the centre of a mighty influence felt through all time, and running parallel with eternity. The very station he holds imparts a sacredness to his character; the familiarity of his intercourse gives life and energy to his influence.

In ages of ignorance the clerical character has exercised an influence over the minds of men of prodigious power. It has, therefore, been sought and assumed by wicked men in furtherance of wicked purposes: and the basest influence has been sometimes exerted on the community, by those who have made the greatest pretensions to piety. No wonder that these facts have made men jealous of ecclesiastical power. I would have them so—that the office of the ministry may never furnish facilities to wicked men in the prosecution of unworthy objects.

We have only to enlighten the public mind, and there is little to fear and every thing to hope for, in the labors of the gospel ministry. Separate church and state, so that ambitious men will find no passport to promotion through the sacred office. Give the duty of supporting the gospel into the hands of the people, so that no extravagant salaries and easy livings may tempt the voluptuous into the pulpit. Make the minister the curate of his parish, so that he must work in his calling to secure and retain the affections of his people. Educate the people, so that he must study his books to enable him to instruct them, and then let the minister of the gospel exert all the influence he can. The people need not be afraid of it. He can do no hurt. The influence of talent, of piety, of labor, of moral worth, can never be dangerous. Would that the ministry could in this way increase their influence an hundred fold, and that the people could feel its moulding, commanding, transforming power.

The salutary influence of such a ministry on the morals of any community, the people of this happy country are well able to appreciate. Under a government of laws, and with no power beyond the force of truth, the minister's of religion come into the pulpit, the terror of none but infidels and wicked men.

In this view the ministers of the gospel, though separated from the duties and forms of legislation, are regarded by the patriot and statesman with high

honor. They are essentially necessary to the prosperous operation of any government in the certain law under which all authority is held—"that righteousness exalteth a nation, and sin is a reproach to any people." Hence, in political economy, we deny that the clergy are an unproductive class of men. The influence, which makes men sober, industrious, temperate, and honest, is an influence directly productive. And this, a faithful ministry does. Is the overseer, who prevents idleness and dissipation, who promotes industry, and directs the application of labor to the best effect, is he an unproductive man? Is the planter the poorer for him? If so, let him be dismissed, and let a faithful ministry be dismissed, and let every man do what seems good in his own eyes, and we shall have the proof of that political economy, and of that philanthropy, which has infidelity for its root, and which would dispense with the labors and influence of the ministers of Christ.

4. We are led to notice the *consequences attending the ministry of the gospel*. Established under such circumstances, and with such an object, the influence of the Christian ministry is necessarily great. In the hands of wicked men it has sometimes proved to be the greatest curse. The very name of priest is imposing, and when attached to a wicked man, has often aided the worst designs. When attended with a tolerable character, or splendid talents, it has often encouraged and spread the most pernicious heresies. Men, naturally conscious of guilt, as they are depraved by nature, seek to quiet their convictions at the cheapest possible rate. The instructions of the official minister of religion, have authority with the troubled sinner; and will have a great influence to disturb, or comfort and establish him.

Hence the influence of a faithful ministry is important. The minds of men are thereby enlightened in the truth. They are made acquainted with their guilt and danger. They are brought to see their opposition to God, are made to feel and fear the consequences, are convicted of sin, and agonize under this conviction. In these distressing circumstances, when they have no help and no hope in themselves, they are led by the ministry of the word to the cross of Christ. They are instructed in the nature, and helped to the exercise of true repentance. They flee to Christ as a Savior from sin. They rejoice in pardon, and are saved from the wrath to come. Their songs of rejoicing are renewed in heaven, and are everlasting. They are redeemed, regenerated, saved. All this great work is carried on through the ministry of the word. Sinners are converted, the church is built, heaven is peopled, the text is verified in this way.

But there are other consequences, which result to sinners from the word preached, the consequences which come on those who reject this word. The ministry that enlightens the soul greatly enlarges its capacity for happiness or misery. The minister of the gospel, therefore, while he furnishes to the mind the light of truth, awakens conviction, and quickens the sensibility of the soul to feel its power. He stands as a messenger of peace before a guilty world, to repeat those offers of mercy first brought by the Son of God himself. He is employed in writing on the tablet of each heart, the sentence of its condemnation, and will be raised at the last day to bear testimony to the inscription. Oh! dreadful must be the doom of those who have despised his warning voice and rejected the word of salvation.

Still the truth remains. Whatever reception the gospel may here find, the text remains, **THE CHURCH SHALL BE BUILT**, heaven shall be peopled, God shall be glorified. Holding, then, as we do, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, we will come to you in the ministry of reconciliation; we will turn back the bolt; we will open to you the door of heaven, we will invite you and **URGE YOU ALL** to enter; and if you will not hear, "your blood shall be upon your own heads."

SERMON LXX.

BY RUFUS W. BAILEY,
OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

**THE WISDOM OF GOD ILLUSTRATED IN THE FOOLISHNESS OF
PREACHING.**

I COR. 1:21. *For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.*

The wisdom of this world never led to a knowledge of the only true God. In the things of religion, the natural understanding is as dark as the natural heart is depraved. In Egypt, the most gifted in wisdom worshipped, and taught others to worship, the sun, moon, and stars, the air, the earth, and the meanest reptiles that crawl upon it. Rome, in the wisdom of this world, had her thirty thousand gods, not the vigilant opposers of vice, but the patrons by example of impurity, violence, and crime. Athens, the mistress of the literary world, had her altar inscribed to the unknown God. By that altar stands the minister of Christ crucified and proclaims—"whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

This preaching is emphatically said to be "*to the Greeks foolishness*"—and yet it *illustrates the "wisdom of God"* in opposition to what the "world knew by wisdom."

The preaching of the cross appeared to the wisdom of this world to be foolishness, in three particulars.

1. *In its opposition to established forms.* The theories of the philosophers were reduced to form. They were taught in their schools. They were identified with the literature, the politics, the business, the pleasures, and prejudices of the people. They derived their influence from the antiquity of their claims, the sanction of philosophers, and their coincidence with the natural and depraved inclinations of the heart. Yet, against all these authorities and influences, the wisdom of God spoke in the foolishness of preaching. It poured contempt on all the wisdom of this world, and pronounced the whole grand fabric of pagan religion utterly and fatally false from the foundation to the top-stone. It called on men to renounce in their religion, all that which had been consecrated by time, by their own approbation and that of their fathers, by the wisdom of their sages and philosophers, and to receive a new system of religion in direct opposition to them all, and which pronounced their religion false, and their gods a lie.

To the wisdom of the world, this appeared indeed as foolishness.

Especially when, in opposition to the philosophers of the age, the Author of this religion was known to be one Jesus of Judea, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and his adherents, without education, political influence, or power, were scattered and despised. The pride of intellect looked down with scorn on such folly. The multitude, bent on their pleasures, and led by their philosophers, rejected the scheme and persecuted its adherents.

2. *In the nature of its doctrines.* When the doctrines of this religion were developed in opposition to the polytheism, superstitions, and gross practices of the age, its folly, in the light of human wisdom, appeared still more glaring. Instead of three hundred thousand gods, sensual, passionate, and revengeful, it taught the being of ONE only living and true God, a SPIRIT, and requiring a spiritual worship—HOLY, and requiring holiness of his worshippers; omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent; eternal, independent, immutable; just, merciful, wise, and benevolent. It represented all men as depraved, and sunk in spiritual ignorance and ruin. It declared that there was no other name given whereby men could be saved, but the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and that in opposition to the received doctrines of heathen philosophy, the only way to become interested in true religion was to repent of and forsake sin, to be humble and harmless, to exercise forgiveness towards enemies, to live peaceably with all men, and receive this same Jesus as a prophet, priest, and king, whom God had sent into the world to save sinners.

•3. *In the manner of promulging its doctrines.* It is by a ministry, to which men are set apart by a certain simple form; and these men are generally selected without regard to worldly connections, or influence, and in the early ages of Christianity, without regard to human learning. The expedient appeared to the view of men too simple and lame to insure success. There was no parade of names, of power, or influence. The first propagators of Christianity were plain unlettered men, who went forth under the divine commission—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." This, with the administration of the sacrament, comprises the public duties of the gospel ministry. Hence we see how the preaching of the cross appeared to the wisdom of this world to be foolishness, in its opposition to established forms; in the nature of its doctrines; and in the manner in which its doctrines were promulged.

Yet in this *preaching*, the wisdom of God is illustrated in three particulars.

1. *In its efficiency.* Its efficiency must be one of the necessary proofs of a true religion. Proceeding from the Author of nature, a remedy for the ills under which we suffer, it must possess an adaptation to this end—it must be efficient. And what are the facts? What has the foolishness of preaching done? Before its simple force of truth the philosophers and philosophy of the Greek and Roman schools have retired. They are known no more but in name, in the books which record their absurd doctrines and their downfall.

The religion, that was appointed in the wisdom of God to be spread by the foolishness of preaching, rose during the three first centuries against the combined opposition of the world. It swam in the blood of its own victims, was rooted in the soil its own veins had contributed to moisten and enrich; overturned kingdoms, and gathered strength in a war of extermination raised against it.

When, under the corruptions of "the man of sin," truth had formed an unholy alliance, and an attempt was made to unite the spiritual kingdom of Christ under one head with the temporal power, and the sword was drawn against infidelity, and the wisdom of this world was substituted for the wisdom of God, it was the foolishness of preaching that, in the simple exhibition of truth, awoke a slumbering and enslaved world, shook the throne of the pope, disrobed the ecclesiastical tyrant, and confined the power of the church to the foolishness of preaching—all the power we ask, the only tyranny which infidels fear, the authority of truth, freely operating on minds that are free.

By a provision made in the institution of the gospel ministry, the simple truth is repeated in the ears of the people. It is therefore heard, enforced, on the conscience, does its office. And it cannot be hindered. Infidelity cannot hinder it. Men will go to hear it. Neither scoffs nor sneers, ridicule nor argument, allurements nor threats, persecutions nor reasonings, nor philosophy, can influence or deter men from going to hear the TRUTH. It may condemn, but that very sentence will bring them again. Consciences awakened cannot be diverted. Effectually roused, nothing but the gospel can soothe the irritation, or draw the arrows which a sense of guilt has implanted. They lie deep centred in the soul, and can only be extracted with the poison of sin.

Do you then seek for the wisdom of God in the efficiency of preaching? See it in the preaching of Peter in the day of Pentecost, and at the beautiful gate of the temple—of Paul at the judgment seat of Felix—of the Apostles in the first ages of Christianity—of the reformers against the corruptions of Rome—of the ministry of our own day of revivals, and of missions.

It is the influence of preaching in an enlightend age, which has brought up the church to its present standard of dignity, purity and influence. And who, but infidels and wicked men, fears the influence of a stated ministry, when thus exerted? It is this precise state of things that infidels fear—the influence of an enlightened ministry on an enlightened public. Then truth is efficient, and those, who bear it have their proper influence. Rather than this, the subtle infidel would prefer the superstitions of the dark age, the whinings of an ignorant priesthood, the ravings of the wildest fanaticism—any thing, that can bring religion into contempt, any thing but the fair influence of truth intelligently preached and comprehended.

2. *In its sanctifying influence.* The want of a sanctifying power has been fully proved on all the systems of religion, which the wisdom of this world has originated. Without this power, systems and theories are but at best the body without a soul, which soon putrefies,

spreading disease and death. It belongs to the Christian religion alone to exert a sanctifying power on its subjects, controlling the passions, chastening and directing the affections by a principle seated in the heart, and operative to a change of the whole nature. All its practical proofs correspond with the peculiarity of its theory—"it works by love, purifies the heart, and brings forth good fruits."

3. *In its saving power.* It hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. The result is salvation. It saves men, not only from the dominion of their passions, from the pollutions of sin, from their own lusts, from hatred, malice, and revenge, from bigotry, superstition, and idolatry, from infidelity and atheism, from mental and moral derangement, madness and despair—but it saves from the consequences of sin, from the sentence of violated law, from the eternal wrath of God. By a retrospective action, it delivers from past guilt, relieves the burdened conscience, and by the application of divine wisdom to a work of mercy, effaces in effect the accumulated guilt from the record of the sinner's life. Here is a salvation, which reaches the extremity of the sinner's case. It reinstates him in the blessings of a holy nature, and adds some joys unknown in paradise or heaven; for,

"Never did angels taste above,
Redeeming grace, and pardoning love."

It will be no impeachment of the wisdom of God, that all men are not saved by the gospel scheme, nor persuaded to embrace its provisions by the appointed ministry. We are called to contemplate a multitude, which no man can number, saved by this instrumentality, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;" while other multitudes are lost through unbelief and the love of sin, in despite of mercy provided and pardon offered. All the attributes of God are illustrated in glorious harmony. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne," in the infliction of eternal pains on the impenitent, while "mercy and truth go before his face" and harmoniously shine from the cross of Christ. If sinners are not saved by mercy, while the truth of God is vindicated at the cross, they are left in righteous judgment under the operation of the law, to the vindication of divine justice.

Here then we see an exhibition of the wisdom of God. That the world by wisdom knew not God, is manifest from the practices to which the light and knowledge of their own minds led them, and from the utter inability of every scheme of religion they devised to purify the moral fountain and correct the life. When this was fairly proved and candidly confessed, a plan is proposed in divine wisdom to save men from the polluting practices of sin, and prepare them in the temper of their minds for a blessed immortality. Here we see an exhibition of the wisdom of God in the Christian religion. Compare its doctrines with those of all other moral codes. Look at their tendency

and uniform influence, their efficiency, their sanctifying and saving power. Consider the wisdom of God in commissioning an order of men, whose duty it is to preach these doctrines. The book cannot go out of print while it is thus commended to the attention of the world. It cannot be locked up in an unknown tongue. Preach it; and the people will possess it. See how it has been translated through the influence of these very men into an hundred languages. What a spirit of inquiry is awake. Instrumentally, this has been accomplished by "the foolishness of preaching." Give us the word of God, is the cry of those who hear it preached. And this will be the demand; for it declares the "love of God manifested toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Two important facts, elucidated by this subject, are worthy of particular consideration. We see plainly the reason why good men love the Christian ministry; and also why infidels hate it.

First: Good men respect and love the ministry. The reason lies in the fact that they have been brought by the foolishness of preaching, to a knowledge of the truth, and felt the efficiency of the gospel in its sanctifying and saving power. They see the wisdom of God illustrated in the ministry of reconciliation. The soul that feels this moral renovation is born in that Spirit of benevolence, which first procured and exerted a saving power; and the ministry is upheld and respected as the great instrumentality employed for accomplishing the work of human salvation. By the Christian ministry, the truth is preached, has its effect; the church is preserved in form, doctrine, and discipline; the Sabbath is sustained as a divine institution, public prayer is repeated, the sacraments are administered, vice reprov'd, the consciences of men enlightened and quickened, and wicked men are made ashamed and afraid of sin.

Secondly, we see in this subject, why infidels and wicked men hate the ministry, and oppose the forms of worship: They are efficient. They are appointed in the wisdom of God, and adapted to promote the end of their appointment. Dispense with a gospel ministry, and the institution of religion would fall into disuse. The sacraments, having no administrators, would awaken in their solemn forms, no remembrances and obligations. The death of Christ, no longer set forth by symbols, would fail to make those deep impressions now effected by our sacramental service. The Sabbath, connected with no public instruction and forms of worship, would be neglected and forgotten; and the church, without officers, without sacraments, without Sabbaths, without public prayer, would be just what infidel France made it, when by a legislative act, the Sabbath was abolished, and the government of God was formally renounced; just such as infidelity desires to see it, a ruin and a desolation, from which the foolishness of preaching, in its doctrines and forms, was designed in the wisdom of God to protect it.

Infidels and wicked men, therefore, hate the ministry, and most of all that ministry, which is the purest and most efficient. A ministry, which will turn out the flock to the undisturbed ravages of beasts of

prey will be suffered to go on unmolested—will even be caressed. An ignorant, or a compromising ministry will be permitted to live, “like dumb dogs that cannot bark.” But let the truth be preached, and repeated, and insisted on, and proclaimed aloud, and be heard, and begin to produce its effect, and the alarm will be taken: These are dangerous men, it is declared, and their influence must be checked. Yet the infidel, who will let the pope sit quietly on his ecclesiastical throne, sealing up the Bible, and “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men,” would arm the country against a clergy, who laboriously study the doctrines of the cross, seeking and possessing no means of influence but that of the truth, honestly preached, and left to do its own work in the hearts of sinners.

What are the clergy of this country, that they should be feared? They are not ambitious men; for here is an effectual divorce of church and state—so effectual, that it is a disgrace for a minister of the gospel to seek, or exercise any political office. They are not avaricious; for the road to wealth lies altogether in the other professions. They cannot seek their ease; for the office is necessarily a laborious one. They can be feared only for their moral influence; and this can proceed only from the purity of their lives and the truth of their doctrines, and be commensurate with them. And who is he, who fears such men in such a cause? Who is afraid of power thus exercised? Who would abridge, or annihilate that power? None but the man, who would enslave the mind.

Finally, the pulpit is the best defence of public morals, a radiating point of moral light, influence, and power; and who would tear it down, or silence the voice that repeats the messages of God from it, seeks to close the flood-gates of mercy on the human family, and to extinguish on earth the light of eternal truth. When this is done, we may be again invited to cheer our dark and benighted souls by the few sparks, which philosophy kindled in the temples of paganism nearly three thousand years ago. We may be invited to possess and enjoy that liberty, which would subject the laws of God and of man to the revengeful and licentious heart, struggling in the darkness of its native depravity, and in the violence of its ungoverned passions. We may be left also to prove what that liberty is which would destroy the Bible, and vote God out of his own dominions.

But this horrid blasphemy can never succeed. It shall die in the throes of its own malignant passion. The experiment has been tried, and the result is on record. It was tried in heaven, and the sinning angels, now devils, met their fate. It has been tried on earth. After abolishing the Sabbath, and dispensing with the ministry, France, by a solemn national act, tried the experiment to throw off the government of Almighty God. And what was the result? Why they could not keep their own heads on their shoulders. Their own swords leaped from their scabbards to avenge the insulted majesty of Heaven. Their madness vented itself in mutual slaughter. The hand of man was even turned against himself, and when no avenger of his infidelity

made haste, his own suicidal act executed the dreadful judgment on himself.

Attempts have been made to silence the ministry, and thereby prevent the promulgation of Heaven's law. And what has been the consequence? The blood of the martyrs has been, in every age, the seed of the church. Under the administration of the law of violence, "a little one has become a thousand and a small one a strong city." The voice of truth, heard in the ministry of the gospel, cannot be silenced. Proceeding from the eternal throne of God, and proclaimed in virtue of a divine purpose and decree, it can be superseded only by the last trumpet, which calls sinners to final judgment. May we regard its admonitions now, that we may rejoice in its doctrines, when "some shall rise to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation."

THE PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

Vol. V.

PITTSBURGH, AUGUST, 1836.

No. 3.

SERMON LXXI.

BY R. M. CUNNINGHAM, D. D.

OF ALABAMA.

THE DUTIES AND DIFFICULTIES OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.*

ACTS 20:24. *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.*

It will be recollected by some of the members who compose this Synod, that some four or five years ago, the Presbytery of South Alabama assigned to her stated members subjects on which they were directed to prepare written discourses, and to deliver them before Presbytery, as occasion might offer. The subject assigned myself was the Duties and Difficulties of the Gospel Ministry; one of vital importance to all who are called to preach the gospel; and one, in our humble opinion, not foreign to the occasion of our present meeting.

At what period or place in our guilty world shall we begin to describe the thorny path these ambassadors of mercy have been destined to travel? No minister of salvation, from Moses and the prophets down to the close of apostolic times, has escaped trials and tribulations, peculiar to this high and sacred appointment. Look at the life of Moses and all the prophets; at the whole life of the meek and merciful Son of God; at the lives of all his apostles; and you will find that the duties and difficulties they were called to sustain wore out their strength and shortened their lives. Whilst they delivered their messages of peace, the tongue of slander never ceased; the sword of persecution never slumbered, until these victims of unmerited displeasure had passed the gates of death.

We will confine our illustrations and remarks principally to New Testament times. It would have been well for the church of Christ had the blood of those innocent men appeased the spirit of persecution. It did not; for it has continued under different modifications, and doubtless will continue, under some form or other, until the glory of the mil-

* Delivered at the opening of the first Synod of Tuscaloosa, 1835.

lenial day changes its character. Brethren, I feel myself inadequate to a subject inscribed upon the heart and life of every faithful minister of Jesus Christ. One which will remain secret and unknown in its multifarious bearings, until the day of eternity. Oh! for a portion of that intelligence and zeal, which fired the breast of that holy man who delivered to the elders of the church at Ephesus the sentiments contained in the text and context. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto me, so that I might finish my course with joy, &c. What an illustrious example of ministerial zeal and fidelity, sufficient to elicit the feelings and to enkindle the affections of every minister of the New Testament!

The apostle appears to have been peculiarly anxious, that he might be at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost: a day of special recollection and deep interest in the Christian church.

On that day, in the city of Jerusalem, the Holy Ghost was shed down on the apostles, and thousands of infidel Jews were converted to God under Peter's sermon. This day brought up a distinct recollection of the Jewish Passover: a feast venerable from its long continuance in the church of God; and one that involved in its constitution and termination some of the most sublime and awful scenes which can occupy the minds of men on this side of eternity.

Another leading object of desire with the apostle was, that on his way to Jerusalem he might visit the churches of Greece and Asia, and strengthen the brethren. In this farewell address he apprises these elders that, after his departure, grievous wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock, and likewise from among themselves men would arise speaking perverse things, and would draw away disciples after them. He therefore urges them to watchfulness and ministerial fidelity. The apostle appears to have had a distinct view of the evils that would fall on the church at Ephesus, as well as of the trials that awaited himself. "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, that bonds and afflictions abide me." God has mercifully hid from our eyes the trying scenes through which we have to pass, as well as our brethren in heathen lands, lest the sight of them should paralyze their strength. But Paul, in view of bonds and imprisonments, remained unshaken in his purpose—"none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself." How vastly important did Paul view the office of a gospel minister? It involves in it the glory and government of God, the redemption of man, the peace and prosperity of ministers and people here, and their assurance of being and happiness beyond the grave.

We shall endeavor to lay before you, brethren, and this congregation, some of the duties and difficulties attached to the office of a faithful minister. We will here assume for the present, that none take upon themselves the responsibility of this sacred office, but those who are called as was Aaron.

Suffer me to make two or three preliminary remarks. In the first place, whatever may have been our early advantages, our mental or

moral training with regard to preaching the gospel; however deeply and thoroughly read, in all the necessary branches of science and philosophy; and however carefully instructed in theology and polemic divinity; we will still be accounted unskillful and unsuccessful ambassadors of Jesus Christ, if we rely on our own acquirements; for notwithstanding all the above mentioned attainments, excellent in themselves, we shall still need the preaching of the divine Spirit, to open the seals of God's word and to show us the mysteries of salvation.

A minister of Jesus Christ should be a man of prayer, after the example of his Lord and Master: every thought of his heart, and every effort of his life should be consecrated to God and his service by solemn prayer.

This temper and tendency of heart will excite his affections, and keep his way open to a throne of grace through a Mediator, and will enable him at all times, to make wise and profitable preparations for the sanctuary, which, by the grace of God, will save himself and those that hear him.

The apostle, while he viewed afflictions like black and angry clouds obstructing his way, with a soul filled with the Holy Spirit, exclaimed with emphasis, "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy; that is, my travels, my earthly pilgrimage, my conflicts, and my trials, as well as the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus Christ, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

Let us stop for a moment and inquire, what was contained in that ministry he received of the Lord Jesus, which so warmed and captivated his whole soul? To this inquiry, a satisfactory answer may be found in the following language of that noble defence Paul made before king Agrippa and his royal court, (Acts 26:16, 17, 18:) "To open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

Brethren, if any thing within the range of human thought can give confidence and courage to the heart of a minister, it is a belief, that he has received his commission from the Lord Jesus. A commission from a king or an emperor, to negotiate terms of peace and amity for the prosperity of a nation, is esteemed highly honorable among men; and so it is: But a commission from the King of kings, the Prince of peace, which includes the glory and perpetuity of his kingdom, the peace and salvation of his subjects, is inexpressibly more so. Beyond all personal considerations, that minister, who possesses any of the spirit of Paul, or of his divine Master, will be sustained, and when darkness obscures his path and enemies obstruct his way, then one cheering ray from the sun of righteousness will clear his view and give a buoyancy to the soul that defies all opposition.

Brethren, were we devoutly engaged in our Master's service, as was this holy man, we would like him, finish our course and our ministry

with joy. Happy the man, who can say with honesty of heart, "For me to live is Christ; and to die is gain."

My design, on the present occasion, is to bring before you some of those doctrines, we apprehend to be closely connected with the plan of salvation; such as the depravity of the heart, regeneration by the Spirit of God; faith, holiness, &c. But on these subjects our time will only allow us to touch.

Human depravity lies deep and eludes the knowledge of superficial observers; from which I would say, that as every wise and skillful physician traces the symptoms of complaint until he has reached the character of the disease, so must every faithful minister. The holy Scriptures minutely point to the heart, as the true source of all moral and mortal disease. The melancholy experience of the whole human family attests the truth, "that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Allow me, while on the doctrine of human depravity, to advert to a few Scripture proofs: "That the wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies;" (Ps. 58:3.) Moses, in confirmation of the apostacy of man, says, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil, and that continually." This delineation of the enmity of the human heart is so plain and so definite, as to need but little comment. Job asks the question, "How can man be just with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" To which, if we add the Psalmist's account of his own original impurity, the doctrine in question must be established. For, says he, (in Ps. 51:5,) "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." Language must deceive us, or that man's mind must be prejudiced, or shaded with scepticism, who hesitates in coming to a conclusion with Jeremiah the prophet, (Jer. 2:21,) "We are plants of a strange vine," whose degenerate nature cannot be changed by any human effort. "Though thou wash thee with nitre and take thee much soap, yet thy iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord God."

It is the universal law of nature, that every thing produces its own likeness without any change of its species. Hence, Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image: (Gen. 5:3.) In what that image consisted is obvious. Paul tells us, (Rom. 5:14,) "That sin reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," and gives the reason for this universality of death over the human family, (Rom. 5:12,) "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The apostle assures us, that sin is not imputed where there is no law; but sin was imputed to Adam and his posterity, inasmuch as they became the subjects of human infirmity, disease, and death.

Children, therefore, must be involved in Adam's transgression; for they suffer the penalty of the law, which proves they have transgressed the law. But, inasmuch as their transgression could not be personal,

we therefore conclude, that children are reputed sinners from their relation to Adam, their covenant head and representative. If the imputation of Adam's guilt to his posterity be denied, it would seem to follow, from a parity of reasoning, that the benefits of Christ's death, who is called the second Adam, cannot be imputed, or applied to children, for justification and acceptance with God.

The apostle states the doctrine of federal imputation in a clear and conclusive manner when he says, "Since by man came death, by man came the resurrection of the dead; for, as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive:" (1 Cor. 15:22.) If all mankind do not stand in some distinctive relation either to the first or second Adam, the heads and responsible persons in the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, words have lost their meaning, and consequently there is no confidence to be placed in the long settled doctrines of the Bible.

The contrivers and preachers of the new scheme of perfectibility by human efforts—a scheme which sets aside the Scriptural doctrine of federal imputation—are doing immense evil in the church. In the charity of our divine Master, we would say—"These men are ignorantly, or sceptically spreading a dark and dismal veil over the future destiny of more than two-thirds of the most innocent and helpless of the human race.

Connected with these new schemes of the day, which are drawing around the churches of God the waters of Noah, is that doctrine which denies the necessity of a divine agency, in the conviction and conversion of a sinner, said to be dead in trespasses and in sins, having no hope and without God in the world. When we speak of the death of a sinner, we do not mean, that he is incapable of intellectual or moral action. We still believe, he is a rational and sensitive being, having a love of pleasure, and a fear of pain: were it not for the derangement of his faculties, and the indisposition of his heart, he might work out his own salvation. But when we speak of the death of a sinner, we mean that he is spiritually dead, having no faith, by which he can either see or comprehend the Savior, or the plan of salvation. This is all we understand by the declaration, and from this view of the subject is there any rational hope that such characters, by their own intrinsic and unassisted powers, can or will make any serious or successful efforts to recover themselves from the snare of the devil taken, as they are, captive by him at his will? (2 Tim. 2:26.) Why are invitations and promises given to poor helpless sinners, if not to encourage them to look to God for aid, and to expect it only in the use of appointed means? The great and important point to be labored in the successful preaching of the gospel is to convince men of their entire helplessness.

The spirit and condition of a helpless, self-righteous sinner, is correctly and forcibly presented in the epistle of John to the church of Laodicea, (Rev. 3:17,) "Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." There is a secret aversion in the heart of every natural man, to use the means of grace God has appointed, or to break off from the prac-

tice of favorite sins; and, if left to himself, he would do neither the one nor the other.

The question put by the prophet to the rebellious Jews, both affirms and confirms the doctrine we wish to illustrate and defend. The necessity of a divine agency in the production of spiritual life: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

Faith in Jesus Christ is another doctrine of our holy religion inseparably connected with pardon and acceptance with God. What that faith is, and the benefits it bestows, are variously but distinctly set forth in the Scriptures. It is usually defined to be the consent of the mind to the truth of a proposition to be believed; or, in other words, the reliance of the heart upon the truth of God. Paul defines faith to be, "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen:" (Heb. 11:1.) We can comprehend faith more clearly in its actings than in its essence. Its actings are presented in the word of God, under different exercises of the mind, and members of the body, as seeing, hearing, walking, running, &c.

That faith, which is the gift of God, is made the agent or medium of our justification and sanctification; for, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God:" (Rom. 5:1.) Faith is the active principle of a renewed nature. It works by love and overcomes the world: "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory:" (1 John 5:4.) Mental conviction, or moral suasion, never reaches the unbelief and turpitude of the heart. Devils and gospel sinners have this kind of faith, and still remain unchanged in the principles of action, as well as the objects of desire. "It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness:" (Rom. 10:10.) With this doctrine of the renovation of the heart by faith in Christ, the Old Testament perfectly accords. The prophet Ezekiel delivers this consolatory message to the captive Jews, which he had received of the Lord, (Ezek. 11: 19, 20,) "I will give them one heart, and will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them."

This faith, which is imparted to the soul in the act of regeneration or the new birth, is the work of the Holy Spirit: "For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death:" (Rom. 8:2.) It is unbelief that hides sin and the Savior from the soul. To bring men off from placing some hope of acceptance with God on their own personal merit is among the most difficult and doubtful enterprises of the gospel ministry. Paul and his brethren labored hard to gain this point among the Jewish professors with but little success. To tell a poor sinner, wounded by the law and a guilty conscience, that all his penitence and prayers will avail him nothing, that Christ is the ark of safety, the end of the law for righteousness to all that believe, rather irritates than relieves the anguish of his pharisaical heart.

Every redeemed sinner must be reduced to the painful alternative of the prodigal—starve, or return, just as he was in his rags and wretchedness. Ask every penitent in this assembly, where he found pardon and peace with God; he will tell you at the cross of Christ. There the clouds of unbelief broke and the shadows flew away. The sinner must be humbled and divested of self—must see and feel, that all attempts to save himself are unavailing, and, like Peter when sinking beneath the billows, must cry out, “Lord help or I perish;” or like the woman in the gospel, who, having in vain spent all her living to obtain a cure, “when she heard of Jesus, came into the press behind and touched his garment; for she said, if I may but touch his clothes I shall be whole:” (Mark 5:17.) The nature and actings of faith are happily exemplified in the case of the woman of Canaan, whose importunity carried her over all discouragements: “O woman! great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour:” (Matt. 15:28.)

Another doctrine connected with the office of the ministry, and one on which much stress should be laid, is that of sanctification, or gospel holiness. The Lord commanded Moses to say to the children of Israel, “Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy:” (Lev. 19:2.) Every thing devoted to God ought to be holy. Holiness is inseparably connected with our spiritual regeneration, our justification and peace with God. The Scriptures assure us, that “without holiness no man shall see God”—“Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.” Holiness is the highway of every Christian grace: as every member of the natural body groweth up to manhood, so every grace of the spirit tendeth to the perfection of holiness in Christ Jesus. It is a confirmation of the hope we entertain of our being in Christ. Paul declares his union with Christ to be the source of spiritual life; for, says he, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me:” (Gal. 2:20.)

Brethren, there is a material difference between gospel holiness, which includes tenderness of conscience, holy zeal, and godliness, and that frigid formality, with which many a professor is clothed. All pretensions to conversion, love of God and the brethren, are equivocal without the fruits of godly living.

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven.” We have many inducements to a holy life. Heaven is a holy place: nothing unclean shall enter there. Angels are holy beings. Our own Christian character and influence in society, depend much on a holy life. The place and comfort of our own souls depend greatly on the consistency that exists between our profession and deportment in the world. The peace and prosperity of the church rise or fall according to the true character of its members. The promise our Savior made to the multitude, in his admirable sermon on the mount, is

well calculated to excite the hope and animate the heart of every believer: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." This was Job's confidence in the hour of his deepest affliction: "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: (Job 19:26.) This blessed hope casts a refulgent light around the Christian in the darkest vale.

Ministers of the gospel ought especially to be holy men, and reflect the light of their divine Master. Priests of old, when entering upon the services of the Tabernacle, or Temple, were first washed and then anointed, in token of their purity and consecration to God. Ministers of the New Testament are received and set apart for Temple service, in the hope that they have been washed in a purer laver, and anointed with a more fragrant ointment; even the blood of the Lamb.

To you, my dear friends of this congregation and members from other churches, we would say, Be advancing in the divine life; in knowledge; in holiness; and finally, in every Christian grace. To enable you to do this, you have the stated means of grace, faithfully and affectionately dispensed among you. When this is the case, would it be an unreasonable thing in your minister to look for fruit in some degree proportionate to the labor he has performed? How would an instructor of youth feel, who had, for years, been counselling and encouraging his pupils to advance in the path of science and virtue, which would lead them to the highest attainments, if, after all his efforts expended on them, they were to remain stationary, or, like some rickety children of whom there was little hope, were rather to decline. If any thing can bruise and break the heart of a pious minister, it must be such fruitless results in the field of his labor.

In conclusion, in the name and by the authority of our divine Master, I urge you and myself onward, in the path of increasing holiness.

It would be impossible, in the course of a single sermon, to give so much as the outlines of ministerial duty. Brethren, neither you nor myself have been able to see the extent or feel the entire force of its obligation. It comprehends the relations we sustain toward God and our fellow men, both in time and eternity.

2. We come now, in the second place, to consider some of the trials and troubles incident to the gospel minister. Were we to trace the history of Moses and the prophets, of Jesus Christ and his apostles, we should find none of this long list exempted; no, not even from the severest trials and troubles that could be inflicted on a human being. The troubles of a gospel minister begin early in life. In fact they may truly be said to be coeval with his holy office, and run parallel with it. The greater number of useful ministers are the descendants of poor but pious parents; consequently many of them experience great difficulties in obtaining an education to fit them for the work of the ministry. By the time they have acquired it, they have no patrimony left. In the ardor of their hearts to preach the gospel of peace, they enlist in this spiritual warfare, having nothing of their own to shield

them from want and insult, nor to comfort them in times of trial and distress, in the unexplored fields of ministerial labor, but a good conscience and a holy zeal for the glory of God, and a tender concern for the salvation of men. In this missionary situation they remain until sad experience proves that their necessary wants can no longer be supplied. They then yield to what they apprehend to be duty; to invitations and calls for a settlement. The deficiency of a scanty promise of support soon drive them to the fields, like the Levites of old, or some other method of acquiring a support. How painful must these dark providences and dispensations be to men, who have hearts imbued by the Holy Spirit, and capacities fully ample to preach the gospel!

To see a young man just setting out on the pathway of duty, crippled as it were, his strength paralyzed, before he has made one full experiment of what he could do in the vineyard of God, is a circumstance in the history of the times greatly to be deplored. Let this brief delineation serve as a specimen of the personal trials of ministers in New Testament times.

Brethren, be of good cheer; better days await the church and her faithful servants, as we shall see hereafter. The man of God shall rise from this mournful vale of tears, and standing with his feet upon Mount Nebo, shall be above these clouds, that so cover and perplex his mind. Then and there God will show him the land of promise; a land of light and liberty, and of corn, wine, and oil; which, when his eyes behold, his soul shall dilate with joy and gladness.

The want of success is another circumstance in the experience of a faithful minister, which often pains his heart and withers his hopes. That his honest and persevering efforts make such slight impressions on the minds of his mixed and wavering audience, the bulk of whom neither comprehend nor feel the force of those doctrines which are sufficient to make angels weep. (The gospel surely contains doctrines so well suited to the condition of poor and perishing sinners, and so consonant to the conclusions of sound reason and conscience, that it is believed it must and will succeed.) But, alas! after repeated trials, the desponding and unsuccessful speaker has to take up the lamentation of the prophet, "Who hath believed our report," &c. The great bulk of our hearers oftentimes go away with cold indifference to what they have heard, with an apparent levity of manners, indicative of disrespect both for the man and his message. And what gives still greater poignancy to this neglect is, that the glory of God in the salvation of a sinner is unnoticed and disregarded. When the Savior is offered in all the beauty and amiableness of his mediatorial character—when the nature of his love for the salvation of his enemies is illustrated by his agony and bloody sweat in the garden—his cries on Calvary—and by the whole scene of the crucifixion; how few, how comparatively few, are made sensible of the amazing price of man's redemption? That minister who can stand at the cross of Christ, exhausted and foiled, and see his infatuated hearers, with measured steps, pressing

down that broad and seductive road that leads to chambers of darkness and keen despair, without feeling a deep depression and sorrow of heart, must be a monster and not a minister.

Brethren, our own salvation is endangered if we, through fear or affection, fail to apprise professors of their duty and their danger; to urge upon them the claims of that Master whom they profess to love and serve. How can they love the Savior, whose precepts and examples they fail to regard, while they live in the neglect of meditation and prayer, the greatest privileges conferred on mortals. To refuse the means of such near and intimate communion with the God of grace is a manifest rejection of his favor and friendship. Many other omissions of Christian duty linger round the character and conscience of the reputed disciples of the Lord Jesus. We are set to watch for souls as they who must give an account.

If Paul thought it necessary to charge Timothy—a young minister of pre-eminent talents and grace, as in the presence of God and the elect angels—with what plainness and force of brotherly affection, ought we to urge each other to the full and faithful discharge of ministerial duties, whatever it may cost us. In all human probability, this is the last time I am to stand before you in this attitude. The number of my months is nearly filled; the measure of my days is nigh run out; and my departure is close at hand. Suffer me, therefore, as a senior member of your body, to offer you some counsels and encouragements drawn from close observations and reflections of more than a half century.

In the honesty of my heart, before God, I counsel you to beware of the world and its fascinations. He who knew the force of temptations the world might present, warns his people to beware of its deceitful charms.

If the world like a deceitful whirlpool, draws you within its eddy, no skill or strength of your own can ever save you from the increasing velocity that draws to destruction. The riches of a good man lie in a happier clime. Paul, a man of ardent love, of indefatigable labor, like his Master, was poor as to this world; but he had a crown of glory awaiting him, which God the righteous Judge would bestow on him as soon as he entered the gates of heaven. This was more than a counterbalance for all his numerous and unprecedented afflictions, and will be to you also, whosoever of you prove faithful to God and the souls of men.

Should you not meet with that comfort and encouragement the very nature of your office seems to demand, leave your case with him who judgeth righteously, and learn with Paul, in whatever state or condition you are placed, therewith to be contented. You have not enlisted in this holy war to please or profit yourselves, but him who hath called you to be soldiers: "Therefore endure hardness, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ: No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier:" (2 Tim. 2:3, 4.)

I counsel you not to neglect a conscientious attendance upon the judicatories of the church. The supervision of her affairs, her government and discipline, require united action. Faithfulness in the many painful duties and difficulties that come before you as a judicature may cloud and perplex you for a season, but the sunshine of peace and happiness will shed a brighter light on your path. Ministerial faithfulness has a present as well as a future reward annexed. The field of Christian enterprise widens before you. The Christian public are now adopting measures and sending out young men (apparently) of the right spirit, *which*, under God, are calculated to change the aspect and moral condition of the whole world. The signs of the times impart comfort and confidence to the friends of the Redeemer, they indicate the near approach of that day which has long been the subject of prophecy and prayer, when the Star of Bethlehem should again appear in the East with renewed splendor, and lead a multitude of wise men to search for Him, who was born King of nations, as well as King of the Jews. The Christian Church is now opening her treasures, and presenting to him gifts, gold, frankincense, myrrh, who is to reign over our rebellious world, and bring it under the government of his grace and universal righteousness.

Brethren, consider well the importance and fearful responsibility of the office you sustain—you are ambassadors for Christ—as though God did beseech sinners by you, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God. Like Aaron you are called to stand between the living and the dead—let your censers always be full of the incense of much prayer to God—that the plague may be stayed—that immorality, crime, and rebellion, may be arrested, and sinners saved.

Brethren, it is with a mournful sensibility I look along your ranks, and see them thinned by the mysterious hand of God; some are sent to other portions of the visible church; some fallen in the ranks of efficient duty; and not a few called to render their last account. Our harps are on the willows—how long they may be silent—how long our spiritual captivity may last in this section of our beloved Zion, none but God himself knoweth. I presume until some prophet from the Lord shall say to us, “Let the priests and the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: (Joel 2:17.) Let us pray for more of the spirit of our divine Master, when on Mount Olivet, which overlooked the city, he wept over her infatuated inhabitants. Let us weep over the slumbering and secure condition of the churches in this quarter of God's moral vineyard, and say, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

SERMON LXXII.

BY GEORGE G. POAGE,
OF OHIO.

THE REDEMPTION PURCHASED BY THE SON OF GOD.

GAL. 4:4, 5. *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

The principal object of the apostle in writing this epistle seems to have been, to expose certain errors which had been introduced among the Galatians, and to establish them in the faith of Christ, especially on the important point of justification. Certain Judaizing teachers had crept in among them who endeavored to degrade the character of Paul, and taught that obedience to the ceremonial law was necessary in order to justification. The apostle, after asserting and vindicating his apostolical authority, proceeds to show that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ: (2:16.) He then goes on to state the use of the law. "Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith:" (3:24.) The temple and all the institutions connected with it were typical, teaching the necessity of an atonement for sin, and pointing to the coming Messiah who should make that atonement. The church was then in a state of minority; and as an heir, so long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father; even so the Jews were in bondage under the elements of the world: (4:1, 2, 3.) They were under obligation to observe all the requirements of the ceremonial law. *But when the fulness of the time was come*, the time appointed of the Father, *God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law*, and He having accomplished all that was typified by the rites and ceremonies of the law, they were freed from all obligations of obedience to that institution.

In the counsels of eternity God determined to send into the world

one to save perishing sinners. . When man fell, a Savior was promised. This promise was renewed to Abraham; and the coming of the Messiah was repeatedly foretold by the prophets. When this long predicted *time was fully come*, God was not unmindful of his promise. Angels announce the Savior's entrance into the world. Behold the Babe of Bethlehem, born in a stable and cradled in a manger! This is the Son of God! his Father's equal! Heaven was his throne, and angels his subjects. The highest orders of intelligent creatures delighted to serve and honor him. But he left his Father's bosom; he descended from his glorious abode; down to earth he came; the God of heaven became man; he united the human and the divine natures. He thus became capable of sorrow, and affliction, and pain, and death. He was *made of a woman*, yet so that he was free from sin and pollution, being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. He was *made under the law*. The King of kings and Lord of lords took the form of a servant and became subject to the law *to redeem them that were under the law*. He saw us poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked, and helpless, and he came to satisfy the claims of law and justice, and to redeem us from destruction; *that we might receive the adoption of sons*. That we might be received into his family, instructed by his word and Spirit, clothed with his righteousness, fed with the bread of life, protected from all our enemies, and prepared for a more enlarged estate in another world. Thus he who was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. That we might become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; heirs to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. That we might be entitled to all the privileges of children of God while in the world, and be fitted for and finally received to the enjoyment of Him in his kingdom of glory.

When God made man he gave him a law to which he required perfect obedience as the condition of life, and annexed to its transgression, a penalty. By disobedience man forfeited his title to life and became liable to the penalty, which was death. He became subject to temporal death, was deprived of the enjoyment of God, and exposed to his wrath and curse, which would sink him to the depths of misery forever. Hence, that God might be just, that he might maintain the authority of his law, and the honor of his government, and save sinners, it was necessary for the Son of God to assume human nature that he might render obedience to the law, and endure its penalty. *Being made of a woman, made under the law*, he satisfied its claims in both these

respects. His obedience to all its requirements was perfect. He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin: (Heb. 4:15.) The eye of omniscience saw no blemish in his character. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners: (Heb. 7:26.) He was constantly engaged in doing good. His life was a life of labor, and toil, and fatigue. He endured the reproach, and contempt, and scorn of a wicked world. He was betrayed by the token of friendship into the hands of his enemies; was buffeted and spit upon, and crowned with thorns; was condemned at the bar of Pilate, and expired on the cross of Calvary. But this was not all, else why do we hear him in the garden of Gethsemane exclaiming, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death? Why do we see him agonizing until he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground? Was the Son of God sore amazed and filled with agony merely in prospect of enduring sufferings? He was now about to drink to the dregs the cup of wrath which would have sunk a world of sinners to endless perdition. The time had come when God was about to call for the sword of justice saying, Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow. And when the powers of darkness were combined against the Son of God, his Father withdrew and we hear him exclaiming, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! Thus, by his obedience, and sufferings, and death, he satisfied the claims of law and justice in our stead. He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust: (1 Pet. 3:18.) He was delivered for our offences: (Rom. 4:25.) He bare our sins in his own body on the tree: (1 Pet. 2:24.) He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him: (2 Cor. 5:21.) Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: (Gal. 3:13.) He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed: (Isaiah 53:5.) Having thus made an atonement for sin, he rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, there to intercede for his people. Through his atonement and intercession a way is opened in which those who are under condemnation *may be redeemed*. The offers of mercy and salvation are made freely to the chief of sinners, and the Holy Spirit is sent to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and all who, convinced by his word and Spirit, of their sins, come as humble penitents, in the exercise of faith, receive a righteousness which justifies them from all their sins. Christ's right-

eousness is imputed to them, and they are thereby rendered acceptable in the sight of God, and *receive the adoption of sons*.

THEIR STATE IS CHANGED. They who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world; they who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ: (Eph. 2:12, 13.) They are taken into the relation to God of children to a father, and his language to them is, I will be a father unto you and ye shall be my children: (2 Cor. 6:18.) Under his parental care and protection they shall be preserved from all evil. The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them: (Ps. 34:7.) Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul: (Ps. 121:4—7.)

THEIR CHARACTER IS ALSO CHANGED. Their proud, haughty, self-confident spirit gives place to a meek, humble, teachable frame; an affectionate, filial, obedient disposition: (Gal. 5:23. Col. 3:12. Acts 20:19. Matt. 11:29.) Their anxious inquiry is, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? and they are zealous and faithful in the discharge of every known duty: (Acts 9:6. John 15:14.) They delight in the law of the Lord, and in all his commandments: (Ps. 119:16, 35, 47, 70, 143.) Feeling their entire dependence on God, they are enabled, by the spirit of adoption which they receive, to draw near to him with confidence, knowing that he is more ready to give his Spirit and all needed blessings to those who ask him, than earthly parents are to give good gifts to their children: (Rom. 8:15. Matt. 7:11. Luke 11:13.) They have the Holy Spirit to lead and guide them, and to bear witness with their spirits that they are the children of God: (Rom. 8:14, 16.)

THOSE WHO RECEIVE THE ADOPTION OF SONS ARE ENABLED TO LAY HOLD OF THE PROMISES OF GOD, WHICH ARE EXCEEDING GREAT AND PRECIOUS. There is no want to them that fear him. They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing: (Ps. 34:9, 10.) Godliness is profitable unto all things having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come: (1 Tim. 4:8.) And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God: (Rom. 8:28.)

THEY HAVE A SURE TITLE TO HEAVEN. For if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ: (Rom. 8:17.) Being thus taken into the family of God, entitled to all the privileges of his house, guided and sanctified by his word and Spirit, nourished and supported

by his grace, and protected by his power; having fought a good fight, having finished their course, and having kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for them a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give them at that day: (2 Tim. 4:7, 8.) The sorrows, and trials, and afflictions of life being ended, they shall enter into their rest; shall be taken home to glory; shall be admitted to the immediate presence and enjoyment of God, where the weary are at rest and the wicked cease from troubling; where there is no more sickness, nor sorrow, nor death; but all is peace, and joy, and bliss. There they shall see their blessed Savior as he is, and shall be like him. Their enlarged and constantly expanding powers shall find full employment in contemplating the glorious perfections of Jehovah as there displayed. They shall unite with the holy throng around the throne of God, in ascriptions of honor, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever. But it is beyond the power of imagination to conceive, and of language to describe, the blessedness of the children of God in the world of glory. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is: (1 Cor. 2:9. 1 John 3:2.)

This subject strikingly exhibits both the mercy and the justice of God.

From this subject we may learn, the obligations Christians are under of gratitude to God for his great mercy; the obligations they are under to live to his honor and glory.

We may infer from this subject, also, the obligations resting upon sinners to accept of salvation as offered in the gospel, and the great danger they incur in rejecting the offer.

THE PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

VOL. V. PITTSBURGH, SEPTEMBER, 1836. No. 4.

SERMON LXXIII.

BY THOMAS CLELAND, D. D.
OF KENTUCKY.

THE CONSERVATION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

PSALM 37:29. *The Lord forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever.*

'TRULY God is not man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and will he not do it? or hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?' No sentiment can be more positively affirmed, no doctrine more directly asserted, than the one contained in this text. It is hardly necessary to give it a name. It speaks out for itself, and cannot be misunderstood, much less contradicted, by the merest tyro in theology, not previously biassed against it. It stands out in such bold relief, such undisguised features, that none but the sceptical, or the mind obnubilated and enveloped in the murky atmosphere of ignorance and prejudice, can doubt its meaning, or hesitate a moment to adopt the sentiment, as the true and infallible word of God. The text suggests two things for our consideration:

I. THE CHARACTER OF THE PERSONS DESIGNATED BY THE NAME OF 'SAINTS.'

II. THEIR CERTAIN CONSERVATION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE.

I. *The character of the Persons designated by the name of Saints.* The term *saint*, is usually applied to a person eminent for godliness. The Romanists superstitiously employ it in reference to those who are canonized, after their order, by which they are made saints of a high degree. But the word is generally applied by us, to the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and other holy persons mentioned in the Scripture. Indeed, the term *saints*, so frequently used in the Old and in the New Testaments, both individually and collectively, literally signifies *holy ones*, or *sanctified ones*; whether on earth or in heaven. Thus, we read of 'the saints in the earth'—'the congregation of saints'—'the assembly of the saints'—'churches of the saints'—'wants of the saints'

—‘love to the saints’—‘death of the saints’—‘saints and faithful brethren in Christ,’ &c. The way by which any become saints, is not of themselves, but by the grace of God, ‘by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;’ as it is emphatically written, ‘being sanctified by the Holy Ghost:’ Rom. 15:16. ‘Through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth:’ 2 Thess. 2:13. So the Apostle Paul informs the believing Corinthians: ‘but ye are sanctified—by the Spirit of our God:’ 1 Cor. 6:11. Which is fully confirmed by the same authority in 12:8: ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, *but by the Holy Ghost.*’ The saint, therefore, is one who is ‘born of God’—‘born of the Spirit’—‘through sanctification of the Spirit:’ John 1:13; 3:6; 1 Pet. 1:2. The sanctification ascribed to the saints, is either of *nature*, being born of the Spirit, and renewed after the image of God, in spiritual knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness: (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10,) or of *practice*, as they ‘grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ’—‘They go from strength to strength;’ for, ‘the righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.’ The sanctification of the saints in this life is only perfect *in parts*; extending, and operating through the whole man; but it is imperfect *in degrees*, as may be seen from the following passages: 1 Kings 8:46; Job 9:20; Eccl. 7:20; Rom. 7:14; 1 John 1:8.

This being a divine, internal, progressive work, it is common to all who are ‘quicken’d by the Spirit, who have ‘passed from death unto life,’ who ‘are not under the law, but under grace.’ All, therefore, whether old or young, bond or free, Jew or Gentile, who have undergone this radical, spiritual change, ‘from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,’ ‘who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son’—all such are, by regeneration and adoption, the spiritual ‘sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.’ As, therefore, the existence and operation of one grace of the Holy Spirit, implies the existence of all the rest, so does their sanctification comprehend all the graces of knowledge, faith, repentance, love, humility, zeal, patience, &c., and the exercise thereof, both towards God and man. We include, therefore, in the term saints, all of every name and kindred, of every class and description, of every clime and nation, who are really ‘born again;’ all in whom the Holy Spirit has efficiently and savingly operated to the production of the ‘new creature;’ having ‘a new heart, and a new spirit’ within them; ‘that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.’ And as ‘wisdom is justified of her children,’ so these will be made manifest to the world, as ‘the salt of the earth,’ as ‘the light of the world;’ and, being ‘children of light,’ will answer to their name, by an open sincere profession, solemn dedication, gracious dispositions, and religious conversation.

II. *Their certain Conservation and final Perseverance.* The proposition to be established is: *That all who are renewed by the Spirit of God, shall, by his grace, be preserved from total apostacy, and continue to persevere in holy obedience, to the end of life, and be eter-*

nally saved. If this proposition cannot be maintained by *positive* Scripture proof and solid argument, we despair of establishing, by the same method, any other doctrinal proposition in the Bible. Indeed, it is to us a matter of amazement, that any enlightened, ingenuous, pious mind, should ever doubt, much less oppose, with obstinate vigor and pertinacity, as is frequently the case, a doctrine so Scriptural, harmonious, and deeply interesting to every real believer. Such being the fact, however, of its being strenuously denied and stoutly opposed, it becomes us, therefore, the more carefully to examine the foundation of a doctrine, the confirmation of which is so deeply interesting. Let us then, with cheerful confidence, and sanguine expectation, hear what the Scripture saith on the subject.

1. It is positively affirmed that, *the Lord will not forsake his saints*. This is the emphatic declaration of our text, which is fully corroborated by kindred and collateral passages, a few only shall be adduced on each item of proof, as specimens; studiously avoiding prolixity by a tedious, indefinite enumeration. In 1 Sam. 12:22, it is said, 'The Lord will *not forsake his people* for his great name's sake.' Particularly, in Heb. 13:5, 'He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.' This short passage in the Greek contains *five* negatives. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a similar instance, in the same compass, in any language. And as Dr. Macknight very justly remarks, 'The multitude of the negative particles, and their position in the original, render this passage exceedingly emphatical and beautiful.' Not only so, but we may add, they are fraught with undiminished plenitude of assurance, encouragement, and consolation. Literally rendered, they stand thus: 'No, I will *not* leave thee; no, no, I will *never* forsake thee.' This blessed truth, when put into song, is frequently expressed with great pleasure and animation.

"The soul that on Jesus hath lean'd for repose,
I will not, I cannot, desert to his foes;
That soul, tho' all hell shall endeavor to shake
I'll never, no never, no never forsake."

Better assurance, then, that God will not leave nor forsake his people, cannot be afforded. But here comes a vigorous opponent, a stranger to this source of consolation, and throws in a damper, by suggesting, 'May not God's people forsake him? and if so, what then?' To this the Lord himself shall answer: 'I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will *not turn away from them*, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they *shall not depart from me*.' Jer. 32:40. These words express the sentiment of our proposition handsomely, and support it unequivocally. While the opposite sentiment, conversely followed out in reference to the divine character and veracity, would be a violation of truth, a breach of covenant, a faithless dereliction of all the revealed grace and blood-sealed engagements of the gospel! There does appear to us tremendous embarrassment and fearful responsibility in the opposing sentiment. In its vindication,

it will require no common perspicacity and adroitness, to keep from conflicting with the throne of God and his revealed wisdom. We add once more; the conduct of the Most High, towards his erring children, is plainly set forth in the following passage, expressive of the same sentiment: 'If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.' Thus will God by this disciplinary course, correct his people for their aberrations, but never finally cast them off. By this wise and salutary conduct, his people are reclaimed, and finally saved, and no shade of imputation falls on the divine integrity, power, and goodness, from any breach of promise, covenant, and oath, which otherwise, would seem to be imputable, were he to forsake his people, and suffer them to fall a prey to sin and the devil, and finally go down to endless perdition.

2. Again: the Lord has expressly said, *his saints shall not utterly or finally fall*. 'The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.' Ps. 37:23, 24. Here the gist of our proposition is very plainly indicated again. None will refuse to allow 'a good man' to be a saint. But it is intimated that such an one may 'fall,' yet not totally and finally. For it is affirmed most positively, that he '*shall not be UTTERLY CAST DOWN*'—he shall *not* utterly, totally, finally, fall into perdition. A good man may fall through temptation, or infirmity, or lack of vigilance, deeply, disgracefully, deplorably. But he shall not fall to rise no more, as hypocrites do, as false professors and apostates do; because the Lord himself interposes and upholdeth him by his almighty power. So, 'A just man falleth seven times, (*frequently, often,*) and riseth up again,' by the same divine adjuvancy.

3. Our next direct testimony is, *the declaration of Christ himself, respecting the eternal and imperishable state of his disciples*: 'I give unto them eternal life, and *they shall never perish*.' John 10:28. This declaration is emphatical and unequivocal; admitting of no addition, of no qualifying terms. Its confirmation is founded on his own and his Father's power: 'Neither shall any *pluck them out of my hand*. And none shall be able to *pluck them out of my Father's hand*.' Here is omnipotent power engaged, employed, and concerned, for their preservation from all opposition and danger. It is the united power and agency of the Father and the Son; for it is added, 'I and my Father are one.' They are not only one in will and affection, in concord and consent; but they are likewise one in essence and nature; one in power and authority. The plain and powerful truth here advanced, is no less than this; that Christ the Son of God, is in nature, co-essential; in dignity, co-equal; and in duration, co-eternal with the Father. And thus, by the joint power, will, affection, and co-operation of both, the preservation and final salvation of all the saints—of all Christ's sheep, is as sure and certain as the Godhead itself. It seems as though

one might as soon question the power, veracity, and Godhead of Christ himself, and his Father's too, as to doubt or deny the certain and eternal salvation of all real believers. Or, which is the same thing, maintain that any of Christ's sheep may be plucked out of his hand, and perish for ever. He has said, in the next chapter, verse 26, that the true believer—'*shall never die,*' that is, an eternal death. And the confirmation of this rests upon a previous declaration, 'I am the resurrection and the life.' This remarkable declaration of Christ respecting himself implies, that his divine nature, or the power of his Godhead, is the *principal efficient* cause of the resurrection. John 5:21; Phil. 3:20, 21. And that his own resurrection is the *meritorious cause*, the *pattern*, the *pledge*, the *assurance* of the believer's resurrection. When he declares, 'I am the life,' it means the *author*, the *fountain* of life, *natural*, *spiritual*, *eternal*. Truly might he say with the utmost confidence and certainty, 'whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, SHALL NEVER DIE.' Then immediately follows his tender appeal to Martha—'Believest thou this?' The sentiment we advocate unhesitatingly responds in the affirmative. But the opposite falters, hesitates, quibbles, and when urged up to the point, coldly answers, no; the *living believer* may yet die 'the second death,' and so be eternally lost!

4. *The inspired confidence of holy men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, further confirms our doctrine.* Thus says the apostle Paul, Phil. 1:6, 'Being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' This is very positive testimony. Here we have the *nature* of grace described—it is '*a good work.*' The *author* is God, *he that hath begun a good work in you.* Its *perpetuity* and *duration* is strongly asserted, '*Being confident of this very thing, that he—will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,*' that is, the day of judgment. A firmer and fuller assurance of the saints' perseverance in grace unto the end, need not be required than this. The same apostle, under the same divine guidance, animated with a view of the unchangeable and everlasting love of Christ, associated with the indissoluble and imperishable union to Christ of him 'that is joined unto the Lord,' gives utterance to his feelings in the following triumphant expressions; 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Rom. 8:38, 39. No proposition can be more positively laid down than this. The amount of it is, that no creature in heaven, or in earth, or in hell, shall separate Christ and his real disciples. This is fully confirmed by the enumeration and induction of particular agents and things, supposed to wield the most powerful and dangerous influence; yet unable to separate the believer from the love of Christ; the permanency and duration of which, is confirmed upon a solid basis, namely, it is 'the love of God in Christ Jesus.' Here, if it be suggested, as has been done, 'that the apostle did not mention *sin* in the catalogue, and therefore sin may separate,' &c; to this idle and sceptical cavilling, the apostle, without any interruption of his rapture, or diminution of his confidence replies, '*sin shall not have dominion over you;* for ye are not under the law, but under grace.' Rom. 6:14. The apostle's assurance of the unchangeable love of God in Christ Jesus, receives additional confirmation, from the everlasting nature of holy love, which '*never faileth:*' 1 Cor. 13:8. Here we are taught, that this excellent grace of love, is of an abiding nature; never utterly lost out of the heart once imbued with it. It is imperishable and abiding in this world, and will be perfected in all its lustre and glory in the world to come. But if one soul, in whose heart this love once existed, is finally lost, then what becomes of Paul's firm persuasion of *no separation* between Christ and the believer, and the declaration that, '*love never faileth!*'

5. The persons *who are justified, and those who are glorified, being equinumerant*, is another invincible proof of the proposition before us. This we have in express, unqualified terms: '*whom he justified, them he also glorified?*' Rom. 8:30. The natural and obvious meaning of these words is that precisely the same persons are included and recognised in each specification in the text—That the number of the glorified, is in exact accordance with the number justified. To suppose the contrary, is to conflict with the divine veracity, and contradict the unqualified declaration of the Holy Ghost by the mouth of the apostle. Yet strange and forbidding as it may appear, it is sometimes done. Hence we are told by a very learned and sagacious opposer of our doctrine,* in reference to this passage, that 'equally contradictory to the Scripture is it so to explain St. Paul here, as to make him say, that all who are justified are also glorified.' And then, drawing his conclusion from his own premises, affirms that 'all persons justified are not infallibly glorified.' This is one way to get over this stubborn passage—by direct, barefaced contradiction. Another method employed to evade the force of this unequivocal testimony against a favorite tenet, is, to add a little to the apostle's words; thus, '*whom he justified*—if they continue in his love—*them he also glorified.*'† Such license with God's sacred word, is intolerable and reprehensible, and goes to show how far good men may be led to contradict their Maker and Sovereign, rather than relinquish their pre-conceived and long-cherished fictions. When it is said, Acts 13:48, 'and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed,' it is not to be conceived, that the number in the one case, is either greater or less, than in the other. If the question be, how many were ordained to eternal life? The answer is, as many as believed. And conversely, if it be inquired. How many believed? The answer will be, 'as many as were ordained to eternal life.' Take another illustration. 'And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the the ark'—'wherein eight souls were saved by water;'—here let the proposition be in the following or like form: Whom God brought into the ark, them he also preserved. Or thus: As many as entered into the ark were also saved. So it is as certain, and plain, without contraction, or qualifying, or adding to the word of God, that '*whom he justified, them he also glorified.*'

6. *The constant supervision, the holy vigilance, and protecting power of that hand from which none shall be able to pluck the sheep of Christ, and of that ever-wakeful eye that never slumbers nor sleeps*, afford the most ample pledge for the security and certainty of their final salvation. Do the saints compose the spiritual '*vineyard*' of Jehovah? 'I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it day and night.' Isa. 27:3. Is it his holy '*Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down?*' 'Not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.' Jer. 33:20. Will God '*sift the house of Israel*'—not '*Israel after the flesh*,' but '*the Israel of God*'—'the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit.' Will God '*sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve?*' He will: 'Yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.' Amos 9:9. Not one grain—even the least—shall perish—shall be lost or forgotten. Are the saints specially designated by the name of '*God's heritage*'? They '*are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*,' even '*until the redemption of the purchased possession*.' Is the '*name of Jehovah*'—his unchangeable mercy, power, wisdom, righteousness, faithfulness, promise, and oath—the secure refuge and defence of his people? Yes, truly; for '*the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.*' Prov. 18:10. And to

* Watson.

† Wesley.

make the eternal inheritance of the saints doubly sure, they have 'an oath for confirmation'—the infallible word and oath of the eternal Jehovah himself. 'Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by *an oath*: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' Heb. 6:17, 18. This is strong consolation, most assuredly. But if a single one of these '*heirs of promise*' should be foiled, defeated, and finally lost, then what becomes of this refuge—this strong consolation—and the immutability of God himself—his counsel—his covenant—his promise—yea, his solemn oath! 'Because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself.' Who does not see the difficulty, absurdity, inconsistency, and contradiction of the opposing sentiment, when viewed in all its tendencies and conclusions. And is there not danger, too, of making it *possible* 'for God to lie,' by a scheme that sends 'the heirs of promise,' even the 'heirs of God, and the joint heirs with Christ'—down to eternal perdition! We see not how such a scheme can guaranty the final salvation of one of the heirs of promise. For if one of these 'lively stones' of the 'spiritual house' (1 Pet. 2:5) may fall out, or be forcibly separated from the building, then not only is it mutilated, its symmetry and beauty destroyed, but the whole fabric itself is weakened, made liable to more successful assaults, and is in danger of total dilapidation—

'And Satan may full victory boast;
The church may wholly fall;
If one believer may be lost,
Then, surely, so may all.'

7. *The true delineation, and infallible description of the character of apostates*, will go further to confirm our position. At the final judgment, our Savior says, 'Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' Matt. 7:22,23. Here is great disappointment, truly. *Many* will plead in vain their religious profession, gifts, attainments, and services. Christ will then openly disavow all knowledge, or approbation of them, as his disciples, or true followers. He knew them individually, as he knows all men; he knew them as hypocrites, or specious professors only. But as real disciples, as genuine sincere servants, he did not *accept* them: he '*never* knew them.' But could he say this, if among these high professors—and if not found here, where shall they be found—there were some who once had been true converts—born of the Spirit—passed from death unto life—joined unto the Lord, and one spirit—not under the law, but under grace—and after all, had lost their religious character, by total and final apostacy. Is it possible that Christ should say, 'I know my sheep,' and 'the Lord knoweth them that are his'—his by the gift of his Father, by the purchase of his blood, by the grace of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and adoption—and yet say, '*I never knew you*,' if once they were *his*? if once they were *his sheep*? if once they were '*justified by his blood*,' and '*sanctified by the Holy Ghost*?' No, it is not possible. Such a contradiction—such an absurdity, can never be imputed to one 'who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' As for those who once made a fair appearance—who seemed to run well—who made high professions—who done many wonderful things in the name of Christ, and afterwards wholly miscarried, and finally apostatized, we have the most plain, sensible, infallible account of them, by the apostle John: 'They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if

they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us: 1 John 2:19. Here we are fully assured, if they had been real Christians, 'THEY WOULD NO DOUBT HAVE CONTINUED.' But as they were not, 'it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, 'The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire:' 2 Pet. 2:22. Here apostates are compared to dogs and swine; the two most disgusting and loathsome emblems, which the whole animal race can suggest. Dogs that have disgorged their stomachs are dogs still; and swine washed are swine still. So it is with those who were washed with the water of baptism externally, yet were never internally renewed by the Holy Ghost, as Christ's sheep are. Like a swine, which, by washing, may be made clean, but not made *cleanly*; so it is with all unrenewed persons; their outward reformation, their baptismal washing, and every thing else in external Christianity, will never change the swine into a sheep. And then we need not wonder if temptation draw them to return to their vomit with the dog, and to the mire with the swine, and so draw back unto perdition.

8. *The saints and angels in heaven believe in the certain salvation of all who are truly converted and born again.* It is declared by Christ himself, 'That joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth;' that, 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.' In the conversion of a sinner, a monument is raised up to the glory of divine mercy and grace, which shall continue to all eternity. And when this blessed event takes place in our fallen world, doubtless, angels and 'the spirits of just men made perfect,' participate the joy of God our Savior when one sinner repents. But if there be no assurance of the final salvation of the repentant sinner, but rather a possibility, or even a probability, that he shall yet be separated from Christ—that he shall not ultimately make one of their happy number, but that sin may regain its dominion, and Satan finally triumph over him; then, truly, is there no foundation for this celestial joy, it is all premature. All the harps of heaven should cease their symphony, and with chilling uncertainty and fearful suspense, await the issue at the termination of the convert's life, to see which shall finally triumph, God or the devil, heaven or hell. If this be not the tendency of the opposing sentiment, to arrest the joy at the conversion of sinners, both in the church above and below, making the end altogether uncertain, then we have greatly misunderstood its features, mistaken its form, and widely misconceived its general bearing and real tendency. The sentiment, moreover, in our estimation, places the disciples of Christ in exactly the same predicament, when he says to them, 'But rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.' If their preservation and final perseverance was not sure, how would this constitute a ground of rejoicing? What assurance have they, that their names shall continue written there? That they will not finally perish, and their names be erased from the book of life? But we have a more sure word to the contrary; Christ, 'the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his' even them, 'whose names were written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.' Rev. 17:8.

9. *The apostolic reasoning based on the gracious conduct of God towards us in our old state of enmity, and that of our renewed state of friendship,* affords another potent and confirming argument in favor of our proposition. 'For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' Rom. 5:10. The pivot of the apostle's argument is this: If God did interpose on our behalf, if he did gratuitously devise a method to save us, at the expense of the blood of his Son, while we were in a state of rebellious enmity and hostility against

him, and justly lying under his wrath and righteous displeasure; if he would, under such unfavorable circumstances, exercise his grace, wisdom, power, and goodness, to bring us into a state of reconciliation and friendship, through the redemption of his Son, '*much more*'—here is the turning point—*much more, being reconciled*—now actual friends, and no longer enemies—shall we be saved by the living, and ever prevalent intercession of him that 'ever liveth to make intercession for us.' If God has so condescended to do for us the *greater*—the more expensive and weighty part of the work, while we were his enemies, deserving eternal damnation; *much more*, will he do the *lesser* for us, now we are become his friends; namely, preserving, perpetuating, and confirming his own good work—his own image in us, even unto the end.

10. Once more: '*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Who is he that condemneth?*' Rom. 8:33, 34. In this passage, we have the justified believer's triumphant challenge, founded on the four eminent branches of the mediation of Jesus Christ; his death, resurrection, exaltation, and intercession. *Christ died—is risen again—is even at the right hand of God—making continual intercession for us.* The thought of a believer, in such 'a strong tower' as this, being defeated, overcome by sin and Satan, and finally lost, is so revolting and forbidding—so dishonoring to God, impeaching his benevolence, fidelity, and veracity, that we cannot, we dare not cherish it for a single moment. '*It is God that justifieth.*' This is his judicial act. He pardons and acquits every repentant believer in Christ Jesus. He says, 'I will forgive his iniquity, I will remember his sin no more'—'none of his sins that he hath committed *shall be mentioned unto him.*' So perfect, finished, and complete, is the pardoning and justifying act of the sovereign Judge, that it is well said in David, 'As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.' Ps. 103:12. The east and the west are two quarters of the world that are widest apart, and never can meet each other. A strong and beautiful figure, conveying the sentiment, that the pardoned believer, and his sins, are never more to meet again, for his condemnation.

But while at this point, let us state a case. Suppose this pardoned sinner walks with God as long as Enoch did, 'three hundred years,' and then 'enters the second time,' morally, 'into his mother's womb'—into that same state, where he 'was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did his mother conceive him.' Or in other words, he is totally fallen from grace. In his apostate state he lives one year, and then dies unconverted, and goes to judgment. Shall sentence there pass against him for the sins of his life *before* conversion? That cannot be; for they were once all '*blotted out,*' all forgiven, and separated from him *as far as the east is from the west.* To say they were pardoned *conditionally*, is absurd; for that were no pardon—no justification at all. How can any thing, to use the symbol the Holy Ghost useth—be actually '*blotted out*'—conditionally? When the east and the west can come together, then may the pardoned sinner, and his sins which were *blotted out*, come together again. If then he be condemned at all, it must be for the last year of his life—the year he lived an apostate. But now apply the *rule of judgment*—'*according to his works.*' How does he '*receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done?*' Where is the award for his three hundred years of evangelical righteousness? Shall three hundred years of approbatory conduct, in which 'he pleased God,' be overbalanced by one single year of misdeeds? How can such an one be a proper subject of God's moral administration, and righteous judgment at all. The sentiment adverse to our proposition is inconsistent, perplexing, and attended with insuperable difficulties. How to manage it without arraying it in conflict against the divine character and government of God—against his wisdom, power, goodness, and veracity, is inconceivable.

Having, as we conceive, fully redeemed our pledge, in the establishment of the proposition under consideration, by the most plain, direct, unequivocal evidence, we might here claim a discharge from any further effort, relative to this subject, were we not apprised of some plausible, though feeble, objections and arguments against the doctrine maintained; and which some might expect, and desire, should be noticed, and obviated. To some of these, the most prominent and commonly used, we shall attend with studied brevity, yet with fairness and candor.

1. It is objected to our proposition, that the representation given by our Lord in Matt. 18:23—35, of the king who forgave his servant, and afterwards cast him into prison, shows that God may remit one's sins, and afterwards reverse the pardon; that his pardons are *conditional*, and not *absolute*. But let it be not forgotten, this is a parabolic representation; the plain, simple, governing purpose of which, is, only to show, that we cannot expect forgiveness of God, unless we can heartily forgive others. This is the real scope and design of this parable, by way of allegorical representation. It has no reference whatever to the evangelical method of divine forgiveness and justification. It takes no notice of the mediation and substitution of Christ, *through whom is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins*. The servant, in the parable, puts in no such plea as the gospel warrants and inculcates, namely, '*for Christ's sake*'—'*for his name's sake*.' No—but it is, 'Have patience with me, and *I will pay thee all*.' Was this ever the language of any truly penitent, pardoned sinner? No, never. Moreover, the servant, in question, bears no one mark of a real, humble, penitent. A very unfit representative of such as are truly penitent before God, and such only does he pardon. In short, the whole passage, perverted from its plain intent and meaning, divested of its real shape and true character, affords as much support for the Unitarian scheme of forgiveness, without atonement, as it does to the theory of conditional, revocable pardon. It is, therefore, wholly irrelevant to the point in question; and the argument at best being merely constructive, based as it is on allegory and figure, is of no weight at all against direct and positive evidence.

2. It is contended, that the foolish virgins, mentioned in Matt. 2:5, 'once had grace, but lost it.' But where is the proof? There is none—no, not the slightest. This is another parabolic representation of 'the kingdom of heaven,' the *visible church* on earth, comprehending within its enclosure, both wheat and tares, good fish and bad, wise virgins and foolish, real saints and false professors. This needs no proof. It is plain matter of fact, which nobody disputes. Of these 'ten virgins'—a fictive appellation employed to indicate all outward, visible professors of Christianity—five are specially designated by the term, '*foolish*;' i. e. imprudent, thoughtless, inconsiderate. This is their distinctive character. They never had any better—never were '*wise*.' They had '*lamps*' only, thereby denoting an outward shew or profession merely. They had neither '*vessels*,' nor '*oil*' therein. In the delineation of their character, as well as their distinctive name, they are radically distinguished from the wise virgins, the children of wisdom, real Christians, just as plainly as the specious, outward, unfruitful professor, is distinguished from the real believer, with the sanctifying grace of God in his heart, to keep his lamp from going out. The argument from this passage, being of the same character of the preceding, merely constructive, it must go for what it is worth.

3. It is again urged, that Christ's words in John 15:2, 6, stand opposed to the sentiment we maintain—'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away;' 'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.' This argument is found in the same condition with the two former, merely constructive—founded on metaphorical representation. Let it be

remembered, once for all, that *circumstances* in parables do not always admit of minute application. 'We are not to expect more in a parable than it is designed to represent; nor is it to be strained to an interpretation exactly suited to every circumstance. Its principal scope is to be attended to; and sentiments are to be accommodated to its other parts, only so far as the nature of things allows.' In the exterior, visible church, there are two sorts of branches, as well as two kinds of virgins. Some are branches *nominally*, having a name that they live, and are dead; a mere *professional* relation to Christ. They were received into the church, upon their *professing to be in Christ*; and there they remain, fruitless, barren branches, until they are taken away, and cast into the fire of hell to be burned. But the real branches are those who are *internally* and *vitally* united to Christ. They are branches, not by external profession merely, but also by real *implantation*—'grafted in contrary to nature into' Christ, *the true vine*. Of such he says, 'Every branch that beareth fruit'—mark now its fecundity, permanency, and progress—he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.' This is our doctrine exactly. See how the good work is carried on. The vital branches are not suffered to die. The life of the believer 'is hid with Christ in God;' and 'because I live,' says Christ, 'ye shall live also.' But was there ever a branch, a member, a believer *in Christ*, really and truly, that did *not* bear fruit—that did not from the very moment of spiritual vitality, *begin* to live and bear fruit? We must believe there never was. '*Whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die.*'

4. Again—Heb. 6:4—6, is triumphantly adduced to prove that saints may finally fall away. 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift,' &c. 'if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance.' But nothing can be gathered from this passage, but what is applicable to the stony-ground hearers—Luke 8:13—to those destitute of true Christian love—1 Cor. 13:1—4; and to such as Christ shall at last disown as workers of iniquity—Matt. 7:22, 23. The expressions taken separately, or all of them together, do not necessarily involve the Christian character. To be '*partakers of the Holy Ghost, and the powers of the world to come*,' i. e. *the future age*, or Christian dispensation, denote *miraculous powers*, not necessarily belonging to Christians; but participated by Balaam, Saul, Judas, and others, who prophesied in the name of Christ, and in his name cast out devils, and done many wonderful things, whom, nevertheless, he *never knew*, as real disciples, and will disown them for ever. All the other expressions are indefinite. They do not indicate or describe character explicitly and definitely. Indeed, when closely and critically examined, it will be found they do not amount to a description of real Christianity. It is true, the expressions describe what was really intended, namely, a total apostacy from the Christian faith, and a reverting to Judaism, or infidelity. It is an open and avowed renunciation of Christ, arising from enmity of heart against him, his cause and people, approving in their own minds of the deeds of his murderers; and all this after they have been once enlightened, have received the knowledge of the truth, and tasted some of its benefits; and have not only been eye witnesses of the miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit, but have themselves been partakers of some of them; yet having, under such circumstances, renounced the gospel—and as there remains no higher evidence, or stronger motives, to persuade them to repentance—so their case, in that respect, must appear desperate. The nature of their sin, too, not being a single act, through the force of temptation, or any other palliating circumstance; but a wilful, voluntary, and deliberate apostacy, seems to preclude all possibility of renewing them again to repentance. Taking in the whole connection, and governing design of the passage, it will, at most, afford nothing more than a constructive, ambiguous support, to the scheme of those who rely on it with so much confi-

dence. But this is not all. Their interpretation and application of the passage, directly conflicts with the 12th article of their Creed, which says, 'After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin; and, by the grace of God, *rise again*, and amend our lives.' But the passage says, *it is impossible, if they shall fall away, to renew them, &c.* Here, then, are two contradictory propositions, from the same fraternity, just as opposite as the poles of the earth. And such inconsistencies are ever likely to happen, in all attempts to maintain, by mere constructive, inferential reasoning, a favorite hypothesis, at the expense of positive and direct testimony.

5. Ezek. 3:20, is urged against us: 'When a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall die.' But in reply, we would observe, that in this chapter, and likewise the 18th, where the same subject is renewed, it is designed to shew the *equality* of the Lord's dealings with men. Of this there can be no doubt. But as the holy Scriptures are every where written in popular style, and not with studied regard to evident consistency, or systematic order and minuteness; and as they speak of persons and characters, as they appear to men, who think themselves righteous, and are so accounted by others, whether they are so in reality or not; so it is here declared, in opposition to the false notions of the Jews of that day, respecting the inequality of God's dealings with men, that, 'a righteous man,' who 'trusts to his own righteousness,' (chap. 33:13)—that doth turn from his *righteousnesses*, (marg.) i. e. his righteous acts, his upright conduct, and thus sinning, and not repenting, should die in his sins; and that a wicked man, upon his repentance, should save his soul alive. It appears evident, upon a careful investigation of this, and the collateral passages, (chap. 18:24—27, and 33:12—20,) that God's arguing and expostulations with Israel, related to their *national privileges*, and to his *temporal dispensations* towards them. So that the righteous man, in that relation, is one whose external *righteousnesses*—righteous acts and doings—entitled to outward prosperity, according to the peculiar covenant which God made with the nation of Israel, commonly called the *national covenant*. (See Scott on Ex. 19:5.) One thing is quite certain: the righteous man, in the evangelical meaning of the phrase—(Isa. 45:24; Jer. 23:6; Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:21, 22, and 10:4; 1 Cor. 6:11; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9)—is not clearly indicated in this whole connection. And by the rules of correct interpretation, its suffrage, at best, is certainly equivocal; and therefore must fail, when set up against express testimony, and positive declaration. For if God forsaketh not his saints—will never leave nor forsake them, if they shall not depart from him—if they are preserved forever—if he will water his church every moment, and keep it day and night; if this holy tabernacle shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof ever be removed, nor any of the cords thereof be broken; if not the least grain of his wheat shall fall to the ground; if the good man shall not be utterly cast down; if the sheep of Christ shall never perish; if none shall be able to pluck them out of his and his Father's hand; if the true believer shall never die; if no power in earth or in hell shall be able to separate them from the love of Christ; if true Christian love never faileth; if the justified and the glorified are equinumerant; if inspired confidence was fully assured of the performance of a good work of grace unto the end—had no doubt of the continuance in the church of those who really belong to it; if those who went out by apostacy are disowned at last, as workers of iniquity, not one of whom were ever recognized by Christ, as belonging to his true disciples; if no one living stone shall be displaced from the spiritual temple, which would deface its beauty, destroy its symmetry, shatter the superstructure, and endanger, if not destroy, the whole building; if there be no alternate entries and erasures among the names written in heaven, to garble and deface the fair book of life; if the good part chosen shall not be taken away;

if there be joy among the saints and angels on every occasion of a true conversion, as a glorious triumph of redeeming grace, and infallible accession to the kingdom of Christ; if there be a portion of our race over whom the second death hath no power; we say, if all these things are so—if 'these are the true sayings of God'—then the most specious and plausible argument, or objection, ought at once to be suspected and discarded, much less pressed with confidence, pertinacity, and vigor.

6. It is objected, that our doctrine tends to licentiousness and carnal security; that its advocates, being persuaded of their safety, may relax in duty, indulge security, and even practise iniquity. Our reply is—they who consistently hold the doctrine, are unconscious of any such deleterious influence. Those who disbelieve it, are not, of course, capable of judging, or knowing, that it has such influence; and those who abuse it, are accountable for the mischief, and not the doctrine. The gospel itself is abused; the divine sovereignty is abused; and particularly the divine forbearance, every day. 'Because sentence against an evil work is *not executed speedily*, therefore the heart of the sons of men is *fully set in them to do evil*.' The objection, if it prove any thing, proves too much, and is therefore good for nothing. Moreover, the strength of this argument was tried long ago, by the devil, on our Savior himself—'If thou be the Son of God, *cast thyself down*;' you cannot be hurt; his angels will certainly preserve you; 'in their hands they shall *bear thee up*, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.' But as this device had no force on Christ, so neither does it at all affect his true followers.

7. But does not the doctrine supersede the use of means—cut the sinews of moral exertion—and render cautions, exhortations, warnings, &c. unnecessary? Why employ them, if there be no danger of being lost? We reply—If the objection has any any force at all, it places the apostle Paul in as awkward a predicament for inconsistency, as, in the judgment of the objector, it would place us. In the midst of greatest peril, when sudden destruction by shipwreck was every moment expected, he assured the centurion and the soldiers, from positive information by 'the angel of God,' that same night, that 'there shall be no loss of any man's life among you.' But did this infallible assurance of their ultimate safety lull them to sleep—do away the use of means—silence the voice of warning, caution, &c.? Quite the reverse. Paul discovered 'the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea;' he immediately raised the warning voice. 'Paul said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.' Here was the mean to secure the promised result. This is our doctrine exactly. It implies the use of *means*, and indicates that means are equally appointed with *the end*. We might further instance the case of Jacob: he had the absolute promise of God, saying, 'I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land, and will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.' Did this destroy all motives to activity, and render means useless, or inexpedient? Surely not. Take another case. Why was Joseph 'warned in a dream, to take the young child, and his mother, and flee into Egypt?' It was because Herod would 'seek the young child, to destroy him;' and yet it was as certain as the established order of heaven, even 'the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,' that he was to die on the cross for the redemption of mankind; and even within a very short time before that event, the blood-thirsty Jews, in the height of their rage and malice, could not lay hands on him, because his hour was *not yet come*.

8. We will notice only one objection more. It is said, this doctrine is inconsistent with *free agency*; that if men are so kept from falling, by divine power, their acts cannot be free. But may not the same be said respecting saints and

angels in heaven? No one doubts their security, being confirmed in the favor and enjoyment of God forever. And yet can any one suppose their freedom is so infringed thereby, as to prevent their most active and voluntary obedience? If liability to total apostacy be essential to free agency, then the confirmation of a rational being in a state of holiness or happiness, in this world or the next, must forever be out of the question. This is an absurdity, for which the doctrine we maintain is in nowise accountable. It is enough that we know God wants neither ability nor willingness to keep us from falling. 'The only wise God our Savior,' says Jude, v. 24, '*is able to keep you from falling*, and to present you *faultless* before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.' And as to his willingness, it is positively affirmed by Christ himself—'It is *not the will* of your Father which is in heaven, *that one of these little ones should perish*.' And—'This is *the Father's will* which hath sent me, that of all which he hath *given* me, I should *lose nothing*, but should raise it up at the last day.' This may seem, at first, to conflict with another declaration from the same lips, which says, in his prayer to his Father, 'Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.' We know, however, that the Scripture cannot be broken; and Christ, who is '*the Truth*,' can never contradict himself. The task of reconciling here belongs no more to us, than it does to the opposer of our sentiment. The difficulty, if we mistake not, is not hard to obviate. Let the particle '*but*,' in the latter text, be used to express *opposition*, instead of *exception*, and then the meaning of the phrase may be plainly expressed thus: '*Those* whom thou gavest me I have kept, and none of *them* is lost; but the son of perdition, *he is lost*. Or transpose it thus: The son of perdition *is lost*; but *those* whom thou gavest me, none of *them is lost*. And this harmonizes with the first declaration, 'That of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing.' Upon the whole, if God's *ability, willingness, promise, covenant, and oath*, do not secure the infallible salvation of *all* his saints, we may despair of the certain salvation of any one of them. But with unshaken confidence, and holy animation, we can sing,

'Grace will complete what grace begins,
To save from sorrows or from sins:
The work that wisdom undertakes,
Eternal mercy ne'er forsakes.'

Remarks.—1. The *way* and the *end* of the righteous must never be separated; for these two hath God joined together. It is the way of *duty and dependence*. 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.' Two distinct, but perfectly reconcilable, propositions. Either would make sad mischief without the other. But operating together, they are like the wings of the eagle, that bear him evenly upward and onward; or like the two oars of a vessel, that propel it straight across the moving current. The saints are not saved without persevering. But being *in the grace of God*, they are kept *by the power of God, through faith unto salvation*. Hence, 'they are not of them who *draw back unto perdition*; but of them that believe to the *saving of the soul*.' Keeping, then, in view, the evident design and tendency of the doctrine, it will neither be perverted nor abused; but minister abundant encouragement and animation to all the righteous who hold on their way, and by the grace of God become stronger and stronger.

2. The doctrine affords great encouragement, in regard to the conversion of sinners. It affords a powerful motive to ministers and others to labor in winning souls to Christ, knowing that their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord; that the souls, converted by their instrumentality, *shall never perish*; that no

power on earth or in hell shall be able to pluck them out of the hands of divine Omnipotence; 'that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his ways, shall *save a soul from death*,' and himself shall 'shine as the stars for ever and ever;' and that the happy subject of his instrumentality, being 'sealed unto the day of redemption,' shall be raised up at the last day, when the words of Christ shall be literally fulfilled, 'that of all which he (the Father) hath given me, I should lose nothing,' i. e. none of them—but should raise it up at the last day.' But conversely; allowing that saints do totally and finally fall—hundreds, thousands, millions, into perdition; that sin and Satan have power to regain them as soon as they are converted, and reduce to nothing the work of the Holy Spirit in their regeneration, and in the end 'full victory boast,' and triumph in their eternal damnation; allowing all this, as the opposing doctrine must avow, what encouragement is there to labor in winning souls to Christ, if there is no certainty of their being his at last! And on what ground can the angels of glory, with the saints above and below, rejoice over the conversion of one sinner, having no assurance of his final salvation?

3. The subject requires solemn, individual, self-examination. 'Who is on the Lord's side?' 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart;' 'he that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.' Such, and such only, are 'saints;' and these shall hold out unto the end and be saved. These shall see God—shall stand in the judgment, and in the congregation of the righteous, and inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. O, that the preacher and his hearer may be of that happy number! Amen.

HYMN.

“THESE glorious minds, how bright they shine;
Whence all their white array?
How came they to the happy seats
Of everlasting day?”

From torturing pains to endless joys,
On fiery wheels they rode;
And strangely washed their raiments white
In Jesus' dying blood.

Now they approach a spotless God,
And bow before his throne:
Their warbling harps, and sacred songs,
Adore the Holy One.

The unveiled glories of his face,
Among his saints reside;
While the rich treasure of his grace,
Sees all their wants supplied.

Tormenting thirst shall leave their souls,
And hunger flee as fast:
The fruit of life's immortal tree,
Shall be their sweet repast.

The Lamb shall lead his heavenly flock,
Where living fountains rise;
And love divine shall wipe away
The sorrows of their eyes.

Watts.

THE PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

Vol. V. PITTSBURGH, OCTOBER, 1836.

No. 5.

SERMON LXXIV.

BY JAMES H. THORNWELL,*

OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

THE GRACE OF GOD SECURES THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

ROMANS 11:29. *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.*

REAL Christians are brought much nearer together by the gracious operations of a common Spirit than they are often willing to confess. Could they know each other even as they are known of Christ, they would find much less cause of "strife and debate" than they probably imagine. In a spirit of conciliation, then, I discuss the question of the *final perseverance of the saints*.

This doctrine has reference to none but Christians; and if the presumptuous hypocrite takes encouragement from it to continue in sin, his fatal delusions should not be charged upon the doctrine itself, but upon his own perverted understanding and deceitful heart. It is not a perseverance of hypocrites or self-deceivers, but a perseverance of those who are truly and really *saints*; and that in a *state of grace*. The apostle Paul concisely expresses the sum and substance of the Calvinistic views on this point, in Phil. 1:6: "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." An individual must first be in a truly saving state—must have "a good work begun" in him, by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit, before he can be entitled to the hopes and encouragements which this cheering doctrine presents. Observe the terms in which it is stated in the Westminster Confession: "They whom God hath accepted in his Beloved—effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."

Here it is manifestly declared, that the *individuals* who persevere are justified by Christ, and savingly renewed by the Spirit, and, therefore, in a state of grace, and that their *perseverance* is a perseverance in this blessed state—a state of justification—of peace with God—of love to his character—of love to holiness and of hatred to sin. This, then, seems to be the statement of the question; that **ALL, WHO ARE TRULY SAINTS, SHALL PERSEVERE IN A STATE OF GRACE**. This proposition I shall now endeavor to establish by a few plain Scriptural arguments.

1. *It is necessarily involved in the doctrine of election.* I know that those who deny the one, deny the other, but still it is delightful to us, who sincerely receive them both, to trace the harmony, and connection, and beautiful symmetry of Scriptural truth. Total depravity, effectual calling, gracious election, and final perseverance, are so intimately blended and linked together, that a

* Published by request of the session of the Presbyterian church at Cheraw.

denial of any one of these cardinal points of faith, must seriously affect our views of the others.

In the case of election, there is no acknowledgment in the Bible of those disastrous and fatal results which human ignorance and timidity have drawn from it; and if there are serious difficulties involved in it, let it be remembered that these difficulties arise, not from the doctrine itself in its own intrinsic nature, but from the limited extent of the human understanding. The objections to a resurrection from the dead, drawn from the unavoidable confusion into which they supposed that it must necessarily throw those who had been repeatedly married, seemed to the Sadducees absolutely insurmountable. And I believe that most of the objections to the sovereign election of God, drawn from the acknowledged moral agency of man, are just about as reasonable and deserve about as much attention from the humble Christian as the flimsy cavils of the Sadducees. They are founded in ignorance. The owl, it is said, is blind in the day, but does it follow, because she cannot see, that there is no light in the day? I cannot see how election and moral agency are reconciled, but does it follow, because I cannot see how, that they really cannot be reconciled? Without presuming then to be "wise above what is written," or charge upon Divine Revelation what that Revelation expressly disavows, it would be well to inquire, with the docile temper of children, what the Scriptures actually teach on the subject of election. And if it be found that they hold it up as eternal, sovereign, absolute and personal, then the doctrine of final perseverance is, not so much a consequence from it, as a necessary element involved in it. Such texts as these are not to be discarded with a sneer: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Christ Jesus to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Eph. 1:4-6, 11. "Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." 2 Tim. 1:9. Compare 2 Thess. 1:13. Rom. 8:29, 30. Rom. 9, &c. From these texts—and many others might be adduced—we learn that election is *personal*—"hath chosen us"—that is, Paul himself and the "*saints at Ephesus*"—for he is writing to them and not to the *Gentiles* as such. It is unconditional or irrespective of works—"not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace." It is an election to holiness, and therefore precludes the liberty of sinful indulgence or carnal security—"that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." It is sovereign—"being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." But whatever may be said in regard to these passages which, in my view, teach election or nothing, there are facts recorded in the Acts of the Apostles well calculated to convince the pious Arminian—facts which *cannot* be avoided without a sad degree of unfair dealing and shuffling with the Scriptures. I have allusion now to the case of Christ. There was a plain decree in regard to his death and sufferings, and yet under that decree the agency of man was exerted in deeds of darkness. So far was this decree from annulling human responsibility, that fearful guilt was incurred by the Jews and tremendous sufferings inflicted upon them.

"Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." Acts 2:23. "For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate with the Gentiles and people of Israel were gathered together for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Acts 4:27, 28.

Now here it is said expressly that the enemies of our Lord acted only according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God," and did only what his "hand and his counsel determined before to be done," and yet they are charged with guilt and wickedness—"ye have taken and by *wicked* hands have crucified and slain." So that the apostle was clearly of opinion that the absolute and sovereign predestination of God, did not take away responsibility from man nor remove the guilt of his transgressions. All the difficulties involved in the doctrine, or that have ever been charged upon it, are involved and with equal propriety may be charged upon this particular case. Election to grace is no stronger a feature of the absolute predestination of God, than the death and sufferings of Christ, and if all the circumstances connected with the one could be positively decreed and rendered absolutely certain, consistently with the liberty of moral and rational agents, then all the circumstances connected with the other may also be determined without the destruction or infringement of the agency of man. It is sometimes forgotten in the heat of argument that personal election is not an isolated feature of the divine government, but is only a part of "his eternal purpose according to the counsel of his own will, whereby for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass."

Predestination is a broad principle covering the whole field of the divine economy; and it amounts to nothing more nor less than this: "My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure." And unless we admit such a principle we reduce the world to lawless confusion; for it must have been formed without a plan and must now be governed without a Providence. The wisdom and omniscience of God are destroyed at a blow, and the eternal interests of immortal souls are left to the ceaseless fluctuations of caprice and accident. To deny an eternal purpose is a virtual dethronement of God in his own dominions; and the voice of reason remonstrates as loudly as the voice of revelation against the disastrous and ruinous results to which such a denial must lead. To admit an eternal purpose is to admit a personal election, in harmonious accordance with the word of God and the experience of the Christian: And if a personal election to grace be established, then the final perseverance of all the elect is involved in election as a necessary element, and must, therefore, be regarded as equally settled.

2. *My second argument is deduced immediately from the text, and is, to a Calvinist, only a fuller development of the first—"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance"—that is, without any charge on God's part.* Even granting, as I am willing to do, that the "gifts and calling" here expressed are collective and not individual, a general principle is established which secures conclusively the final perseverance of the saints. It is admitted by all evangelical Christians that regeneration is an act of God's grace, and that saving faith is a gift of God, and that no man can, by his own unassisted powers, regenerate his own heart, or exercise a saving trust in the blessed Redeemer. "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." "Without me ye can do nothing." "The carnal heart is enmity against God—it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." The bones in the valley of vision had just about as much power to clothe themselves with flesh and to assume the form and functions of living men, as the sinner "dead in trespasses and sins," to quicken his heart and "arise to newness of life." The views which are given of human depravity in the Bible, preclude all, even the remotest, regard for the "things of God." "The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint;" that is, understanding, affections, and will, all are equally "out of the way." There are so many multiplied passages of Scripture which bear upon this point, that I cannot see how the conclusion is avoided that man is "dead in sin, and wholly defiled in

all the faculties and parts of soul and body," and as a natural and necessary consequence, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good." Compare Gen. 6:5. Jer. 17:9. Rom. 3:10—19. Psalm 51:5. Rom. 7:18. The first holy desires therefore must originate from some other source, beside the human heart. There must be a thorough renovation, or rather a new creation, before the dead can be made alive; and the sink of sin, a fit dwelling for the Holy Ghost. Hence, the Scriptures uniformly refer all holy action or desire on the part of man, to a previous action of the Holy Spirit. God first seeks the sinner—the sinner does not first seek God.* It is just as manifest that the spiritually dead must have spiritual life infused into them before they can perform its offices, as that the naturally dead must have natural life before they can perform its functions. Now this infusion of spiritual life, or regeneration, is, in broad English, an effectual calling of God's Spirit under which the sinner is, and, in the nature of things, must be, passive. It infuses spiritual light into his naturally darkened understanding; it renews the heart to love and relish what before it hated—the beauty of holiness—and it determines the will, formerly powerless in regard to good, to holy volitions. This infusion of light, renovation of the heart, and determination of the will, lead the sinner to spiritual apprehensions of the character of God, the nature of holiness, the odiousness of sin, and the necessity and suitableness of the blessed Savior, in whom he consequently fixes his trust. Now the question arises, why does God effectually call or regenerate any man? Are the motives by which the divine Being is determined, or the principles on which he acts, derived from the "counsel of his own will," or from the sinner himself? Not from the sinner surely. For Paul tells us, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the holy Ghost." Titus 3:5. Here regeneration is ascribed to God's mercy; that is, to motives of benevolence in the divine Mind, and not to any thing in the subject of its influence. Again we are told that God "worketh *all things* after the counsel of his own will." And if regeneration be a work of God, then the question is definitely settled. Besides, from the picture given of the whole human race, we should be driven to the dogma of universal salvation, if the originating causes of regeneration were found in the sinner himself.

From the depravity and inability of man, and the express testimony of Scripture, the conclusion is established, that regeneration and faith are the gifts and calling of God; and therefore, according to my text, "without repentance" or change. The motives of divine action in these respects, are derived from the divine Being, and therefore, just as immutable and eternal as God himself. They depend upon no conditions in the sinner, but are acts of mercy exerted upon him as lost, helpless, and depraved. Until it can be shown that there is no gift and calling in the exercise of saving faith, the immutability of Jehovah stands absolutely pledged eventually to glorify all those whom his own Spirit has effectually called. In the mean time let such texts as these be seriously considered: 2 Thess. 2:13, 14. 2 Tim. 1:9, 10. Rom. 8:30.

3. This conclusion is further confirmed by the *actual bestowment of the Holy Spirit as an abiding Paraclete in the bosoms of believers*. "And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive,

* Unrenewed persons ought not to misapply the preceding truth, for when God in his providence, gives an opportunity to read his word, to hear his gospel, &c. he is seeking them by means which the Holy Spirit can make effectual to salvation. When the sinner neglects or misimproves these means, he resists God; and sometimes is permitted to remain in a state of spiritual death. And justly so, inasmuch as he will not use his natural faculties in crying for help, &c.; and since God is not under obligations to save any one.—Ed.

because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." John 14:16, 17. "Know ye not, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" 1 Cor. 3:16. Compare 2 Tim. 1:14. 1 John 4:12, 15, 16. Rom. 8:11. From these texts, it is sufficiently obvious, that the Holy Spirit permanently dwells in the bosom of believers as his temple or abode; and the question naturally arises, why does he dwell there? Let the answer be afforded from the Scriptures.

He is, first, a Spirit of truth or instruction. "But the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:26. "But ye have an unction from the Holy One and ye know all things." 1 John 2:20. Secondly, as a Spirit of sanctification. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because, God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. 2:13. It is through the Spirit that we "mortify the deeds of the body," Rom. 8:13; and we are "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Eph. 3:16. It is also obvious that sanctification is the work of the Spirit, from the fact that regeneration is, which is nothing more than sanctification begun, since the same agent who begins the work "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Compare also 2 Cor. 3:18. The Holy Spirit is also spoken of as a Spirit of consolation and hope, as the very title which the Savior gives him manifestly implies.

Now if the Holy Ghost takes up his residence in the hearts of believers, for the express purpose of enlightening their minds in the knowledge of the truth, and sanctifying their natures from sin and corruption, is it supposable that any believer can finally perish through ignorance or sin? Does the blessed Paraclete fail to discharge his office? Is he sent to sanctify, and unable to do it? Is the power of human corruption too strong for him, and does he leave the heart in conscious inability to dissolve its bondage? And if the Spirit be, indeed, as the Bible represents him, a sanctifying energy in the heart, how absurd are the opinions of those who circumscribe his influence and limit his operations by previous conditions in the sinner himself? "If the sinner will obey, the Holy Spirit will abide with him." Whereas the Holy Spirit abides with him in order to work in him a willing and cheerful obedience. He does not by any thing in his own heart purchase the Comforter, Christ did that long ago and sends him by his grace.

Again: the Spirit is represented as an earnest of our inheritance: "Who hath also sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. 1:22. "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." Eph. 1:13, 14. Compare also 2 Cor. 5:5. Now an earnest means nothing more nor less than a pledge. The Holy Spirit is given to believers as a first-fruits and pledge of their ultimate beatitude. If I owe a man a thousand dollars, and pay him fifty in pledge of the remainder, that fifty is an earnest according to the Scripture phraseology. Now God, by the gift of his Spirit, has solemnly pledged himself to save all believers, and will he violate this solemn and self-imposed obligation? "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the son of man that he should repent; hath he said and shall he not do it, or hath he spoken and shall he not make it good."

The doctrine of perseverance has now been viewed in its relations to the Spirit of God, in his regenerating and indwelling influences, which may be regarded as the internal work of Christ, and by all these it is, I apprehend, unequivocally confirmed. I shall now view it in relation to what may be called the external work of Christ, or that which he does, not *in*, but *for*, the sinner.

4. Evangelical views of the great doctrine of *justification necessarily include, not only a freedom from present condemnation, but likewise a freedom from all possibility of future condemnation.* To be justified is not simply to be pardoned for our past sins, and then put on our good behavior for the future. It is a higher and a nobler work than this, and involves privileges infinitely more precious than this meagre, lame, and miserable caricature.

To be justified is not only to receive a pardon for all our sins through the blood of Christ, but to be accounted, and "accepted, and treated as righteous in the sight of God, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith." "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Rom. 5:19. As on account of the transgression of Adam, their federal head and representative, all his posterity were regarded and treated as sinners, so on account of the righteousness of Christ, the federal head and representative of his people, all believers are treated as righteous. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. 5:21. Here is a fair exchange expressly asserted. Christ assumes the sins of the sinner, and gives the sinner the righteousness of himself; that is, he consents to be treated as a sinner, in order that the sinner may be treated as righteous. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Rom. 10:4. Christ has rendered a full and complete satisfaction to the law in the sinner's place, and therefore the sinner is completely delivered from it. Hence, the apostle tells us, that he is "dead to the law that he might live unto God." "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ." Rom. 7:4. Now if the sinner, when he receives Christ, becomes invested before God with a perfect and "everlasting righteousness," how can he be condemned, and if he is as perfectly delivered from the law as a widow is delivered from the law of her husband, sleeping in the grave, what is there to condemn him? "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Let the thunders of Sinai roar around me, and dart their keen and fiery bolts at my head, I can hold up before them the broad, impenetrable shield of the Redeemer's righteousness, and bid defiance to their vengeance. Does the law demand, in its majesty, a full and penal satisfaction for all my multiplied transgressions, "Behold the Lamb of God" when the horrors of hell gat hold upon him, and he poured out his soul an offering unto death, when he bore in his own body on the tree the penal wrath of God, satisfied the claims of eternal justice, and gave his people a complete deliverance. Does the law demand again, a perfect obedience to all its requisitions? Behold the Savior's mantle thrown around my shoulders—the snow-white mantle of a perfect righteousness, co-extensive with the claims of the law. Now just conceive of a man, having satisfied the penalty of the law in the sufferings of Christ, and having fulfilled the law in the obedience of Christ; how can such a man ever be condemned? It is clearly impossible. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Men forget that justification is a complete deliverance from the law, as the ground of life and divine favor. They are too prone to regard it merely as a pardon of past offences, and consequently leave us, for the future, exposed to all the claims and vengeance of the law. They secure the past, but make no provisions for the time to come. But the truth is, the moment I receive Christ, I am pardoned for the past—completely justified. I die to the law and become married to Christ, and am henceforward under the law only to Christ—only as an index of his will and a rule of evangelical obedience. It is to him that I look for "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

To suppose that justification can be forfeited by a defective or imperfect sanctification, is to manifest a very unpardonable ignorance of both; since jus-

tification entitles us to the joys of life and sanctification fits us to receive them. By justification I am rendered righteous in the sight of God, and in sanctification I become the happy recipient of his "saving health." A man dies and leaves an estate to an infant child. Now the title of that child is already perfect, but its qualifications to receive and manage the estate are defective, and therefore it is placed under "tutors and governors" to train and develop its faculties. Just so in justification: my title to the "joys of God" is perfect, but my qualifications are defective, and therefore I am put under the training and discipline of the divine Spirit, to prepare me for the "inheritance of the saints in light."

Faith is the channel through which, by divine appointment, the righteousness of Christ is received, just as natural generation is the channel through which the guilt and corruption of Adam are received. Now faith is represented as uniting believers to Christ, and creating a near and indissoluble relation between them. They become *one*, even as husband and wife are *one*. They are bound together as the vine and the branches; Christ abiding in them and they in him. And so very intimate and tender is this union, that Christ illustrates it by the mysterious union which he bears with the Father. The bonds of this union are twofold. Christ lays hold of the believer by his Spirit, and the believer lays hold of Christ by faith. It is the grasp of the Spirit which secures the grasp of faith, and until some power is found adequate to tear loose the grasp of the Spirit, the case of the believer is safe; for, wherever he goes, Christ must go with him; and wherever Christ is, there is safety.

5. *The intercession of Jesus Christ affords a strong ground for the perseverance of his people.* In the 17th chapter of John we have a pathetic prayer of our blessed Redeemer, not only for his immediate disciples and apostles, but for those who should afterwards believe on him through their word. And if we believe, as he himself informs us, that the Father hears him always, it seems impossible to evade the efficacy of that prayer in securing the eternal salvation of his saints. In one of the epistles of John he is represented as an "Advocate with the Father;" and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the efficacy and merit of this part of his sacerdotal office are unanswerably established. "But Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us." Heb. 9:24. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Heb. 10:12, 14. To suppose that the presence of Christ in the Holy of Holies, his pleading the merits of his own sacrifice, and his earnest prayers for the salvation of his people, should all prove ineffectual in the end, is to make Christ so complete a nullity and blank in the court of Heaven, as to shock the feelings of every pious heart. And the erection of a mediatorial throne, which the Scriptures represent as a throne of exaltation and glory, becomes but a dazzling show and an empty pageant. The sceptre is powerless, so far as the purposes of a willing obedience in the hearts of his people are concerned, and the only monuments of the Savior's dominion at the Great Day, will be the dust of those who are broken in pieces by his wrath. I am free to confess, that the priestly and kingly offices of Christ become to my mind altogether unintelligible, or, at least, most wretchedly obscure, if the Scripture accounts of them do not involve the final perseverance of the saints. Christ intercedes for them, but the results of his intercession are not absolutely certain. Christ rules in their hearts, but his dominion may be attended with no obedient subjection. It is all idle to say, that he *will* rule, provided they will submit. What becomes of this Scripture? "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Ps. 110:3; and this, "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Phil. 2:13, and 2 Cor. 3:5.

Lastly. There is one view of this subject upon which I have often reflected, and which weighs as strongly in my mind as any positive arguments in favor of the doctrine I am supporting. Arminians are driven to their views by the apparent incompatibility of election and moral agency. They cannot understand how God can secure the salvation of a sinner without infringing or impairing his moral liberty, and reducing his actions to a stern system of iron-bound necessity. Now suppose that there is an impossibility in the case—that man cannot be free and God sovereign at the same time—this same impossibility must extend beyond the grave; and if you blot out the sovereignty of God, and knock the props of the Christian from under his feet, there is the same danger of falling in the heavenly world as there is here. The possibility of falling grows out of the sinner's own mind—his own liberty of moral action—and so long as that liberty continues there must be danger of losing the favor of God. Upon the Arminian hypothesis, it is a possible, if not a probable case, that a soul may have basked for myriads and myriads of years in the rays of eternal glory, and then fall, and fall like Lucifer, never to rise again—fall from the heights of paradise, the dazzling throne of God, into the deep abyss of hell—suddenly exchange its shouts of praise and alleluiah for the wail of the damned, and drop the song of redeeming love for the gnashing of teeth and the fiendlike yell of despair. These monstrous results are necessarily involved in the Arminian theory, and carry along so complete a denial of many promises of Scripture, that they at once overthrow the whole foundation upon which they stand. In the language of Newton, "I should expect that the opposers of perseverance, if thoroughly sensible of their state and situation, upon a supposition that they should be able to prove it unscriptural and false, would weep over their victory, and be sorry that a sentiment, so apparently suited to encourage and animate our hope, should not be founded in truth." And if it be so, that God cannot influence and determine the actions of moral and intelligent agents without the destruction of their liberty, prayer becomes utterly vain, and conversion is worse than nonsense; the most precious part of the Bible is swept off at a blow, and the sinner is left, with nothing but his boasted liberty, to withstand the shock of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Well might we weep at such a triumph! Just think of the multiplied temptations with which we are surrounded—corruptions within and snares without—battling not against flesh and blood, but principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places—beset with hell and its infernal host beneath—allured by the world around us—depravity within us and having no help above us—well may we ask with the apostle, Who is sufficient for these things? Ah, verily, none could stand. But unfold the covenant of grace, and read the promises of God, and how are our hearts cheered with the hopes of victory! All things are counted but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and we can triumph in the language of Inspiration: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

SERMON LXXV.

BY JOEL STONEROAD,*

OF PENNSYLVANIA.

CHRIST THE GLORIOUS BUILDER OF THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE.

ZECH. 6:12, 13. *Behold the man whose name is the Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory.*

The ceremony respecting the coronation of Joshua, recorded immediately before the text, was, at once, interesting and significant. At this very period, Joshua sustained the office of high-priest; and, it is a circumstance worthy of some notice, by the way, that there should have been, in the Old Testament, two eminent types of Jesus Christ, *of the same name*; a name, whose import is synonymous with Jesus, Savior: The *former* Joshua, a renowned captain, typical of Jesus Christ, the Almighty Captain of our salvation; the latter, a chief-priest, and thus typical of Christ, the great High-priest of our profession. This public coronation of one who was already high-priest, by express direction from Heaven, seemed to indicate a union of priestly and kingly authority, in the great Antitype; and, affords a clue to the expression, (v. 13) "he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." As far as Joshua was concerned, all this was mere ceremony; its *significance* alone claims special attention. The ceremony was employed merely to excite the interest, and fix the attention of the people upon the prediction about to be engrafted upon it. And accordingly, immediately subsequent to his coronation, the prophet was directed to inform him that, as thus habited, crowned, and mitred, he was still but a faint shadow of a most glorious Personage, who was yet to come, and to whom he thus directs him, (v. 12) "Behold the man whose name is the Branch, and he shall grow up out of his place," that is, out of Bethlehem, the promised place of his birth.

The term "Branch" is often given prophetically to Jesus Christ: In chap. 3:8, we have the following language, "Behold I will bring forth my servant, the *Branch*;" and, in Jer. 23:5, the Lord says, "Behold, the days come that I will raise unto David a righteous *Branch*." This is that illustrious Branch from "the root of Jesse," predicted by the prophet Isaiah; (11:10). The ancient stock of David, from which originated, according to the flesh, this ever-blessed Branch, was at the time of his coming, "like a root in a dry ground;" yet, the promise and the power of God, secured, even from this depressed and decaying stock, the origin of this far-famed, illustrious Branch. In the benevolent purpose of God, this Branch is destined ultimately, to extend "its leaves for the healing of the nations," to all the ends of the earth. More than eighteen hundred years ago, the prophecy in the text was in part accomplished by the incarnation of Jesus Christ, whose human nature sprang from "the root of David," but whose *divine* nature was from eternity the very essence of Deity himself. And no sooner did he enter on his ministerial career, than he

* Delivered at the laying of the corner-stone of a Presbyterian church, Robbstown, Pa. and published by request.

commenced the great work of moral reformation, by the establishment of the Christian church and the propagation of his holy religion; and ever since, by his word and Spirit, he has prosecuted without intermission, this glorious scheme of mercy, in the very face of the most deadly hostility from earth and hell. All this accords with the prediction in the text; "And he shall build the temple of the Lord; even he shall build the temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory."

With these preliminary observations I hasten to inquire,

I. WHAT WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND, IN THE TEXT, BY "THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD."

II. WHO SHALL BUILD "THE TEMPLE OF THE LORD?"

III. THE INSTRUMENTLITY EMPLOYED IN REARING THIS GLORIOUS STRUCTURE.

IV. TO WHOM THE GLORY OF THE ENTIRE BUILDING IS TO BE ATTRIBUTED.

The first inquiry is, What we are to understand by "the Temple of the Lord." The solution of this question on gospel principles, involves but little difficulty. The meaning unquestionably is, "*the entire company of redeemed sinners, quickened and converted by divine grace, and "made an habitation of God through the Spirit."*" The prophecy, in the text, was uttered, at the very period in which Joshua and Zerubbabel were engaged in rebuilding the temple at Jerusalem, about seventy years after its destruction by the Chaldeans, and more than five hundred years before our Savior's incarnation. Of course, the physical temple, then rebuilding, was not the temple to be reared by the "Branch." The splendid fabric, constructed under the supervision of Solomon, as well as that now going up, under the direction of Joshua and Zerubbabel, constituted most beautiful and emphatic types of the spiritual temple to be reared by the Branch; and it was from *this* circumstance, much more than their amazing splendor and external richness of appearance, they derived their chief glory.

That the definition given of "the temple of the Lord," in the text, is correct, is manifest from various passages of Holy Writ. What else, it might be asked, can it mean, than the whole company of redeemed and renovated sinners? What other temple shall ever be reared by the Branch? And in what other way can the prophecy in the text ever be accomplished! But further: the apostle proposes to the Christians at Corinth, the following question, (1 Cor. 3:16,) "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." In this passage, the "temple of God," is spoken of the church, *distributively*, that is, in application to each particular member of the church invisible, who are set apart from the service and dominion of sin, and consecrated to the exclusive service of God; and to whom he manifests his gracious presence by his Spirit. Again: the apostle addressing the Christians at Ephesus, employs the word "temple," to mean the church *collectively*; "Ye are built," says he, "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself, being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom also, ye are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Again, he says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" Again: "What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God." "Ye, also, (1 Pet. 2:5,) as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." Here then is testimony, from the divine Word, amply sufficient, to prove that the "temple of the Lord" in the text, is intended to designate the entire company of redeemed, quickened, renovated sinners.

This, then, is the spiritual fabric, now in a state of glorious progress towards entire completion, and of which the head-stone shall, in due season, be brought forth with rapturous exultation, and with endless "shoutings of grace, grace unto it." The *corner-stone* of this Divine Structure was laid in the original promise that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head;" and upon this unyielding foundation, the apostles and prophets, yea, all the true Israel of God, in every age, have reared the superstructure of their immortal hopes. Nay, every true believer, is himself a "lively stone," prepared and set, by the grace of God, in this spiritual temple, and makes one of its constituent parts. Merely nominal Christians, of every name and grade, may constitute the scaffolding reared around the "temple of the Lord," but form no part of the structure itself.

What progress has been made towards the completion of this heavenly building, we cannot of course determine; but we know assuredly, that, as the work is carried forward under divine superintendence, it can never be successfully impeded. When God begins a work, it shall go forward to completion, though a universe combine to arrest its progress. Mountains of difficulty and opposition from earth and hell, will, it is true, be found to stand in the way, but before the Almighty Antitype of Joshua, "they shall soon become a plain." Never did Sanballat the Horonite, or Tiahb the Ammonite, evince more sincere and determined hostility against the rebuilding of Jerusalem, in the days of Nehemiah, than is constantly felt and manifested every day, against the erection of the spiritual temple, by the deep depravity of man. But vain is all this hostility, and wicked as vain, and ruinous as wicked. With infinitely greater ease could Atheists and scoffers storm Gibraltar in a pilot-boat, or pluck the moon from its orbit, than their enmity against the religion of Christ, hinder for a moment the steady prosecution of this divine enterprise: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing." After all their "counselling against the Lord and against his anointed," "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision;" "He shall speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure;" "He shall break them with a rod of iron; and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

II. The second point requiring notice in the text, is, Who shall build "the temple of the Lord." This is answered in the text itself: "the Branch" spoken of, shall build this spiritual temple, and this Branch, as we have seen, is none other than "the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star;" in a word, the omnipotent, eternal Son of God. As Joshua, the type, was prominently active in rebuilding the physical temple in his day, so Jesus Christ, the illustrious Antitype of Joshua, is not only the master-builder, but the sole-builder of the spiritual temple, which is the gospel church; and to give emphasis to this important truth, (a truth most frequently and lamentably forgotten,) it is repeated verbatim in 13th verse, "Even he shall build the temple of the Lord." This heavenly "Branch" is not only the corner-stone and strong foundation, but the blessed Founder, the glorious Architect, and the sole builder of this spiritual fabric.

To drop the figure, for the present, it is asserted, that the work of regeneration, conversion, and sanctification, (and this is rearing "the temple of the Lord,") is exclusively the work of God.

I. This is demonstrated irresistibly, by the very nature of the work to be performed, which imperiously requires the exercise of omnipotent power. And if such power be not exerted, the work remains for ever unaccomplished. A momentary glance at the nature of the work, will suffice to show that it is indeed a mighty work. It is such a revolution in the moral powers of the soul, as is equivalent to a new creation, with which, in Scripture, it is frequently compared; a revolution such as nothing short of the plastic hand of Omnipotence itself, could possibly accomplish. It is an utter detachment of the soul from all its former pernicious habits and practices, with which it has long been

most intimately associated, and which, in many cases, have become almost as strong as death; it is the origination of desires, and feelings, and tendencies of soul, in direct contrariety to its *present* moral constitution; it is the communication of new views and prospects, the vivid presentation of new and nobler objects of pursuit, and the implantation of new and heavenly motives, during the whole course of subsequent life. In a word, it is rescuing an immortal mind from the cheerless thralldom of Satan; plucking a brand from certain and awful exposure to an eternal hell; elevating guilty and helpless criminals, from "the horrible pit and from the miry clay;" converting an heir of hell and a son of perdition, into an heir of unutterable, eternal glory. Surely, nothing short of divine power, can effect such a glorious revolution in the character, and feelings, and views, and prospects, and destiny of the soul.

2. Again: the utter incompetency of any inferior agency, to prepare materials for the spiritual temple, is, also, a vivid demonstration of the necessity of divine power. True, indeed, some men, in the fullness of their spiritual pride, have, in some instances, presumed to usurp this divine prerogative; they have claimed sufficient energy for the accomplishment of this mighty work, for a certain machinery denominated "moral suasion;" that is, the exhibition of motives to the mind, sufficient to convert men to God, in the absence of any *immediate* agency of the Spirit upon the powers of the soul. And as might have been expected, such men delight in expatiating on the perfection of human ability, the omnipotence of truth, the potent energy of moral suasion, and maintain that a certain newly-discovered mode of exhibiting truth, in connection with certain peculiar, and as I must suppose, unscriptural measures, is essential to the potency and success of the truth; and in perfect accordance with such views of the nature and powers of man, they seldom even refer to the necessity of divine agency in the work of conversion. Such men, by the application of such machinery, generally succeed in producing many cases of conversion; but always in *such a way*, however, as that the persons *converted* need *another* conversion, before they are Christians. Many are thus added to the visible church, but not, we fear, to the number of such as shall be saved, and constitute, of course, no part of the spiritual temple. And I am sorry to add, that this species of moral radicalism, this antichristian, Pelagian tendency to aspire after the prerogatives of Deity, and dispense with divine assistance in the work of conversion, is lamentably prevalent, both among ministers and people of the present age, in almost all denominations. It is one of the evils and characteristics of the age. And whatever may be said about "the spirit of the age," and of "the nineteenth century," "the march of intellect," and "the advanced state of theological improvement," such tendency, it is humbly conceived, in whomsoever found, is one of the impulses of human depravity.

3. But Inspiration settles this question beyond all controversy; a very small part of whose testimony we can now find time to introduce. The repeated declaration in the text, "He shall build the temple of the Lord: even *he* shall build the temple of the Lord," is very emphatic, and imposes upon Jesus Christ exclusively, the great work of rearing the spiritual temple. The sacred Scriptures say, "He that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God." "Except a man be born of—the *Spirit*, he cannot see," &c. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us, by the washing of *regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost*." "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also *called*, that is, *regenerated*." "Who hath saved us and *called* us with an *holy calling*," &c. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you;" which is repeated in the same prophecy, (Ezekiel,) in almost the same language. "No man," says the Savior, "can come to me except the Father—*draw him*." "Thy people," says the psalmist, "shall be willing in the day of thy power." "Even when we were dead in sins, (saith the apostle,) he hath *quickened* us together with Christ." "*The Lord opened the heart of*

Lydia to attend to the things which were spoken of Paul." Such is a very brief specimen of Scripture testimony, on this important subject.

In view of such testimony, how strange that men professing to believe the Bible, will claim to possess power sufficient to accomplish this mighty work of God; and especially, that ministers of Christ, whose grand aim it should be, to direct lost and wretched men to the great Physician of souls, should so far forget the chief object of their commission, as to impress men with the belief that nothing is easier than conversion! This is to incur the fearful wo, denounced against such as "heal slightly the hurt" of human depravity, and "daub with untempered mortar." Nothing, surely, can be better adapted to people the realms of wo, than such instruction as this, and can deserve no softer appellation than that of "damnable heresy." The conduct of a physician who should administer to his patient a dose of arsenic, under a gilded exterior, would involve consequences much less ruinous, on the whole, than that of the misnamed spiritual physician, who cries "peace, peace, when there is no peace." Profound spiritual ignorance in the teacher, is the only solution to be given for such teaching as this: if they knew and felt the depth and strength of their own depravity, as every converted man must feel it, they could not thus facilitate their course to everlasting despair.

III. Let us notice the instrumentality employed in rearing the Spiritual Temple.

1. It may be proper here, to remark that the materials for constructing this heavenly building, are found abundant in all their pollution, perverseness, and untractableness, deeply buried "in the horrible pit and miry clay" of their own depravity; and are only brought out thence, by the sovereign intervention of Almighty power. By nature, Christians can claim no higher origin than their unconverted neighbors: all are alike derived from "the man whose guilty fall corrupts the race and taints us all." "Children are raised unto Abraham," out of "children of wrath;" yea, out of materials, the most hopeless, untractable, and abominable, in the sight of God. How amazing the wisdom and power displayed, in constructing out of such materials, a temple whose glory as far outshines the glory of Solomon's, as the glowing radiance of the noon-day sun exceeds the feeble glimmerings of a midnight star; a celestial temple of "lively stones," whose unutterable splendor will be as fadeless and unchanging as eternity itself! And who that reflects for a moment upon the nature of the materials out of which this heavenly structure has been reared, could imagine that any power short of Omnipotence, or any wisdom inferior to that of a divine Architect, would be competent to the mighty task: especially as those materials are collected out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tribe of earth, and out of all classes and conditions of life, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, bond and free.

2. The only instrumentality employed in rearing the spiritual temple is truth: not moral or philosophical truth, but inspired truth. Philosophy, falsely so called, has often impeded but never aided the progress of divine truth. Exhibitions of moral truth, however important in their place, can never greatly aid the erection of the spiritual temple. "Sanctify them," prayed the Savior, "through thy truth, thy *word* is *truth*;" that word, which, to use the language of the immortal Locke, "has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without mixture of error for its matter." Here is living, life-giving, eternal truth. In accordance with this view of the subject, is the declaration of an apostle; "Born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*" Again: "Of his own will begat he us, *by the word of truth.*" And, as the truth is universally conceded to be the only instrumentality employed by the divine Spirit, in the conversion of men, how vastly important to understand the truth aright; and that those appointed to stand "between the living and the dead," should preach "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," and not as did false prophets of former days, "prophecy lies in the name of the Lord." Would to God these ancient deceivers

had no counterpart in our own times. And if the truth be thus important in the work of conversion, how unreasonable and unchristian to regard it as a matter of small moment, what men preach or what men believe. How vitally important to defend "the faith once delivered to the saints," which is the citadel of eternal truth. How erroneous to suppose that God will bless, to the conversion of man, any thing else than his own inspired truth; or to conceal part of the truth for fear of giving offence to ungodly men; or to varnish the truth with a mixture of Pelagianism, to make it palatable to the unconverted. Such treatment of the word of God, is not more unreasonable than it is insulting to the God of truth; and yet, alas! how common. So did not Paul and his associates in the ministry; so did not "holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" so did not Jesus Christ, who "spake as never man spake." Nay, "Wo to them," says the Spirit of truth, "who speak smooth things and prophesy deceits, saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace;" who employ "untempered mortar," in rearing "the temple of the Lord." Such unscriptural teaching as this, come from what quarter it may, instead of subserving the interests of Christ's kingdom, is fatally auxiliary to the cause of error and the kingdom of satan. And materials collected under such instruction, cannot be "*lively stones*," but are evidently of *human preparation*; and, of course, are unfit to make a component part of a divine structure.

Indeed, the value of *all other means* of grace, must be estimated, entirely, by their adaptedness to exhibit and enforce the *truth*. Of course, when, instead of the living, eternal truth of God, drawn immediately from Heaven, naught but cold moral essays, or loose and fitful declamation, or, at best, a very partial exhibition of the truth is presented, the divine blessing will be withheld in the same proportion. The great truth should never be lost sight of, that the only possible way in which men can be co-workers with God, in building the spiritual temple, is, by every divinely authorized means, to inculcate, enforce, and *live the truth*. If men are not *thus* converted from "the error of their ways," in vain shall mortal man aspire to improve upon the wisdom of God, and devise "a more excellent way;" in vain shall error be employed to bring men to the adoption of the truth. With what deep interest, then, should all men, and, especially, ministers of Jesus Christ, seek to know and understand the *truth*; and when, by divine grace, they have acquired this precious, invaluable boon, with what unyielding tenacity should they cling to it; yea, maintain and defend it, at the expense of all that is valuable and precious, on earth. The fact is incontrovertible, that the *natural tendency* of all men is to forsake the truth and embrace error; and, especially, that popular and palatable species of error, which passes under the well-known title of Pelagianism. And, perhaps, never was this lamentable tendency, in the public mind, more strongly developed than at the present period, and, I am sorry to add, the humiliating confession, *especially among* some of the clergy of different denominations.

IV. The last point to which your attention shall be directed is this: To whom the glory of this Heavenly Temple must be given. But one answer, surely, can be given to this inquiry. Who but the divine Architect, the omnipotent Builder, *deserves* the glory? Who but the glorious Branch, from the root and stock of David, on any principle, divine or human, can claim the smallest *meed* of glory? And, verily, "He alone shall bear the glory."

I. The *plan* of the spiritual temple, to be reared by the Branch, was projected in the eternal counsels of a triune God; and, of course, the glory of the *design*, should be given to the ever-blessed Trinity. Eternal glory belongs to the Father, for the "unspeakable gift" of his well-beloved Son, to be a Mediator between God and man, and, for graciously accepting his mediation. But to the eternal Son, the ever-blessed Branch, belongs, *especially*, the glory of executing this wondrous plan of mercy, by his obedience and death; thus laying, not only a corner-stone, but a glorious foundation, upon which to erect the spiritual temple. And to give efficacy to the means employed to carry

into execution, the benevolent design of a triune Jehovah, he has also purchased the gracious influences of the Spirit, without which, the entire plan of mercy and salvation must remain for ever unaccomplished.

Besides; nothing can be more insulting to the honor of the Savior, than that puny, polluted worms should aspire to share with him, the glory of the celestial temple. Nothing argues more forcibly, the spiritual pride, and deep depravity of man. This is to pluck, with an impious hand, from the Savior's brow, the heaven-wrought and unfading laurels, so hardly-earned, by his obedience, his agonies and death; nay, this is wickedly to aspire after the exclusive honors of Divinity. Impious and insulting as may be the disposition to derogate from the Savior's glory, in the salvation of man, nothing can be more common or more characteristic of unconverted men. When men, for instance, forgetting "the hole of the pit whence they were digged," regard themselves as better than others, and suppose this to be the reason of their being "called and chosen;" or, when they attribute their conversion to their own prudence and foresight; to their own ability and exertion, or skillful use of means; in all such cases, the glory is divided and Jesus is dishonored. And, when ministers of the gospel, as is often lamentably manifest, entertain high notions of their own powers and importance; are full of self-conceit and self-sufficiency, and preach, and talk, and feel, and act, as if, by their own *moral power*, they could convert men to God; this, again, is *aspiring* to rear the spiritual temple ourselves, and thus rob the Savior of his well-earned glory. And when men place great dependence on the use of certain peculiar measures, (measures, to say the least, without the slightest countenance, from the Bible,) as if they possessed intrinsic energy, *almost* sufficient to produce conversion; and teach that conversion is merely a change in the *governing purpose* of the mind, to which every man, by his *own ability*, aided by "*moral suasion*," is entirely competent; all this, I say, is an impious invasion of the exclusive glory and high prerogative of the Almighty Savior, and shall assuredly meet his frowning indignation.

3. Moreover; *true* believers, of whatever name, do, on earth, most cordially unite in ascribing all the glory of their salvation to Jesus Christ. "Praise, and honor, and glory to the Lamb," is now their constant theme. Nay, the degree and sincerity of personal religion is most justly graduated, by this *very disposition* to give all the glory to the blessed Savior. A refusal to do so, not only involves a man's pretensions to religion, in dark suspicion, but *proves* them to be spurious. St. Paul was not only disposed, at all times, to ascribe to Jesus, all the glory of his salvation, but abhorred the very thought of "glorifying, save in the cross of Jesus Christ:" "God forbid that I should glory, save," &c. He ascribes, even to tautology, the salvation of his own soul, and that of the entire church, "to the praise of his glorious grace." And the reason why St. Paul *abounded* in such phraseology, is found in his extraordinary devotion and unusually ardent piety.

4. Finally; the "Branch," in the text, "shall bear the glory" in heaven, with the entire concurrence of every ransomed sinner there. *There*, will be perfect unanimity of feeling and sentiment on this, as on every other subject. *There*, will not be heard one discordant note—one jarring sound, to interrupt the eternal symphony of heaven. And if shame were possible, in heaven, what crimson blushes would mantle upon the cheeks of its redeemed inhabitants, that they were not *more willing*, on earth, to give to Jesus *all* the glory. In heaven, nothing will be heard of human ability, self-regeneration, or moral power: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory," will warble from the tongues of all the redeemed, and echo and re-echo from every mansion in heaven. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honor, and praise, and glory, and blessing," will constitute the darling theme of blood-bought millions, for ever and ever; and, the only competition tolerable in heaven, will be, who shall most loudly extol the glory of Immanuel. Alas! that men, on earth, should be found so slow to learn the ever-

lasting song of heaven; so slow to become assimilated, in desire and devotion, to "the spirits of just men made perfect." A word of improvement shall close our remarks.

1. From the consideration of this subject we may infer, that the erection of the spiritual temple is entirely a work of divine grace: "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. Not of works lest any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works," &c. If this blessed work were not exclusively of grace, from beginning to end, the *whole* glory would not, and should not, have been given to Jesus, as is manifestly the case in the Scriptures. If men or angels build any part of the spiritual temple, they have a *right* to a share in the glory. But "salvation is of faith, that it might be by grace," and, of course, boasting is excluded. How sweet the thought, to lost and guilty men, who feel their only merit is that of condemnation and wrath, that salvation is "without money and without price." It is *only* thus, that salvation is possible to man.

2. Another just inference, from the general unwillingness of mankind to give all the glory of their salvation to Christ, is, the fatal predominance of spiritual pride. This is, perhaps, one of the strongest and most ill-boding features, in the present aspect of the religious world; and, the great reason, doubtless, why the frowns of the insulted Head of the church rest upon his earthly heritage. Men will be "wise above what is written;" bloated with self-confidence and exalted notions of their own powers, they often proudly attempt, in their own strength, to rear the heavenly temple. Not so, the royal Psalmist—"the man after God's own heart." In the language of supplication he says: "Build thou the walls of Jerusalem." Again: "When the *Lord shall build up Zion*, he shall appear in his glory." "Except the *Lord build the house*, they labor in vain that build it." "The *Lord doth build Jerusalem*: he gathereth the outcasts of Israel."

3. Permit me to add, in conclusion, my fervent prayer, that of the temple about to be reared on this consecrated spot, it may be said, in after times, that "this man and that man was born there." May "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands," but rejected, alas! by many who call themselves master-builders in the church, be here the "chief corner-stone, elect and precious." May "Christ and him crucified," the blessed foundation of the Christian church, be the sum and substance of all the ministrations to be performed within it sacred enclosure. May this be the hallowed spot upon which, through the mighty power and grace of God, materials may be formed, and "living stones" prepared, to push forward to a glorious consummation, the spiritual temple of the living God. May "the cross of Christ," the only legitimate subject of the gospel ministry, be the ever-blessed theme upon which every heaven-commissioned "legate of the skies," will here delight to expatiate. May the much-persecuted, yet precious doctrines of grace, which *alone* give *all* the glory to Christ, and, by whose instrumentality *alone*, he continues to carry forward, towards completion, the living temple of the Most High, be ever promulgated on this hallowed ground. And, being richly fed "with the sincere milk of the word," may the "righteous here flourish like the palm-tree," and grow tall and fair "like the cedars of Lebanon." And may many, now "wearied in the greatness of their way," and dragging out a miserable existence, "in the horrible pit and the miry clay," be here cast into the gospel mould, and be thus prepared for their appropriate place in the living temple above. And, in the consummation of all things, when earthly temples, with all things else, shall have been wrapt in the fire of the final conflagration, may those, by whose benevolence and enterprise, this earthly house shall be reared, be found themselves "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone, and be thus fitted for admission into the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

THE
PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

Vol. V. PITTSBURGH, NOVEMBER, 1836. No. 6.

SERMON LXXVI.

BY JOHN MATTHEWS, D. D.

Professor in the Theological Seminary at South Hanover, Indiana.

THE MORAL STATE AND CHARACTER OF INFANTS.

LUKE 18:15, 16. *And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.*

THE holy Scriptures are given to make us wise unto salvation; to teach us "what we should believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." They are wisely adapted to this great and important purpose. But here they stop; to this object they are limited. They contain nothing to satisfy an idle curiosity. When Peter would know what *this man shall do*, he receives a mild rebuke instead of the information which he desired. This information could not have made his path of duty plainer, nor the labors of his life more useful. When others inquired respecting the number that should be saved, they are earnestly exhorted to secure their own salvation, by entering in at the strait gate. Had this knowledge been given, they could not be saved without holiness. Many inquiries now made, had they been presented to the Savior, would have been dismissed in the same way. If our inquiries are prompted by an honest desire to know our duty that we may perform it, we will find, from the prayerful study of the Bible and the providence of God, full and satisfactory information. But if our inquiries proceed from mere curiosity; if the information required has no connection with our duty or the improvement of our moral character; we must apply to some other source than the Bible for such information. It would be useless to give us information respecting those objects which are, in their own nature, incomprehensible to our minds. If the language employed was suited to the nature of these objects, we could not understand it; and if it was accommodated to our limited faculties, it could not explain the nature of these objects. As far as our agency extends, we have information to guide the useful efforts of this agency: but where our agency ceases, there our information also ceases. The husbandman has a sufficient knowledge of the surface of the earth to direct his labor to useful results; but he knows nothing of the surface of the planets, because his agency does not extend to them. If our information is full and complete, our whole energy is to be exerted; if our information is limited, but a limited agency is required; if we have no knowledge, we can exert no agency.

This is especially the case respecting the moral state and character of infants. It were easy to ask a number of questions respecting them to which the Bible furnishes no answer; and yet we have information amply sufficient to guide us in discharging our duty towards them. This is the subject—the moral state and character of infants—on which we would offer a few remarks. These remarks will relate exclusively to that period of life which precedes moral agency. We undertake not to fix on this period; nor is it necessary to our purpose.

I. Our first remark is, that infants are included in the mediation of Christ. The children brought to Christ, as stated in the text, were literally *infants*. Matthew calls them *little children*; Mark, *young children*. We may, with propriety, call an infant a little, or a young child; but we cannot, with the same propriety, call all children infants. At what age the term infant ceases to a child is not determined. It is certain, however, that custom confines the use of it within a few months, or years at most, of the earliest period of life. The same word translated in the text *infants*, is found in five other passages: In Luke 1:41,44, on which we offer no remarks. In Luke 2:12, 16, it is applied to the Savior, the same night after his birth—ye shall find the babe—they found the babe, &c. Acts 7:19—so that they cast out their young children, &c. The cruel edict of the king did not suffer the children to live beyond the period of infancy. Even the parents of Moses did not attempt to conceal him longer than three months. 2 Tim. 3:15—and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures. This may mean either, that before the close of infancy, some knowledge of the Scriptures was obtained; or, that from the close of that period, this knowledge commenced. 1 Pet. 2:2—as *new born babes*, &c. There can be no doubt of the meaning of this passage. The children brought to the Savior, then, were literally infants; they had not reached the period of moral agency.

The declaration of the Savior is positive: *of such*, that is, of such infants as these, *is the kingdom of God*. This phrase means either that state of happiness enjoyed by good men after death; or, that dispensation of mercy revealed in the gospel. If understood in this first sense, if infants enjoy the happiness of heaven, then unquestionably they are included in the mediation of Christ. If they should enter heaven in some other way than through his mediation, they will not sustain the same relation to him which others do; one source of joy is cut off from them, which is free, and full, and overflowing to others. In one song they cannot join, which others sing with heavenly devotion. If the phrase means the dispensation of mercy, and if infants are included in this dispensation, it is equally clear that they are included in the mediation of Christ; for it is only through Christ that mercy is exercised. If you exclude them from the mediation of Christ, you exclude them from the mercy of God, or find some other channel through which this mercy can flow. Without deciding what is possible or impossible with God, we may, with confidence, affirm, that the Scriptures reveal to us no other channel of mercy than that of Christ. Taking the Scriptures for our guide, if we exclude infants from the mediation of Christ, we exclude them from the mercy of God. Although we do not suppose that parental affections are the standard of truth, and still less the rule according to which the great Jehovah decides on the measures of his government, yet as these affections are innocent, useful, and required, they cannot be inconsistent with these measures. When parents are called to follow a beloved infant to the grave, the conviction that this infant was no more within the reach of mercy than the fallen angels, would pierce their heart with anguish keener than a two-edged sword.

Pious parents have been, and still are, required to dedicate their infants to God. This was the design of circumcision, to distinguish those who were, by

public profession, the people of God, from those who were not. This rite implied the enjoyment of privileges, and the bestowment of blessings, which could only be enjoyed and bestowed through Christ. This rite was, by the positive command of God, to be applied to infants. As certainly, therefore, as infants were circumcised, so certainly are they included in the mediation of Christ, through whom alone all spiritual blessings are conferred. The Jews were also required to dedicate their firstborn males, while yet infants, to the Lord. As this offering was according to the will of God, of course, it was acceptable to him. It was a religious dedication, and necessarily implies the mediation of Christ, through whom alone religious services can meet the approbation of God. Christian baptism, as we verily believe, on Scriptural authority, has been appointed in the room of circumcision. It is at once the solemn duty and the precious privilege of pious parents to present their infants to God in this evangelical ordinance. They are baptized in the name of the Son, as well as of the Father and of the Holy Spirit. But why baptize them in his name, if they are not included in his mediation? Baptism does not constitute, but implies the relation which infants sustain to the Savior. By baptism this relation is publicly recognized. Take away the relation, and you divest baptism of that importance which renders it worthy the wisdom of God. The baptism, therefore, of infants, declares the fact that they are included in the mediation of Christ.

I am the way, said the Savior, *no man cometh to the Father but by me*. This is equally true of offerings presented to God. Unless they are presented through Christ, they will not be accepted. *He that honoreth not the Son*, by presenting his offering through him, *honoreth not the Father*. Cain presented his offering directly, without any reference to a Mediator; it was therefore rejected. Abel presented his by faith in the promised *seed of the woman*; it was therefore accepted. Infants, no more than other offerings, will not be accepted, unless they are presented through Christ. All men, in all their religious offerings and services, must honor the Son as they honor the Father.

To pray for their infant children is the duty and the privilege of all pious parents. This they promise to do when they present them to God in baptism; this the ambassador of Christ does when he administers the ordinance; and this every member of that church into which they are received ought to do. This prayer is for spiritual blessings, of which the water used in baptism is an emblem. This prayer has no meaning, unless these infants are capable of receiving the blessings for which the prayer is offered. That they are capable of this, is evident from the text; for Jesus himself blessed those infants which were brought to him. But all spiritual blessings are bestowed through Christ; they cannot receive them unless they are included in the mediation of Christ. This prayer is, to say the least, useless; this emblem is useless, if they cannot receive these blessings. Those parents are worthy of compassion who can persuade themselves that their infant children are thus excluded from Christ, and that they are relieved from the duty of praying for them.

II. Our second remark is, that infants are subjects of the moral government of God. By this they are distinguished from all other animals. These sustain the relation of creatures to their Creator, and are subjects of the government of Providence. They sustain no moral relations to God, and are not treated according to the principles of moral government. Infants, too, are the creatures of God, and are under the government of his providence; but, in addition to this, they sustain the relation to him of subjects of his moral government. His treatment of them is in accordance with this relation. The ground of this relation is, that they belong to a race of rational being, and possess immortal spirits. This follows from the conclusion of the preceding remarks, that they are included in the mediation of Christ. For if they are included in this

mediation, they must possess a nature spiritual and immortal. This deathless spirit raises them far above the grade of other animals, and connects them with the moral government of God. The mediation of Christ is of a moral and spiritual nature, and requires in those included in it, a correspondent character. This mediation, therefore, connects all whom it embraces with the moral department of Jehovah's government.

The difference between a subject of a moral government and a moral agent is very obvious. The agent is required to act according to a moral law; and this obligation is grounded on the fact of his possessing faculties which fit him for this action. The subject is treated according to moral principles, and requires a nature adapted to this treatment. The man who is a moral agent was once an infant, and then only the subject of a moral government. The infant, if spared, will be a moral agent. The moral agent is also the subject of this government; the infant is advancing to moral agency. The infant possesses an immortal spirit which connects it with the moral government of God; as the faculties of the mind unfold, as the exercise of reason increases, moral agency commences and increases in the same degree.

Brutes never thus rise from a lower to a higher department in Jehovah's dominion. They remain the subjects of the government of Providence, from which they are never transferred in any sense or degree, to a state of moral discipline or responsibility. Their instinctive propensities are the same the first, that they are the last year of life. No wisdom is gained from experience. They select their food, and their places of shelter and repose, with the same discrimination at one time as at another. In this respect, their infancy, their mature life, and their old age, are alike. Whatever may be the power of thought which they possess: whatever the glimmerings of reason which they exhibit; yet, as far as we can judge, they are as incapable of receiving the knowledge of God and his perfections, of a moral law and its claims, of a state of future rewards and punishments, as the earth itself on which they live. Widely different is the character of human beings. The infant man may be far more helpless than they, yet he is linked to the moral government of God by an immortal spirit, an immaterial mind, possessing faculties which, though dormant for a time, will wake up to consciousness and activity. As these faculties unfold and mature, he becomes capable of receiving the knowledge of God and his perfections, of the moral law and its claims, of rewards and punishments, as the consequence of obedience or disobedience to this law. As he becomes capable of receiving this knowledge, he becomes a moral agent, and is accountable for his conduct.

A similar difference between a subject and an agent exists in the civil government. Infants have rights which are secured by the civil law. By this protection they are recognized as belonging to the government, although they can exercise no civil power. In the moral government it is the development of the mental faculties, which is gradual and in different degrees at different times, which constitutes moral agency. In the civil government the law itself determines the period when agency commences. The period of agency is not the same for all purposes: a man must be twenty-one years of age before he can make a valid contract, or give his vote at an election; but whatever his talents and qualifications may be, he must be thirty before he can fill the office and exercise the power of chief magistrate. Those who are now agents were first minors, and no more than subjects of government. Those who are now minors will, at the different periods fixed by the law, become agents, and may be employed in all the offices of government. Minors, before they reach the lowest degree of civil agency, may suffer punishment for transgressing the laws of their country. Many a youthful offender has thus suffered for the good of the community. The difference, in the civil government, between infants as minors and irrational animals is quite obvious. These

ain no other relation to government than as a species of property, animal, the owner by law. No man forfeits his life by killing a horse or an security to the owner only the value of the animal. The murder of an ox; however, is death as certainly and as deservedly as that of an adult. infant is a subject, and may one day be an active and useful agent of the Thent.

get the church is a moral, not a civil community, will be admitted by all. Kingdom, said the Savior, is not of this world. A connection, then, with church is a connection with the moral government of God. Under the mer dispensation; by the rite of circumcision, infants were recognized as members of the church, or as belonging to the congregation of the Lord. They are now received by baptism. They are given to the church in the name of the Lord, and in the name of the Lord the church receives them, and promises to educate them for his service and his kingdom. It will, perhaps, be alleged, that mere animals were, in religious service, dedicated to God; and yet they are not subjects of the moral government, and that neither, therefore, does the dedication of infants prove their connection with this government. We admit the dedication of the first born was typical, and, for the sake of argument, though by no means certain, that circumcision was also typical; and yet our conclusion remains unshaken. The whole system of types and shadows, having been fulfilled in Christ, has vanished away; and yet, in the ordinance of baptism, infants are presented to God, and received by the church as visible members.

In praying for infants, it is chiefly spiritual blessings for which we ask; those connected with salvation, and suited to the spiritual and immortal nature of the soul. We believe, when offering this prayer, that God can bestow, and that they can receive these blessings. But these blessings, as we have seen, are bestowed through Christ alone, and are therefore confined to the moral government: those, of course, who receive them, must be connected with this government.

III. Our next remark is, that infants must be considered, in the sight of God, as guilty; they cannot be entirely innocent. This follows as a consequence from both the preceding topics of remark.

The term *guilt* is said to be derived from two German words, signifying to *pay a fine*. A guilty person, therefore, is one who is liable to pay a fine, or a debt. In the moral government this can be done only by suffering; and as this suffering is according to the sentence of a law, it is punishment, or penal suffering. Careful attention to all the passages of Scripture where the term *guilty* is found, will show that this is the most obvious meaning, the leading idea of the word: a liability to suffer. If there are passages of which this is doubtful, they are very few. If it be supposed that this liability implies some uncertainty respecting the result; that the guilty person may, or may not suffer; to this we observe, that this uncertainty relates exclusively to the time of suffering, not to the possibility of final escape. This liability involves obligation; the guilty person is bound to suffer; and is liable to it at any time when it may please the *Judge of all the earth* to visit him. The possibility of escape would imply weakness or indifference in the executor of the law.

Our remarks relate to the fact, that infants are guilty, not to the degree of that guilt; with perfect accuracy this is estimated by the *Judge*; nor, at present, to the manner in which they become guilty; our ignorance of this manner cannot alter the fact of their being guilty. We are ignorant of the manner in which the mind is united with the body and exerts a positive influence over it; and yet this ignorance does not alter the fact of this union, and of this influence. After the preceding remarks, we take it as a truth fully established, that infants are included in the mediation of Christ; and if this is

admitted, we cannot see how to escape the conclusion that the for none but the guilty can possibly need a Savior. *The whole are guilty; physician, but they that are sick.* If infants are not sick, they need not a physician. *Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost.* If no physician is lost, they cannot be saved. What would you think of the physician who gravely tells you that he is about to restore a man to health, who is at that time, perfectly free from disease? or, of the shepherd, who shows the sheep to seek one of his sheep, when that sheep is safe in the field? The physician cannot restore a man to health who is not diseased; the shepherd cannot find a sheep which is not lost. The kind and gracious purpose of Christ in coming into the world was, by his sufferings and death, to make an atonement for sin; to procure pardon for the guilty; and to render this pardon consistent with the justice of God. But not one pang of these sufferings was endured, not one drop of this blood was shed, no pardon was procured for infants, if they are not guilty; plainly because they do not need it. The death of Christ, as to them, was in vain. Those who are not guilty, need not, and, in truth, cannot be pardoned. Those who die in infancy never can enter heaven through Christ, never can be vessels of that mercy which flows through Christ, unless they are guilty. They must enter that blessed state through some other door than that which Christ has opened; must wear other robes than those washed in the blood of the Lamb. If you contend that they are not guilty, you dash from their lips the cup of salvation through the blood of Christ; you snatch from them the arms of mercy, and bolt against them that door of heaven, through which all the redeemed of the Lord will enter.

That infants are connected, as subjects, with the moral government of God, is a truth which will not be denied; that they suffer, under this government, is a fact which comes under our own observation. They are, therefore, guilty, or they suffer contrary to the principles of this government. Justice is one of the moral attributes of Deity; and one, too, which characterizes every part of his moral administration. That it is unjust for those who are, in all respects, innocent, to suffer, is a truth so obvious, that nothing can be plainer whence proof can be adduced. That infinite justice will not inflict suffering without a cause, is a truth which strikes the mind with all the force and clearness of intuition. That these sufferings are sent and controlled by the appointment of heaven is abundantly taught in the Bible. *Affliction cometh not forth of the earth; neither doth trouble spring out of the ground. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.* Both the degree and continuance of these afflictions are according to the will of God. This is implied in the prayers that we are permitted to offer to God for infants, that they may be relieved from suffering, and preserved from death; and in our grateful acknowledgment to the *Preserver of men*, when this relief and this preservation are granted. Our prayers imply our firm belief that God is able to do what we ask, either to preserve them from affliction, or relieve them when afflicted; and thus *hold their souls in life.* This belief is founded on his word and the dispensations of his providence; for while we witness the suffering and death of hundreds and thousands of infants, hundreds and thousands are preserved through all the dangers of this early and helpless period till mature age. What he does for a part he could do for the whole, if it was according to his wise and holy purpose; *for unto God the Lord belong the issues from death*—the outgoings of death. The sufferings and death of infants take place according to the design of God, as certainly as do those of adults: a design as explicit, distinct, and immutable, as that according to which the heavens and the earth were created. If it is his intention to preserve them, though tender and helpless as the morning flower, nothing can hurt them; *he will be their help and their shield.* But if it is his intention to remove them, the wind has only to pass over them and they are gone. No

parental solicitude, no medical skill can possibly save them. *Their breath is in his hand in him they live, and move, and have their being.*

Now the question is, are these sufferings just or are they unjust? *Is there fitness with God? Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?* If the answer is just, there must be a cause; a cause, too, that will justify them, not only in the sight of God, but also in the view of holy, intelligent beings. Why may be alleged that brutes also suffer, and yet they are not guilty. Why not infants, therefore, suffer and yet not be guilty? The analogy between them is not complete; and, therefore, reasoning from one to another, when this analogy fails, cannot be conclusive. The tree of the forest is smitten by the lightning from heaven and is killed; why may not the life of the animal be destroyed without suffering? The tree is a creature of God, is under his providence, and is smitten by his hand as well as the animal. In all these respects the analogy between them is complete; and yet there is one thing in the nature of the animal which does not belong to the tree, and which is not included in this analogy; that is, sensation, or the capacity of feeling pain. The animal is a sentient being, and as such sustains a relation to the Creator which the tree does not. Now, every one can see, in a moment, that reasoning on the subject of suffering from the tree to the animal, will not be conclusive; that because the tree may be shattered and yet feel no pain, that therefore the bones of the animal may be broken without pain. To make the reasoning conclusive requires the tree to possess a nature not given to it by the Creator. From its very nature, the tree is as incapable of pain as it is of speech or of thought; the animal, from its nature, must necessarily feel pain from the stroke of violence. So the infant and the mere animal are alike the creatures of God, are subjects of his providence, and are sentient beings; but here the analogy fails. And yet there is one important feature in the character of the infant which the animal does not possess, and which, of course, is not included in this analogy. The infant possesses an immortal spirit which connects it with the moral government of God; the animal does not possess this immortal spirit, and for want of this link, never can be, in any sense, connected with moral government. For the want of this nature, the animal can no more belong to the moral government than the tree can to the sentient part of creation. Moral principles can have no more application to the one, than those of sensation can in the other. By this immortality, this moral relation to the great Jehovah, the infant rises infinitely higher above the animal, than the animal rises above the tree. Now guilt is as strictly confined to the moral government as feeling is to a sentient being; it is as impossible for the animal to be guilty, as it is for the tree to feel. When guilt, therefore, is the subject of consideration, reasoning from the suffering of animals to that of infants cannot be conclusive. They do not possess the same nature; do not belong to the same government; are not treated according to the same principles. Produce moral subjects suffering without guilt, and the correctness of the reasoning will be admitted. Until a degree of light which we do not possess is shed on this deeply interesting subject, we must honestly believe that the suffering of infants proves the fact that they are guilty.

When we pray, it should be *with the spirit and with the understanding also*. We should distinctly understand the meaning of the words which we employ; should have some definite idea of the blessings for which we pray. When, in praying for infants, we entreat God to be merciful to them, what do we mean? Do we ask God to do what is impossible? to save those from suffering who are not liable to it? to pardon those who are not guilty? No; but we ask God, through the *exceeding riches of his grace, and for Christ's sake*, to pardon those who are guilty; to save them from sufferings which they

deserve. If this petition—one of the most precious which we are to offer—has any meaning, those for whom it is offered are guilty. ^{permitted}

The baptism of infants is not an unmeaning ceremony; it is an ordinance of divine appointment, both impressive and instructive. The water is ^{used} for the sake of cleansing the body, but as an emblem of the blood ^{of Christ,} which is the *blood of sprinkling*, and which *cleanses from all sin*. ^{is needed} apply the emblem of this blood if there is not guilt to be washed away. ^{is needed} moral defilement from which the soul needs to be purified? If the water ^{is needed} applied by divine appointment, that blood of which it is an emblem, ^{is needed} of course, the subjects of this baptism are guilty. Nothing else can require the pardoning merit and purifying efficacy of this blood.

To the feelings of some parental hearts, it may be considered unwelcome, perhaps repulsive and even cruel, to allege that infants are guilty. Is it, then, more grateful to believe that infants are excluded from the mediation of Christ cut off from the mercy of God, and, of course, that they cannot be ^{partaken} of the blessings of salvation through the compassionate Savior? Would this belief, this view of their character and relations to God, be the source whence we would derive consolation, if, in the wise and holy providence of God, we are called to resign them to the grave? We appeal to all pious parents who have experienced these afflictive bereavements, if, when shedding the ^{parting} tear, they did not derive their chief consolation from the tender mercy of God, through the kind Redeemer, and not from the justice of God without a Savior? True it is, that our belief cannot change the truth; whether they be innocent or guilty, they are so, independently of our belief; yet we are certainly responsible for all the fair and legitimate consequences of this belief. We repeat, therefore, that if infants are not guilty, they cannot be included in the mediation of Christ—cannot be interested in the merit of his atoning blood—cannot be ^{partakers} of his salvation. If, in their dying moments, we commit them to God, it must be to his justice, not to his mercy.

IV. The next and last remark is, that infants are included in the covenant made with Adam; the conditions of which seem to have been, that his obedience would secure happiness, perfect, immutable, and eternal, to all his posterity; that his disobedience would subject himself and all his posterity to the penalty annexed to the law. The promise of life, as a reward of obedience, is, indeed, not understood; nor was it necessary that it should be. It was quite sufficient to state distinctly that death would be the certain consequence of transgression. He is already in possession of life, of which nothing but disobedience can deprive him. When the civil law makes death the punishment of crime, it does not promise life as the reward of obedience. The security of life already possessed is implied in the threatening. If Adam was obedient, during the time of probation, innocence and happiness would be secured to him and his posterity. True, it is not explicitly stated that infants, or any part of his posterity, were included in this covenant, generally called the covenant of works; but neither is it so stated that Eve was included. The language is addressed to Adam alone, in the singular number: and yet it is certain that she was included. It is equally certain that infants were. If Adam had obeyed, his offspring, during the period of infancy, would have been secure from suffering and death; that they suffer the penalty of disobedience, is a fact which cannot be denied. That they suffer justly, or because they are guilty, is a truth established by the preceding remarks. But this cannot be the guilt of actual transgression, or of sin which they, as moral agents, have committed; because infancy is that part of human life which precedes this agency. The commencement of moral agency, in any degree, is, in the same degree, the close of infancy. To be infants, in the sense in which we use the term, and at the same time, to be moral agents, is impossible. We cannot,

therefore, see any possible way of escaping the conclusion that they suffer on account of the guilt of "Adam's first sin"—that sin which he committed as their representative; and, of course, that they were included in the covenant made with him.

This doctrine, if we mistake not, is plainly taught in the holy Scriptures. Rom. 5:12. "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." Death, the penalty of that law which Adam transgressed, is suffered by infants. This death entered by sin as its punishment; and this sin is the sin of one man: the *one offence* of this one man. This one man, therefore, was the representative of his posterity, and acted for them, so that they, as justly and as certainly, as if they had acted individually for themselves, should enjoy the blessings secured by his obedience, and suffer the punishment due to his offence. The following context illustrates and confirms this view of the subject. The only other passage we will adduce is, 1 Cor. 15:22. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The apostle is here treating of the resurrection of the body; of course, by death, he means, not spiritual, but natural death; exclusively the death of the body. It is not true that all, in a spiritual sense, shall be made alive in Christ; but it is strictly true, that *all who are in the graves*, both the righteous and the wicked, *shall hear his voice and shall come forth*. From the fact which the apostle assumes, that all die in Adam, he affirms the certainty and the universality of the resurrection from the dead. Admit that Paul reasoned conclusively, then, believing in the resurrection, you believe in the fact which he assumes. If all die in Adam, then he represented all, and acted for all, when the penalty of death was incurred.

The result of the preceding remarks is this: 1. Infants are included in the mediation of Christ, and may be partakers of his salvation. Therefore, 2. They are subjects of the moral government of God. Of course, 3. They are guilty. And finally, 4. They were represented by Adam in the covenant of works.

From this subject we infer two duties relating to infants: baptism and prayer.

1. It is, at once, the privilege and the duty of Christian parents to devote their infants to God in the holy ordinance of baptism; and thus have their membership in the visible church publicly and solemnly recognized.

That circumcision was, by the appointment of God, applied to the infants of his professed worshipers, none will deny. That it was an ordinance of the gospel, an outward and visible sign of the spiritual blessings given through Christ, we sincerely believe. It was first enjoined on Abraham, more than four hundred years before the law was given by Moses. According to an inspired apostle, Rom. 4:11, Abraham "received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised." The faith of Abraham, and of all who believe since the death of Christ, is essentially the same, having the same reliance on the atonement of Christ. Hence he is *their father*, and they are *his children*. If their faith is evangelical, so was his. If circumcision was the sign and seal of his faith, baptism is of theirs. If they have the gospel preached to them, so had Abraham the same gospel preached to him. Gal. 3:8. "And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." This promise was the gospel, which Abraham understood and believed. It was also the most important part of that covenant which God made with Abraham, and which was confirmed to him of God *in Christ*; and if in Christ, then it was an evangelical covenant. Circumcision was the *token* of this covenant; the *sign* and *seal* by which it was

confirmed. Circumcision was, therefore, an ordinance of the gospel; and as such was applied to infants. Christ has redeemed us, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." This is not any blessing which Abraham confers on his children by faith; nor is it the blessing of entering into the earthly Canaan; but it was the blessing which God promised to Abraham and to his seed in Christ; the blessing of the gospel secured in that covenant, of which circumcision was the token and the seal. "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham;" that is, they enjoy the same spiritual blessings and privileges which he did. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Heirs, not of his temporal, but of his spiritual possessions. One of the blessings enjoyed by Abraham was the privilege of having his children received as members of the visible church, by affixing the token and the seal of the covenant to them. If his children by faith in Christ are blessed with him, they enjoy the same privilege. This blessing has come upon them. They inherit this part of their father's possessions. If they do not enjoy this privilege, then he was more fully blessed than they are. His blessing, in all its rich abundance, has not come on them. They are deprived of this part of their inheritance. The covenant, though "confirmed of God in Christ," has been *disannulled*. If they do not enjoy this privilege, we must believe all this to be true, or deny that there is any blessing, any spiritual advantage, connected with membership in the visible church. Now, although we do not believe that salvation is inseparably confined to this membership, yet certainly it does not follow that there are no advantages connected with it. Because a man may recover from sickness without a physician, and without medicine, it does not follow that there is no advantage derived from medicine prescribed by a competent physician. Because men may live, for a time, in a state of anarchy, it does not follow that there are no advantages derived from a well-ordered civil government. So, although salvation is not confined within the pale of the visible church, yet God has promised to this church, of course, to each individual member of it, great and numerous blessings. Hence it always has been, and ever will be, an object of desire to belong to the congregation of the Lord, to the fold of Christ.

But, perhaps, you will ask, what benefits can infants derive from membership? Your question is what logicians call, begging the question, taking for granted the very point to be ascertained. The meaning of your inquiry is, that, in your opinion, they can derive *no* advantage from this relation. Of course, if you had organized the church, you would have excluded infants. And as you consider this the only correct opinion on the subject, you suppose that God has acted as you would have done, and in forming his church has also excluded them. By circumcision infants were formerly received as members of the church. He that was not circumcised, "that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." The neglect, not the performance of this rite, was a violation of the covenant, a rejection of the principle on which the church is formed, and, of course, was rebellion against God. Your question might have been proposed to Abraham and the pious Hebrews with as much propriety as to us. What reply would they have made? God permits us to bring our infants with us into his church; we will, therefore, thankfully enjoy it as a privilege. God commands it as a duty; we will, therefore, cheerfully obey, and leave it with him to bless his own ordinance. We will not call his wisdom in question by supposing, for a moment, that he has appointed a useless rite in his church. We will *plant and water*; he will *give the increase*. We adopt this, for the present, as our reply to your question.

Neither wishing nor intending to pervert the apostle's language, or use it in any other than its most obvious sense, we affirm that it is the privilege and

the duty of all parents to have their infants baptized; and by this rite, performed by a minister of the gospel, to have their membership in the church of Christ acknowledged. If this duty is neglected, not the infants, but the parents, are accountable to God for the guilt of this neglect. Those infants, who are thus neglected, are *cut off from the people of God*, and are deprived of the blessings connected with the church. Baptism is now, as circumcision formerly was, the ordinance by which members are received; if not, there is no such ordinance now in the church. 1 Cor. 12:13. "For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body;" that is, the church. The former rite was discontinued by that synod which met in Jerusalem; but baptism will remain while there is a church on earth. Accordingly, when the Savior commissioned the apostles to *disciple all nations*, that is, to form them into churches, he commanded them, not to circumcise, but to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

2. Prayer is another duty, incumbent on all parents, in behalf of their infant children. They cannot instruct them, give them a new heart, or confer on them the blessings of salvation; but they can ask of God, who can accomplish this work and bestow these blessings; and who has promised to hear the prayer of faith, offered in the name of Christ. Parents, rejoicing themselves in the hopes of the gospel, cannot suppress the desire that their infants, so helpless and dependent as they are, should be embraced in the arms of redeeming mercy, be washed in the blood of Christ, and finally enter into the joy of their Lord. This desire, offered up to God, is prayer; and the privilege of offering it up will be esteemed precious, in proportion to the sincerity of their own piety, and the tenderness of their parental affections. Nor will they be perplexed or discouraged in the discharge of this duty by the question suggested by unbelief: *How* can infants, who can neither believe nor repent, be partakers of salvation? They are not required to bestow this salvation; it is the *gift of God*; and, therefore, a knowledge of the manner in which God bestows it, is neither essential to their own safety, nor their faithful discharge of duty. They know not *how* the Spirit operates on their own minds; and yet they do not cease to pray for his gracious aid. They rejoice in the fact, that infants are included in the mediation of Christ, and that this is not a vain participation. This Savior, who is *mighty to save*, who can *save to the uttermost*, can apply to them the merit of his death, and this will secure their salvation. He can bless them now, though in heaven, as effectually as he did when on earth, when they were in his own arms. Who can say this blessing did not include salvation!

But prayer is not only the duty of parents, but of the whole church, and especially when the ordinance of baptism is administered. When the church calls a minister of the gospel to labor among them, they call him to discharge this duty, as well as all others, which are peculiar to his office. When, therefore, he administers the ordinance of baptism, he acts for those who have called him in the name of the church. The parents give to God and to the church a solemn pledge that they will pray for these infants, and "train them up in the way in which they should go." The obligation rests on the church to pray for these members, now received into the family of God, and to see that they receive a religious education. If both the parents should be taken away, it is the duty of the church, a duty which cannot be neglected without criminality, to appoint and authorize other agents to take charge of these orphans, and "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." If the church was found in the faithful discharge of these duties, attending, with parental affection, to the religious education of all her children, praying for them without ceasing, the results would furnish an answer to the question—What benefits can infants derive from baptism? The church may neglect her duty. This does not prove, however, that the faithful discharge of this duty is not

blessed of God, and followed with the happiest effects. If some do *not believe*, does this make the *faith of God without effect*? If some disobey the law, does this prove that the law is *not good*? that in keeping it there is not *great reward*? If the prayer of *one righteous man availeth much*, will the prayer of the whole church for these infants, now received into her bosom, avail less? We protest, most earnestly, against that opinion, and that paralyzing apathy, the result of this opinion, which reduces this ordinance to a mere ceremony, in which none but the parents and the minister have any interest. Infant baptism, when viewed in its true light, in all its bearings and relations, is both instructive and impressive; calculated to call forth the spirit of true devotion, and of earnest prayer in every breast. Those members of the church who take no part in the devotional exercises, who consider themselves only as witnesses, prove by this indifference, either, that they are criminally ignorant of the nature and design of this ordinance, or, that their hearts are cold and lifeless in the cause of Christ. Such members need to be "instructed in the way of the Lord more perfectly."

There are parents in our Christian country, who live in the habitual, and as we verily believe, criminal neglect of these duties; who never devote their infants to God in baptism, never ask the church to receive them to her bosom, to exercise over them her kind and maternal influence; who never pray for them; who devise plans and employ means to promote their temporal comfort, but never ask God to give them spiritual blessings. These neglected infants are sometimes removed by death. Then those parents attempt to comfort their bleeding hearts with the hope that their dear little babes are saved through Christ, and are happy with the redeemed of the Lord. But what reason have they to cherish this hope? How do they know that they are saved? They never thought this salvation worth asking for—never used the means of *grace* which have a reference to infants—how then do they know that they are happy? Parents who faithfully discharge their duty; who devote them to God; who request the church to "receive these little ones in the name of Christ," to watch over and pray for them; whose fervent and daily prayer to God is, that they might be saved: these parents, if bereaved of these objects of affection, have reasons for this hope and this belief. These reasons are derived from "the blood of Christ which cleanses from all sin," from their own prayers, and the prayers of the church. If God saves a guilty and helpless sinner, because he prays for it; if he heard Moses in behalf of Israel, Job's prayer for his friends, the church for Peter, will he not hear the parents and the church for these infants? When the Judge shall say to them, at the last day, "Come ye blessed of my Father"—ye lambs of my flock—"inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," he may assign as a reason for this sentence—For your parents devoted you to God, and prayed for you; the church received you in my name, and prayed for your salvation.

SERMON LXXVII.

BY SAMUEL C. JENNINGS.

THE PROPER ACQUIREMENTS IN FEMALE EDUCATION.

PSALM 144:12. *That our daughters may be as corner-stones, polished after the similitude of a palace.*

The royal Psalmist David, thankful for past victories, desired a complete deliverance from the evils of war. He implored it with paternal solicitude, that the nation might have an opportunity to prosper and improve—that the daughters of Israel might become a binding support and the honor of his kingdom.

As corner-stones of palaces were laid on a good foundation, and were durable and ornamental, and consequently united and adorned the building; so, well-educated daughters, established in piety, unite different and the same families in safety; and when graceful in person, and adorned with the graces of the Holy Spirit, ornament the fabric of domestic, civil, and Christian society. Or, if by corner-stones we are to understand the columns which were erected under the porches and galleries of ancient and eastern palaces, still the pious and polished daughters, which grace every house to which they belong, are represented in the same particulars of utility and ornament.

To illustrate farther the propriety of the language of the text, and to improve the subject, I propose to show WHAT ACQUIREMENTS DAUGHTERS NEED TO MAKE THEM AS POLISHED CORNER-STONES.

I cannot in a short space pretend to describe the *modes* by which they should be attained.

I. IT IS REQUISITE THAT THERE BE A PROPER FOUNDATION LAID FOR A GOOD EDUCATION.

1. The *first* part of the foundation is to nurture and preserve, as far as possible, an elastic, healthy state of the body, that there may be a proportionable exercise of the intellectual faculties. This physical education is a sacred duty enjoined by the spirit of the Bible, and important from many considerations.

2. The mental faculties should be trained to *discriminate* between truth and error; to *reason correctly*; to *think long* on one topic; to *examine attentively* any given subject; and to *retain* what is acquired.

3. The moral powers of the soul should be cultivated by the precepts of the gospel. Passions should be restrained; habits formed in reference to the welfare of daughters as moral agents, and in reference to the glory of God. These attentions include all that early, systematic instruction, discipline, and prayer, which are blessed to lead to Jesus Christ for the saving gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit.

Thus the different materials—physical, intellectual, and religious culture—cement and form a foundation for the polished corner-stones in the fabric of society.

H. THE SUPERSTRUCTURE RAISED ON THIS FOUNDATION (*which must still be guarded*) SHOULD BE OF VALUABLE, DURABLE MATERIALS.

The knowledge acquired should not be merely some sickly flowers of poetry and often useless fictions, which excite the imagination but impart no stability to the mind. They who feed it much on the *fictitious images* wrought by the fanciful, will have but little taste or room left for the study of the wondrous *realities* of this and other worlds. Such acquisitions rather unfit than prepare for the active duties of life—they rather prepare the possessor to be crushed into the dust during the storms of life, than to stand firm, an ornament of society and an example of patience and courage.

Whatever has a tendency to increase the knowledge of the works of God, and consequently to fill the mind with adoration, admiration, and love—whatever leads to a knowledge of the will of God as developed in his word and in his providential government of this world—whatever prepares the mind to embrace the plan of redemption, should be made a subject of study on earth. Some degree of this kind of knowledge is essential for this life. *Much* of it should be sought; for to those who are savingly taught of God it will be increased and perfected in heaven.

Beside these branches of inquiry, whatever enlightens as to the past history and the present condition of man, should be obtained to qualify for the performance of social and relative duties. Whatever is likely to fill the mind with pleasing and useful contemplations and reflections—"whatsoever things are true—whatsoever things are lovely," should form a part of Christian female education.

This brief statement as to what should be the acquirements in female education covers several branches of study. Beside those comprehended in a common literary and domestic education, (which I do not propose to notice in this discourse,) it embraces several others, some knowledge of which every daughter, if possible, ought to attain. Namely, 1. The laws by which natural, material objects are governed, with some adequate idea of the number, dimensions, positions, and revolutions, of the heavenly bodies. 2. The composition and properties of bodies, by which daughters would be enabled to explain the causes of the changes which take place in nature. 3. They should be acquainted with the outlines of human physiology, that they may become somewhat acquainted with the structure and operations of that body which is "fearfully and wonderfully made," and be led to the same exercise of mind as the Psalmist from similar knowledge; and be also led to use means for self-preservation. 4. They should have some knowledge of Zoology, or the science of animals, in all its different branches: of beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, and animalculæ. The *names* of some of these creatures often meet the eye in the Sacred Scriptures, and the *things* themselves, in the walks of life; and therefore invite the attention of every person. 5. They should understand Botany: something of the fifty thousand different plants which have been discovered. 6. They should have a general acquaintance with Geology and Mineralogy: with the structure of the earth and the substances which compose it—with the minerals which are found in the earth.

A knowledge of all these branches of natural science help to understand allusions in the word of God. They also enlarge the views respecting his wisdom, power, and goodness. To say nothing of their utility for other purposes, they afford the mind pleasing contemplations when journeying by the way, or in the hours of recreation, when it would otherwise be left comparatively void of useful thought, or perhaps filled with idle imaginations and unnecessary cares.

Farther: some knowledge of mental science, without being conducted through all the labyrinths of metaphysics, with as much acquaintance with

human nature as it is possible to attain, are included in a useful female education.

Every lady, to be well educated, must know the rules of correct reasoning, speaking, and writing.

It is essential to a Christian education, and for a *full* understanding of the comprehensible parts of the Scriptures, that there be an acquaintance with Biblical Antiquities, or the customs in vogue when the Bible was written.

It is also essential that Sacred Geography should be studied, to obtain a knowledge of those places mentioned in the Scriptures, and to have their relative position and condition in the mind, so that the female student may be able to follow the Savior and his apostles, in their journeyings, and to know something of the state of the people amongst whom they tarried at different times.

This should be accompanied with a chronological knowledge of the periods when the events of past ages transpired. This helps to understand prophecy, to locate events, and to trace the dealings of God with the human family. In short, the minds of our daughters should be stored with such ideas as would make them useful and interesting as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers—as members of society, or of the church of God.

III. I COME NOW TO INQUIRE BRIEFLY INTO THE NATURE OF THE ORNAMENTAL ACQUIREMENTS OF A DAUGHTER, WHICH POLISH HER CHARACTER AND APPEARANCE.

She should desire and seek none which do not unite utility with adorning. The time of every daughter is too precious, and her obligations too great, to waste the one and neglect the other in mere "outward adorning." (See 1 Pet. 3:3. 1 Tim. 2:9.) David, in the text, desired that the daughters of his kingdom should be as polished corner-stones: Not polished automations, or statues. Whatever countenance may seem to have been given to mere external embellishments, in accordance with the spirit and usage of the Old Testament dispensation, true refinement and the simplicity of the gospel should now lead Christian daughters to lay aside. Their tendency, under the former dispensation, can be learned from the third chapter of Isaiah. Still, like the virtuous woman described by Solomon, she may make "herself coverings of tapestry," to hang her rooms; especially when necessity requires it, as much as the latticed windows of his time, to screen from the light and the air. And her clothing may be "of silk and purple" on suitable occasions; for in such covering utility and beauty are united together.

Among the ornamental acquirements which are useful, are the arts of *Drawing* and *Painting*. By these a taste is cultivated for observing whatever is sublime or beautiful in the works of the Creator. These arts, for which but few have genius, when properly directed, lead the mind up to God. When there is an *adequate* knowledge of them, the results can be applied to ornament what is useful, or to help memory to retain a remembrance of persons and scenes which may and should be recollected.

Music may be mentioned as illustrative of accomplishments which are useful and ornamental. Both *vocal* and *instrumental* music, refine and soften the asperities of mind, when moral and devotional pieces are the subjects of study and performance. A talent for the former is much more universal than for the latter; and its value, especially for the worship of God, is much greater than instrumental music. Very few daughters have musical talents for this branch sufficient to justify conscientious Christian parents to cause them to persist in the pursuit of it. The time and expense necessary for the most gifted pupils to acquire a polished acquaintance with it, are great. But when youth, who have comparatively no talents for this branch, are kept from year to year pursuing that which they never can attain, to the neglect of important

branches of knowledge for which they have talents, is sacrificing time and money on the altar of vanity. The ladies, in the time of David, do not appear to have had an acquaintance with the difficult wind and stringed instruments then in use. Those in use by them seem to have been chiefly the timbrel and cymbal, to use which did not require much skill.

As to the point, whether our daughters should acquire a knowledge of the *Ancient and Modern Languages*, should depend much upon their situation in life and future prospects. The *individual* advantage which a lady would derive from a knowledge of the Ancient Languages, would not be so great as if the same time had been spent in other studies. And the condition of mankind is such, that much time and means should not be expended on what cannot, in the possession of a lady, greatly profit our fellow creatures.

The Modern Languages may be more useful and ornamental. They give an opportunity, in many situations, "to do good and to communicate;" and give the possessor an opportunity to peruse the excellent authors who write in some other than the English Language.

Other feelings beside prejudice from the abuse of the knowledge of dancing, will prevent us from numbering it among the useful ornaments which should be acquired by the daughters of this age. There was "a time to dance," when the exercise was employed as part of the service of God, and as a manifestation of gratitude to him. None now, however, *profess* to "praise him in the dance," and should not appeal for examples to usages of a former dispensation, which have been abolished with the "carnal ordinances," Heb. 9:10.

There is too much time spent, and too many dangers in the practice, and too much risk of health, to compensate for all the ease in carriage which are acquired by this practice, separately considered. Gracefulness in movements and in forms of society, can be acquired from competent instructors, and from mingling with refined people.

That ease and gentility in manners are useful accomplishments should be inculcated on youth of both sexes. Their acceptability in society, and consequently their usefulness, depends much on these attainments. Moreover, the words of sacred writ direct to "be courteous;" to "be gentle with all meekness towards all men." These passages have reference to the *external* carriage, as well as to the state of the mind. Genuine polished manners, proceed from that gentleness which is a fruit of the Spirit. There may exist true love to God without some traits of *true* politeness and other necessary accomplishments to fit for usefulness. And it is the work of human education, to impart such an acquaintance with refined manners as may be obtained by instruction and example. And on the other hand, there may be much of the gentleness and dignity of Christ attained from praiseworthy motives, without being influenced by his Spirit, and so far it is commendable; still, while this ornamented structure has not its foundation in true piety, it is in danger. The most polished corner-stones in an edifice, which have *stood* long, may eventually, for want of a good foundation and because of some undermining influence, be hurled from their position and dashed to pieces.

Like the prophet let me call upon you, to "hear my voice, ye careless daughters, give ear unto my speech," and let your education be founded on the principles and affections of true religion, your superstructure of useful materials, and your *first* adorning that of a "meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of God, of great price."

PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

VOL. V. PITTSBURGH, DECEMBER, 1836. No. 7.

SERMON LXXVIII.

BY SAMUEL MARTIN, D. D.
OF PENNSYLVANIA.

CHILDREN ARE AN HERITAGE OF THE LORD.

PSALM 127:3. *Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord.*

It is thought by some that this psalm was written by Solomon when advanced to the throne of Israel, and when about to build the temple. If so, it is to be regarded as expressing his strong conviction, that success in every undertaking was mainly dependent on God; and that, in the noble enterprise of building an house for God, it was peculiarly so. Others think that it was written by David, and that it was especially intended for the instruction of his son. Furnished with means in vast abundance, with the grand design fully formed of building an house for God, and withal flushed with the ardor of a youthful mind, Solomon was strongly tempted to self-dependence. Against this his pious father sets him on his guard. While he commands attention and diligence in the discharge of the duties called for, he urges the necessity of entire dependence on God for success in his undertaking. The design of David to build an house for the worship of Jehovah was approved as pious; yet because he was a man of war, and had shed much human blood, he was refused that honor. God had declared that Solomon his son should build him an house; and had promised that he would dwell with him. With this declaration of God upon his mind, and the certainty that it gave, that his son should build God's house, David assures Solomon that all his attempts would prove vain unless the Lord would work with him. "Except the Lord do build the house, they labor in vain who build it." This is true in ordinary cases. They labor in vain, who build for pleasure or convenience, if the blessing of God be wanting to their labors. Dependence upon God in all cases of duty and of right is essential to success. Armed guards may compass the city; their eyes may be wakeful and penetrating as the eagle's; yet if "God guard not the city the watch-

man waketh in vain." Men may rise early and sit up late, yet all in vain: for so, by diligent discharge of duty accompanied with reliance on him, giveth he his beloved sleep. While his mind is so engaged on the important subject of trusting in God, the parental relation and its responsibilities break in upon his thoughts, and, as if by surprise, he exclaims, "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord."

These words imply,

I. THAT CHILDREN ARE AN HERITAGE, OR POSSESSION, OF THE LORD'S BESTOWING.

We do not hold them as property of our own acquisition, nor as at our own disposal. Our title to the possession is through the gift of God, and we hold them under such restrictions and reservations as have been dictated by his wisdom and benevolence. Duty to the sovereign Giver demands, that we maintain an habitual conviction that they are his, and a just sense of his goodness in bestowing them. Jacob when asked by his brother Esau, "And who are these that are with you," answered, "These are the children which God hath graciously given thy servant." Joseph called his firstborn Manasseh; for God by this, with other instances of his kindness, had made him forget the toils of his past life and his father's house. The second he "called Ephraim; for God had caused him to be fruitful in the land of his affliction." By these names he expresses his sense of God's goodness in bestowing upon him an heritage so invaluable. When Joseph brought his sons to his aged and now dying father, the patriarch inquired, "And who are these?" "They are my sons, whom God hath given me in this place." "Of all my sons," says David, "for God hath given me many sons, he hath chosen my son Solomon to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord." The envious, the impatient Rachel accosted Jacob saying, "Give me children or else I die." Her impiety, in the wrong direction of her prayer, was reprov'd by the patriarch, who, being angry, said, "Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?" Of God it is said, "That he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." In this light the Christian in every age has regarded him. Who can be the author of life to any thing that lives, but he that never began to be!—Who is uncreated. Wherever you turn your eyes upon God's vast dominion, you behold it swarming with life. The insect, seen only by microscopic aid; the atom that floats in the sunbeam; the worm and the serpent that crawl; the multifarious tenants of the deep; the beasts of prey that roam through the desert, and the domestic animal that waits at the stall: these all have derived life from the same creative power

which animates the tongue of the seraph, which enlivens the wing of the ministering angel, and "which sendeth man to his work." Shall we not all join with David in exclaiming, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wisdom hast thou made them all: the whole earth is full of thy riches." Shall creatures, then, that breathe by the inspiration of the Almighty, set up a claim of exclusive right to their own being; or shall they so set claim to their own offspring, barely because to them is left the care and direction of their infancy, childhood, and youth. The claim, if made, is founded either in ignorance or arrogance; for "children are an heritage of the Lord." Nor are we to admit the thought, that the inheritance bestowed is of small, or even of common importance. That little heart that palpitates within that bosom, is actuated by a spirit that will never die. That little immortal may be destined to tell the story of redeeming love, and to bring salvation to many of his fellow men. It may live and be the support and comfort of aged and feeble parents. It may be the instrument of public good to its country; or it may be an example of wickedness, and the subject of misery unutterable and everlasting. And all this, the reasonable and natural result of parental faithfulness, or the contrary. Parents we appeal to you; for ye can tell the excellence and worth of this inheritance. Why are your children the objects of your anxious care? Because they are most ardently and tenderly loved. The love of offspring is in man a law of nature. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb." Was there ever a heart so leaden and motionless as not to be moved by an infant's smile? Their charms displayed in the artless forms to which instinct leads, when reason scatters her earliest rays upon the soul, how enchanting! The first voice it utters tells you that it is a sufferer. It is cast into your arms forlorn and helpless. Its cries are eloquent pleas for compassion; and if they ever fall ineffectual on the ears of any, then there are monsters in human form. "He that provideth not for his own, and especially those of his own household, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." To parents, then, children are a precious gift of God. They are a treasure which they are bound to improve for their Master's use.

II. THE WORDS DO INTIMATE THAT GOD IN BESTOWING CHILDREN AS AN HERITAGE, HOLDS PARENTS BOUND TO TRAIN THEM UP FOR HIM, AND TO SURRENDER THEM TO HIM AT HIS CALL.

This seems to be the sentiment as enforced in the second clause, "and the fruit of the womb is his reward." That is, the children which God has given you for an heritage are to be restored to him as a reward

for his gift, improved by the performance of all parental offices. Should I mistake the sentiment of inspiration intended in these words, the position which I have taken still presents a duty binding on parents universally; and the general principle applies to every man and every thing we call our own. The principle which I maintain is briefly this: As we are God's, so the children which God has given us are his; and that they are given us, that we may train them for and dedicate them to him. By the Spirit of inspiration we are told that "the Lord's people are his portion." This is said of them as a people in covenant with God, and has a respect to Israel as a nation. This is plainly stated in the following passage: "Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that thou mayest be a holy people unto the Lord thy God." Deut. 26:17, 18, &c. These words of the covenant could only be addressed to the living individuals of the nation; yet they plainly include the future generations; as the whole form applies only in a future sense, viz. the promises on God's part, and the pledges of fidelity on Israel's part. Now if parents pledged themselves to God in behalf of their offspring; and if they had a full prospect of a blessing on them as the reward of their fidelity, how could they redeem their pledge to God, or reasonably expect a blessing on their seed, but by teaching them concerning God and his ways; concerning their duty and their hope of reward. After God had promised to Abraham, that he should be the father of many nations, that he should be exceedingly fruitful, and that kings should descend from him, he adds, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee." So dealt God in renewing his covenant with Isaac and with Jacob. And why does God embrace the parents with the children in his covenant? That the parents might be held by the special covenant obligation, as well as by natural affection and the interest which they have in the eternal well-being of the children, to train them by every proper means for God. Good men feel the obligation, and their hearts gladden with the hope of blessing on their labors. God holds them bound to fidelity, and confidently looks for the proper fruit of their labor. "I know him"—I know Abraham—"that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abra-

ham that which he hath spoken of him." The change of dispensation from the forms of the ancient ritual to the simple and venerable forms of the gospel, has produced no alteration in the parental and filial relations, neither in that which exists between God and man. The gospel exhibition of grace as it respects men in successive generations is as follows: "The promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." It is to you, believing parent, and to your seed; but it extends now to heathen nations, said to be "afar off," and to the children of such of them as shall be savingly called; and so on, to the believing and their children, until all the "earth shall see the salvation of God." Upon this is founded the parent's privilege of dedicating his children in baptism unto the Lord. In this dedication, the parent pleads this promise, and trusts in him that made it, that he and that his offspring may be jointly partakers of the blessings it contains: viz. that God may be his God and the God of his tender infant. In this dedication, too, the church receives the promise of the parent on the child's behalf, that he will teach and otherwise faithfully train it in the ways of the Lord. And the church becomes bound to have oversight of his fidelity, and to see to it that he is faithful to his vows. By such means as these, a most reasonable expectation may be entertained, that the Lord will give efficacy to his own appointed instrumentality, and come and save. Let us now see how this view of the subject accords with the directions or injunctions of the Scriptures to parents and to children. When Moses had recited to the people of Israel the substance of the covenant at Horeb, and had subjoined the most solemn exhortations to keep the statutes and commandments contained in it, he calls their attention to the only object of worship, and to the sum of all duty in the following words: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might: And these words, which I command thee, this day, shall be in thine heart:" subduing their corruptions, regulating their purposes, animating their affections, and directing all their actions, as a people who sought and had reason to expect blessings from God. Without this, their mere mental acquaintance with divine things could avail them nothing personally; nor without this, would they be inclined to use them to any benefit in the relative obligations of life. Having thus taught them how they were individually dependent on a living and heart-governing power of divine truth, for their own present and eternal well-being, the Spirit of the Lord, by Moses, commands as follows: "Thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and

when thou risest up: And thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and on thy gates." Whether the interest which parents have in the felicity of their offspring, or God's rightful claim upon their services, are most prominent in this passage is not easily determined. Children are spoken of as being the property of parents. "Teach them diligently to *your* children." But why does God, in forms so varied, in terms so strong, and on occasions which would seem to admit apology, press the duty of parental fidelity, if he did not hold them as his peculiar property, and as in circumstances peculiarly dangerous? Parents are to make religion the subject of their conversation on the little occasions of respite from common labors, when they sit in their houses waiting or receiving their wonted repast; as they go to or return from the labors of the day. They must remind them of the Keeper of Israel that never slumbereth nor sleepeth before they deliver them over to sleep, or take repose to themselves. They must tell them, that trusting in this faithful Guardian, they are equally safe from "the terror by night" and from "the pestilence that walketh in darkness," as from "the arrow that flieth by day," or "the destruction that wasteth at noon-day." In the morning, before the cares of the day occupy the attention, the subject must be introduced. They should be told that the appointed angels of their Father in heaven have watched their pillows, and enjoined to seek his guidance and his protecting care through the day. Fearful of neglect, parents are commanded to bind them for a sign, or remembrancer, upon their hand, that as the employment of the hand in business demands the attention of the eye, they might have a monitor continually pointing to the duty. So habitually must they be engaged on the all-solemn theme, that their countenances must, by their fixed solemn adjustment, speak to the children around the devotional feelings of the heart. The posts of their doors and their gates must bear witness to their fidelity, in showing to their dear offspring the way of life, as fully as if the whole were described or written upon them. Of worth how unspeakable are immortal souls! And how full of wisdom and good-will to men are the arrangements of God's providence, by which he prepares them for future felicity. Parents are ministers of his for the instruction of infancy and childhood. They are guards of his, set between them and danger. The laws of superiority in the parent, and of subjection in the child, which are indeed laws of nature, founded in the dependence of the child and the strong affection of the parent, abundantly discover the divine intention to be, that parents teach and in all things direct and rule their offspring on his behalf. The written law is in exact accordance with

the above on this important subject. "Children," says the apostle, "obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." How unfriendly to the reception of instruction is a spirit of disobedience? Against this the command recited provides. That they may not mistake the divine design in placing parents over them, they are expressly enjoined to be submissive. And that the relation of parents is one in which they have much interest, and which has high claims upon their gratitude and reverence, they are commanded, "Honor thy father and thy mother," which is a command, by no means the dictate of power, or mere claim of right, but a command commended to whatever is ingenuous in the human heart, by the promise of reward: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long upon the earth." On the other hand, whatever is attractive, persuasive, or alluring, is to be employed by parents for the end of rendering the duty of the young pleasant and improving. "Fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but train them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." A fault-finding, impatient, and fretful temper in parents, how very inconsistent with the successful performance of parental duties. And when such caprice is the means of discouraging children in seeking instruction, or of provoking them to decline waiting upon it, how fearfully accountable must parents be to him who is the God of their little ones, and who demands that they train them up for him. The ministry of parents over children, among the means of salvation, is of no common importance. When the religious education of youth is wanting, it cannot be supplied without a diligence which the engagements of life seldom admit, and without an attention which ministers of Christ, engaged to strive for a whole church and for a world, to save them, cannot pay. And rare are the instances, in my apprehension, in which persons, who have reached maturity in ignorance of the doctrines of religion, ever obtain what may be called a well-settled system of divine truth. My heart has often been sorely pained on finding, in certain regions of our country, where the education of children has been neglected—I shall not say from what causes—that many persons, amiable and attractive, who showed a fondness for conversing on the subjects of religion generally, were altogether unacquainted with its foundation and all its component parts. I have heard these speak confidently of their saving relation to God, and of their assurance of rest in heaven, while in the same conversation they affirmed that the Scriptures contained contradictions, and that they liked to read them where they did not. I have heard conversations maintained with ardor and zeal which filled me with delight, but how dashed was the cup of pleasure, when on bringing into view some of the important and even most consoling doctrines of the

Bible, I noted on their countenances the marks of surprise, and was left now to address them a silent audience.

It has been urged with great malignity of intention, and with a plausibility which has obtained too much success, That the doctrines of religion are too sublime for the contemplation of the tender mind; that they are too solemn, and that the abuse of them is too dangerous, to risk the presentment of them before the unexpanded and untrained minds of children. Are persons so objecting, willingly ignorant, that the years of childhood often are the seasons of grace. Do they not know, that the opportunities of grace often close before life has reached its vigor; and that the divine Spirit, for whose gracious influences all faithful parents have reason to look, can sanctify the word to them, by making it effectual to their salvation. Do they not know that we owe to God the whole of our time, and that the love and devotion of youth are peculiarly acceptable. Do they not know, that those points in the system of religion, which outreach the conceptions of men, are not taught that they may be explored, analyzed, or elucidated; but that on God's testimony they may be believed; and that being believed they can share all the influence which they were intended to have by him that taught them. Do they forget that when the human mind is unfurnished with materials for religious thoughtfulness, evil inclinations, corrupt imaginations, a sinful world, and a tempting devil, will fill it to overflowing with an host of pampered inclinations, evil passions, and sinful purposes, which, if it do not render the condition desperate, will surely render it but little hopeful. By the one sin of one man guilt stands charged against all the individuals of our race; pollution has overspread the whole family; out of this all evil passions and propensities do grow, and, when unresisted, flourish. Now I ask, is it the part of wisdom to look on unalarmed at the growth of these, until conscience is silent, the mind enslaved, and a sense of future responsibility buried in the general ruin. God has chosen parents as teachers, that the minds of the young may be pre-occupied on his behalf, by the infusion of divine knowledge, and that thus their minds may possess materials for amending their hearts and directing their lives. Let such enemies of man know, that until they can show that impulses and choices derived from the materials which corrupt inclinations, evil consciences, worldly objects addressed to the senses, and the excitements of the grand enemy of God and man, are the true means of human refinement, and the ordained means of rendering man fit for heaven, no argument can lie against parental instruction. It is this that, by the grace of God, has been the means of retaining a place and a church for God in a world lying in wickedness until this time. How just the sentiment of the poet:

“Tis education forms the human mind;
Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined.”

And how accordant the thought with that of inspiration: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”

If it be asked, by what rule shall parents be guided in preparing the children, which they have received from God, for restoration to him at his call? The answer is: The word of God, as it is able to make parents, who know and improve it, wise unto salvation; so it is qualified to secure to their offspring the same blessedness. It is the full revelation of God to man of all that is to be believed, and of all that is to be done. “It is able to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good word and work.” It is plain to the mind of an honest inquirer; except as to the incomprehensible things of God, which it is impossible that man should know, and those wondrous things of his ways and his judgments which it hath pleased him to conceal. The vast diversity of religious systems and opinions which divides the Christian world, is not owing to any obscurity that pervades the sacred volume; but to the dire obliquity given to the intellectual faculties of man through the intervention of sin. Many of these systems, as may be seen by their influence on their votaries, are rather to be regarded as owing their shape and form to the tastes, inclinations, and prejudices of those that have formed and adopted them, than to the prayerful mental research of the Holy Scriptures. But prejudice and passion aside; the great variety of mental endowment, the pressure attendant on many of the unnumbered pursuits in life; the entire privation or the imperfect enjoyment of opportunities of improvement, and many such causes, disqualify the grand mass of mankind for the at once arduous and important work of gathering light from the sacred book that may guide their path to heaven. For this, the God of grace has kindly provided. “He has given some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man; unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” As many of these offices as are proper to our period of the church and of the world are still continued. There are still evangelists, pastors, teachers. They are not indeed men specially inspired to teach something which the Scriptures do not contain; but they are qualified by the possession of mental endowments, by learning, by personal piety, by a desire to serve Christ in seeking to save souls, and habitual study of the Scrip-

tures, to open divine truth before the mind and to enforce it upon the heart. Among the blessings conferred through men like these, the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Presbyterian church ought to be regarded as invaluable. Parents, who of you are qualified for sitting down, and gathering together the doctrines of the Bible, and for placing them in the order of mutual dependence? Who of you are prepared to gather the Scriptures around the collected points, should you succeed in collecting them, and fence them in so as to render the citadel of your hope impregnable? Who, if they were in possession of powers equal to the task, could find the leisure, or submit to the labor and self-denial which the work would demand, unless it were one who was set apart to the work of providing food for poor dying souls. The Confession of Faith, in all its parts, claims the admiration of Christians; but, as a short, plain, and comprehensive exhibition of Scripture doctrine, the Shorter Catechism, in my apprehension, stands pre-eminent. Very childhood can embrace and entertain it as matter of memory. And then, the leading work of the parent is, to explain the language and endeavor to impress the sacred sentiments upon their hearts. The child that has on memory that precious summary of divine truth, has obtained a treasure upon which it may draw for direction in every period of life; and which, if the Spirit of the Lord mellow the ground, and warm, and water the precious seed when sown, will not fail of bringing forth fruit to eternal life. We do not ask you, parents, to take our word, as to the soundness of the doctrines it contains. We refer you to the passages upon which every point rests for its support. They are collected for you that at the same glance you may see the truth and the evidence of truth. If you suspect any thing, the whole Bible is in your power, and we ask you to do as the good Bereans did: "search the Scriptures daily and see if these things are so." Strange that there should be any who would endeavor to bring into disuse this useful manual. For I am persuaded that just in the degree in which it is neglected, will truth be undervalued; and discord and disgrace take the place of harmony and order. I firmly believe, that those whose hopes are placed on the system of doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, are securely built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. I stand for no untried foundation; I would not that any should hazard their own salvation, neither that of the precious children which the Lord hath given them, upon a mere experiment. "To the law and to the testimony" it has often been brought, and I know not that any production of man has ever transmitted so fully the light of heaven shining in God's word without shading its lustre, as the Presbyterian Confession has done. On the sacred volume, the Bible, in the light in

which it is exhibited here, I plant my foot, and take my stand, and risk my all. Parents, I invite you to place yourselves with your children by the side of me and mine; and with the Bible as our sun, shedding light upon us through our Confession, let us hold on our way, and whatever may be the toils or trials of our journey, the end will be glorious.

If our right to the possession of children is founded in the gift of God, then we should not only feel thankful for them, but hold them as at his disposal. Children trained in the fear of the Lord are unspeakable blessings. The attentions due to them, and the expressions of love and regard received in return, not only lessens the tedium of life, but bring with them much positive satisfaction. The performance of the duties which we owe to them, as tender, helpless, and dependent, improve and soften the finer feelings of humanity, and prepare the heart for the entertainment of those sympathies, the exercise of which is so often called for towards the miserable around us. Who that, as a parent, has been teaching his children, with the diligence that becomes him, the sacred lessons that open to their view a happy immortality, will not testify that the things of God and religion have risen higher in his own estimation, and that the labors spent on them have terminated in his own benefit? What thanks are due to God for appointing us a task so pleasant as to teach the child, which by nature's laws we so much love, how to obtain and enjoy *him* and heaven; and for how important an end shall we have lived, if we are blessed as instruments in preparing their souls for a willing and peaceful surrender at his call. To hold our offspring as ours, by a deed of gift, implies God's right to take them when he pleases, and our duty in resigning them when he calls. Resignation to the will of God, when children are taken from our embraces, is arduous and trying. While all may desire to possess it; all lament, while they feel the pungency of *wo*, that they are so deficient in its exercises, and that they experience so little of the tranquillity it proposes. To what cause is this deficiency rather to be ascribed than to this: that we are accustomed to conceive of our children as exclusively our own. Ask the mother covered with tears, wringing her hands, and pale with sorrow; ask her, why this extravagance of grief? O! the child, the darling child, torn from my bosom, lies there the unseasonable victim of untimely death. Could sympathy for the mourner be suppressed, she ought to be reproved. Inconsiderate woman dry up your tears: you have lost nothing. This child was given you on the express condition that you should surrender it at God's call. He has taken his own heritage, and in doing so has released you from a trust and a labor difficult and precarious. When the train of complicated sorrows, with which Job

was visited, was crowned with the shocking and desolating scene, which swept away all his sons and daughters, observe how the sentiment of my text sustain his spirits. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of Lord." The words of pious Eli on the death of his abandoned sons, show his submission to the rightful claims of God the giver. "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good." When visible wrath from heaven was revealed in consuming Aaron's sons, he held his peace: He had no right to complain: He dare not murmur. For the righteous God doeth righteously. God said to Abraham: Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and go into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, on one of the mountains which I will tell thee. Does he expostulate with God or plead delay? No; but in the morning with all things prepared, he sets out with Isaac to the destined spot. On the third day he arrives in view of the place; and addresses the servants who accompanied him saying, "tarry ye here with the ass, till I and the lad go yonder and worship, and return." He places the wood upon the shoulder of his son, the intended victim, and with the fire and knife, the instruments of death, in his own hand, they set out together. With unsuspecting innocence, Isaac inquires: "Father, here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" "Son," said the father, with entire composure, "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." Arrived at the place, Abraham builds the altar, piles the wood, binds his son, and lays him upon it. With extended arm, the knife is raised for slaughter. The appointed angel loudly cries from heaven, "lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." For this Abraham was blessed with the multiplying of his seed like the sand of the sea. Through this all nations of the earth in him was blessed.

Parents consider, that whatever any may gain, they are infinite losers, if they lose their souls. How great is the folly, then, of the toil and labor that has for its object the worldly ease or comfort of the child. So far as heaven and its blessedness excels the things of earth or rises above the things of hell; so far do endeavors for the salvation of souls rise in importance above efforts for the procuring of any thing else. On bended knees, then, daily dedicate yourselves with your children to the Lord: and doing this daily, in the reliance of your souls on your covenant God, if their glass shall be run while you live to plead, on their dying bed you will be enabled in faith to deliver them over to your Savior's arms. Amen.

SERMON LXXII.

BY WILLIAM M'MILLAN, D. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF FRANKLIN COLLEGE, OHIO.

ON THE SUPPORT OF THE MINISTRY.

1 COR. 9:14. *Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.*

The apostle in this chapter shows in very express terms, that the ministers of the gospel should be supported by those to whom they preach. From the seventh verse and onward, he first shows that *he* as well as *other* ministers of the gospel had a *right* to a maintenance on the principles of natural equity; for, who expected others to employ their time, strength, and skill, in their service, without affording them a support? The soldier when fighting for his country, being thereby deprived of the opportunity of attending to his private concerns, had his charges borne by the state. The person employed in planting a vineyard was allowed a maintenance from its produce; and he who tended a flock, was used to eat the milk of the flock. And who could think it equitable to refuse them of this recompense for their labor. Ought not, therefore, the ministers of the gospel who give up other prospects of supporting themselves and families, that they might promote the spiritual good of others, be maintained in a comfortable and decent manner by them. But this was not merely the dictate of human reason; for in truth the law gave an emblematical intimation of it, when it forbade the Israelites to muzzle the ox which was employed in treading out the corn. If the ox must not be refused a share of that abundance which men enjoyed through his labor, surely the laborious and patient minister should be supported by those who received far richer blessings by his instrumentality? And if the husbandman should plow and sow in hope, or with the expectation of obtaining a recompense for his labor; so also should the ministers of Christ, who had sown the seed of the word of God, which was about to produce the excellent and permanent fruits of salvation, be recompensed for their labors.

The apostle in verse thirteenth adduced another proof that ministers should be maintained by the gospel. For it was well known, that the priests and Levites who attended on the worship of the temple, and so spent their time in that service, as not to be at leisure for those employments by which the other Israelites supported themselves and their families, were maintained from the first-fruits—oblations and sacrifices there presented. Such are the arguments the apostle uses in favor of the maintenance and support of the ministers of the gospel. And, therefore, he draws this conclusion in the words of our text, that even so the Lord Jesus had appointed, or ordained, that those who preach

his gospel should be supported by the people, for their services in that sacred function; and not be obliged to engage in any other. If God was particular in regulating the temple service, and appointing the priests and Levites a due proportion of the fruits of the earth for their support, that they might devote themselves wholly to the service to which he had appointed them; even so the Lord Jesus, as he had erected a gospel church and appointed the administration of his word and ordinances, has ordained that those who are appointed to this sacred service should be supported by the people, that they may devote themselves wholly to it.

Having thus explained the words in their connection, that which is designed in the further prosecution of this subject is, to show

THE NECESSITY OF A DUE SUPPORT BEING ADMINISTERED TO THE PREACHERS OF THE GOSPEL, BY THOSE TO WHOM THEY PREACH.

That it is the duty of people to pay their ministers, rests upon this simple principle of justice, that no one has a right to claim the services of another without rendering him a compensation; and those who preach the gospel are plainly warranted by the word of God to look for the reward of their labors: For, even so hath Christ ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

Taking it, then, for granted that this is a duty which none, we presume, who is either acquainted with Scripture or the principles of equity and justice, will be disposed to contradict, I shall endeavor more particularly to urge the necessity and enforce the observance of it upon the hearers of the gospel. But before this, I would observe, that promising, by way of subscription or otherwise, to compensate a man for his ministerial labors, is not what is meant by administering a due support unto him; for some by their conduct seem to manifest that this is all that is requisite, and when applied to for it, or urged, rather threaten to break off from the congregation than pay. Nor do we intend that the clergy should be supported in affluence, or their families kept in idleness at the expense of the people. Nothing is farther from our view: this has proved the source of many evils in the church. But by administering a support unto them is intended, that a due competency of the necessaries of life be afforded as a compensation for their labors, in order that they may be enabled to support themselves and their families without worldly embarrassments. And this they have a right to look for, as they have relinquished other means of subsistence in order that they may dispense the bread of life to perishing man. Let me, then, enforce the necessity of this truth from the advantage it would prove to us as a people, as also its tendency to promote the interests of Christianity.

That by affording a due support to the ministers of the gospel, and thereby preventing them from worldly embarrassments, and the necessity of engaging in occupations, not only foreign to, but inconsistent with, their main employment, would prove an advantage to the people cannot be doubted, especially if they be men who have the spiritual welfare of mankind at heart. Hereby they would have more opportunity of study and preparing themselves for the work of the sanctuary,

and consequently be better enabled to give more accurate notions and ideas of the doctrines of Christianity, which is the grand bulwark and defence of religion; yea, is the foundation upon which it is built. Now, how can it be expected, that a man who is under the necessity of laboring the three-fourths of his time to support himself and his family, can improve himself to any considerable degree in the knowledge of the doctrines of religion, or that he will be able to show forth things new and old from the treasury of God's word. And this a large portion of the clergy in this country are under the necessity of doing, otherwise they must come to a state of starvation. It is true, that were they paid punctually and seasonably what is promised them, they might perhaps be able just to live and no more, without making any future provision for their families, which other men are warranted in doing. But it will hold true with regard to many clergymen of the country, that little more than half of what is promised them is paid at all; and if it is paid, it is generally in such a manner that they know themselves very little the better of it. To depend for a living from a congregation in this country is often like leaning upon a broken staff. Hence ministers are under a necessity of laboring, or engaging in some other occupation, in order to obtain a livelihood. And so it happens, that they are not unfrequently *branded with the name of worldlings*; but necessity has no law; they must work, or live in meanness and poverty. But this is not all: attending to worldly occupations or employments unfits the mind, in a measure, for study, and unqualifies it for the duties of the ministry. The mind is usually most exercised concerning that about which a person has been and is most employed. This results from the laws of nature; the best of men are sensible of it. It is therefore not reasonable to expect that a man, just coming out of the throng of business and the hurry of the world can preach to that advantage, or with that correctness, which he might otherwise do. If the people, then, would consult their own advantage, and wish to obtain the *real benefit* of a gospel ministry, it would be better to contribute more liberally to the support of it, and be more punctual in their engagements. The perplexities and concerns of the world by no means comport with the spiritual functions of the ministry. And the more a man is freed from embarrassing circumstances, the more, of course, will his perplexities in this respect subside, and he be better prepared to attend to the duties of his office.

But some may be ready to object and say, that the apostle Paul by his own hands administered to his necessities; and that no one, notwithstanding, was a more able and successful minister of the gospel than he. This is very true; but there is no reasoning from extraordinary to ordinary cases. Paul was an extraordinary character, under the immediate *influence and inspiration* of the Holy Spirit, which none without blasphemy can pretend to in the present day. Besides, this same Paul declares, that Christ, the institutor of the gospel ministry, has ordained that they who preach the gospel should live of it. But the necessity of this appears not only from the superior advantage it would prove to ourselves as a people, but also from the more general benefit of religion. By this means the minister would be better enabled to attend to the duties of his office. He might preach

more frequently, and attend to the duties of *catechising* and *visiting* more regularly; which duties many find it very difficult if not impossible to attend on, and which is altogether owing to their embarrassing circumstances. Nor is there any reason to expect that he will attend on them with that particularity he might, and no doubt would do, were he better supported by his people. If he has to make his living by the world, he must attend to it. He cannot serve two masters at the same time. We often hear it trumped up, though perhaps in an indirect manner, that it is the duty of a minister to attend to this service and that, but not a sentence about what is the indispensable duty of the people in order to his performing the duties of his office in a proper manner. Were a better support afforded, how much more might religion be promoted, as opportunity would hereby be afforded of attending more punctually to its public offices. But as long as things are so, there is no just reason to expect these advantages, unless we can always find men who are endued with the *extraordinary gifts* and zeal of apostles, and are willing and *can* forego every temporal advantage, for the sake of the spiritual edification of their people. It requires no small degree of self-denial, in a minister, to relinquish his business, which he must necessarily engage in to obtain a livelihood, and attend to that of a people who will scarcely thank him for his trouble, much less compensate him for it. But why, then, it may be inquired, do so many devote themselves to the ministry in this country, if things are generally so as stated? If it be out of lucrative motives that any devote themselves to this office, they widely mistake their aim; and this they will very soon find by their own experience. We have reason, then, to hope, that it is out of mere disinterested motives, that so many devote themselves to the gospel ministry; and which, of course, proves, in some respects, a fortunate circumstance to this country; otherwise they would have but few to break the bread of life amongst them.

But with this last advantage is nearly connected, a more general promotion of the interests of Christianity. By this means, not only might religion itself be more promoted, but the doctrines and principles of Christianity be more particularly investigated. The ministers of the true gospel might thus be better qualified to defend the cause they have espoused; and be able more effectually to obviate error, and overthrow the systems which sectarian zeal and bigotry are establishing in our country. How such an effect is connected with a more liberal support being administered to the ministers of the gospel is obvious. I shall therefore dismiss this subject with only just observing, that in addition to the arguments proving it to be the duty of a people to support a gospel ministry, let the consideration of *their own advantage*, the *benefit of religion*, and the *interests of Christianity*, enforce the necessity of a punctual attendance to it.

THE
PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

VOL. V. PITTSBURGH, JANUARY, 1837.

No. 8.

SERMON LXXX.

BY STEPHEN BOVELL, D. D.
OF MISSOURI.

CHRISTIAN ELECTION EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED.

1 THESS. 1:4. *Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.*

THE subject suggested to the mind by this brief expression, is one which has been the occasion of long protracted and strenuous controversy in the church. This dispute, although now greatly abated, still exists among the different denominations of Christians, and still it continues to interrupt and, in a degree, to lessen that cordial affection and harmony, which all the truly pious will acknowledge ought to characterize and distinguish all the genuine disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is still a marked difference and contrariety of sentiment respecting this important article of the faith once delivered to the saints.

In this discourse the leading object will be, to explain the sense in which Christian election is understood and maintained by true Calvinists, and to defend it against the false constructions given to it by its opposers, as well as by some pious people, who profess, in general, to subscribe to the Calvinistic creed.

Diffidence, I am very conscious, becomes me in undertaking to discuss this mysterious and controverted subject. It is my sincere desire to undertake the discussion of it in the spirit of Christian meekness and candor, and with the kindest feelings towards those pious followers of the Redeemer, who hold a creed different from mine, as well as towards those of my own church, who find it difficult to reconcile their views to the doctrine of God's sovereign purposes and decrees.

The apostle Paul, in the introduction of this epistle, expresses his devout thanksgivings to God for the success of his ministry at Thessalonica; the blessed effects of his labors having been manifested in the lively faith, active love, and patient hope, of the Christians of that place. The evangelical graces which adorned their profession of love to the Redeemer, he viewed as satisfactory evidence of their election of God, and evidently alludes to them as the foundation of his knowledge of their election of God. He reasons from the effect to the cause. His ministry among the people at Thessalonica had been effectual in promoting their conversion and salvation; hence he justly inferred their election of God.

I. WHAT IS ELECTION? AND THE EVIDENCE OF ITS BEING A SCRIPTURAL DOCTRINE.

Election is a plain and familiar term, and is not involved in any peculiar mystery. This word, as every person knows, is synonymous with the familiar and intelligible word, *choice*. The election of God is his *choosing a part of the fallen race of Adam in the Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life, and ORDAINING the means by which they are to be qualified and prepared for future glory*. This view of the subject is clearly expressed in Ephesians 1:4, 5, 6. "According as he hath chosen us in him [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." The same sentiments occur again in 2 Thess. 2:13, 14. "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." The apostle Peter likewise advances the same doctrine in his 1st Epistle 2:1, 2, in which he addresses the Christians to whom he was writing, as being elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Any candid person, who will attentively read these quotations from the writings of the inspired apostles must, we think, be convinced that they speak explicitly of God's having chosen some persons, and that before the foundation of the world, that they should obtain salvation in Jesus Christ, and that they should be prepared for heaven through faith and sanctification.

Now, if it be admitted that God has chosen some persons, or a part of mankind in Christ, unto eternal life, it will follow as a plain consequence, that some persons, or a part of mankind, have not been so chosen. If it had been God's purpose, or determination, to save all men, then there would have been nothing said about a choice; for, upon that supposition, there would, in reality, have been no choice made. The very idea of a choice implies that some are taken and some left. A choice must terminate upon some and not upon others; upon a part and not the whole. In any other sense, a choice, in relation to the human family, is wholly inconceivable. Why it is that God, in his sovereign and eternal purpose of grace, should have chosen some and not others unto everlasting life, is not for us, at present, to know; but, if the Bible teaches us, as it plainly does, that God has made such a choice, then he has certainly made it, and we have reason to *believe he has made it* in a manner consistent with his infinite wisdom, justice, and benevolence. Some of our Christian brethren prefer the idea of an election of characters, but this scheme, when rightly considered, will be found to be attended with the same difficulty as that for which it is intended to be substituted. If Christian characters are not found in all men, as all must acknowledge, then it is evident that election,

even according to this scheme, will be restricted to a part only of mankind. According to that principle, it is a choice of a certain part only; that is, all to whom Christian characters appertain, and no more. Election, then, whether we understand it as referring to persons or to Christian characters, will embrace only a part of the human family. All will not be saved agreeably to either scheme. It is agreed, on all hands, that none will be saved but those in whom Christian characters are found. If, therefore, we restrict election to Christian characters, it will refer only to a part of mankind. Understanding the doctrine of election in this sense, a part only of mankind can be viewed as chosen of God to eternal life. That part the apostle Paul, in one of his epistles, has represented as the election of grace.

The doctrine of election, in whatever sense it ought to be taken, is a doctrine which is certainly taught in the Bible. To avoid prolixity, we will add only a few quotations to those which we have already adduced. This doctrine is found in every part of the word of God. We find it in many parts of the Old Testament. In the sixty-fifth psalm, the holy Psalmist presents to the glorious object of his pious adoration, the following devotional address: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts." "Blessed, indeed," says Dr. Scott on this verse, "is that man whom the Lord chooseth, and by his Spirit causeth to approach him in humble faith and prayer; and who, finding acceptance with him, learns to delight and be at home in his courts and ordinances." To the same purport are the words of the Lord, by the prophet Isaiah, 65:9: "And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains, and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there." The people alluded to in these words was ancient Israel, who, generally, in the Old Testament, are spoken of as God's chosen people, because, in preference to all other nations, the Lord had placed his name and established his worship among them, and honored them with his peculiar protection and blessing. But now, the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles being broken down, the same gracious promise extends to all who become true Israelites by faith in Jesus Christ. All true believers are his elect, and shall inherit his promised blessings; for, in the New Testament, we read, that the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

But the doctrine of election is more explicitly and clearly taught by our blessed Savior, and by the inspired evangelists and apostles. Our Savior has spoken of the elect in frequent instances. When he was predicting the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the awful calamities which were to attend that event, he comforted his disciples with the assurance that, "For the elect's sake, whom the Lord hath chosen, he hath shortened the days." Mark 13:20. In the same chapter, verses 26, 27, we read again: "Then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory. And then shall he send his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth, to the uttermost part of heaven." In each of these predictions, our Savior makes a plain distinction

between the elect and the rest of mankind, and speaks of special favor being showed to them; and we may observe, in every instance where the elect are spoken of in the Scriptures, they are always represented as the objects of God's peculiar favor.

In the writings of the holy evangelists and apostles, who, as all Christians must allow, wrote as they were inspired by the Holy Ghost; the doctrine of Christian election occurs in frequent instances, and is expressed with the utmost plainness and candor. The apostle Paul, that zealous, faithful, and successful minister of Christ, has something on the subject of election in almost all his epistles. We have already made two or three quotations from the writings of this holy man. We ask your patient attention while we add a few more. We quote first from the Epistle to the Romans. The ninth chapter of that Epistle is wholly occupied in stating and explaining the doctrine of election. In that chapter, the apostle illustrates the riches of the grace of God and his adorable sovereignty by the examples of Isaac and Ishmael; Esau and Jacob; and of Pharaoh. He shows, from the Old Testament, that God chose Isaac to be the heir of his promised blessing, in preference to Ishmael and to the sons of Abraham by Keturah; that he chose Jacob, in preference to Esau; but we will insert the apostle's own words: "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called." The apostle then proceeds to another example in verses 10—13: "And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, (Malachi 1:2, 3) Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." We find no reason assigned any where in the Bible, why special favor was showed to Jacob in preference to Esau. It did not at first accord with the views and feelings of the good old patriarch; but so soon as he became convinced that God had chosen Jacob to inherit the blessing, he calmly acquiesced in the divine will, and confirmed the blessing to his younger son, although he had previously expected, agreeably to prevailing custom, to have awarded the privileges connected with the divine promise to his first-born, Esau. The apostle also introduces the instance of Pharaoh, respecting whom God by Moses had declared: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." So then, St. Paul infers, "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy;" and then he adds, in verses 17, 18: "For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." This portion of Scripture clearly teaches the doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty in the dispensation of his mercy, and of his righteousness in *permitting wilful transgressors to go on in sin*, and then punishing them for having, by a course of wilful sinning, *hardened their hearts to con-*

firmed impenitence. God did *not* advance Pharaoh to the throne of Egypt in order that *he might* disobey his commands and contemn his sovereign authority; but the haughty monarch *hardened his own heart* by a voluntary course of sinning; by a succession of acts of disobedience to the positive injunctions of God; and it is in the same way that all obdurate transgressors become the cause of their own perdition. There is no divine decree which lays any one under any *necessity of leading a sinful life*, but it is decreed—and who can say the decree is unjust—that “the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.”

In the 11th chapter of the same epistle, the apostle mentions the subject of election again, and shows that a part of the Jewish nation was graciously chosen to salvation through the sovereign mercy and free grace of God in Jesus Christ. In verses 5, 6, he says: “Even so, then, at this present time also, there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And, if by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then, (he continues in verse 7th,) Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for, but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded.” In these verses, we think, the apostle plainly teaches, that the election of some sinners to eternal life is a matter entirely of grace, or free favor. He does not hold out the idea, that men are chosen to salvation *in consequence of their faith or obedience*, but wholly out of God’s unmerited mercy and sovereign good pleasure.

The apostle Peter also asserts the doctrine of Christian election as explicitly as the apostle Paul. In the introduction to his First Epistle, addressed to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, he calls them “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” Peter considered the Christians to whom he was writing, as having been chosen in Christ, according to the foreknowledge of God, and taught them, that the object of their election was, that they should be saved through sanctification of the Spirit, and the merit of the atonement made by Jesus Christ. Now, if Peter and the other apostles, who were cotemporary with our blessed Savior, and who received immediately from him the essential doctrines of his kingdom of grace; if these holy men have taught and asserted the doctrine of election, we must think it is a doctrine worthy of credit, and abundantly confirmed by the best authority. If, then, the first ministers of Christ’s kingdom have, in their published writings, inculcated the doctrine of absolute election, may not their successors in office be permitted, without censure, to imitate their example? Have we not, from the New Testament, ample authority for assuring all true believers in Jesus Christ of their election of God?

But some pious people enter a demurrer, and allege that, though the doctrine of election is a doctrine of Scripture, Calvinistic Christians do not hold it as it is taught in the Bible. This will merit particular investigation; for doctrinal principles which are not to be found in the Bible can have no title to our belief. Calvinists, though con-

scious that they are fallible, like other men, feel a firm persuasion that the scheme of Christian election to which they have subscribed is the very scheme which is sanctioned by the Holy Scriptures. From the writings of the apostles, Peter and Paul, as we have already shown, all those who are denominated the elect were chosen of God in Christ before the foundation of the world. The apostle says, in a passage which we quoted above, Eph. 1:4: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Again, in 2 Thess. 2:13, he says: "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." These two portions of the word of God, construed agreeably to their literal and grammatical signification, will conclusively establish the idea of an eternal election. It is objected, I know, that these modes of expression are sometimes used in the Scriptures in relation to things which take place in time. It has hence been argued, that men are elected, not before the foundation of the world, as the apostle alleges, but at the period of their conversion. This idea of election would seem to represent God's choosing us to salvation as the consequence of our having first chosen him as our Savior and portion. But our conversion is the *effect*, not the *cause* of God's electing love. Our conversion is an evidence of our having been chosen of God in Christ to eternal life, and this choice the apostle represents as having taken place before the foundation of the world. Indeed, if we believe in the eternity of the divine existence, we must also believe that his purposes and decrees are eternal like his nature. The conversion and salvation of his chosen people is the result or effect of his eternal purpose of grace, but, though the object of his purpose takes place in time, the purpose itself, agreeably to the apostle's views, was formed in eternity, or before the foundation of the world. In the succeeding verse, he still farther enlarges upon the same subject: "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ." In this mode of expression election is manifestly represented as being antecedent to conversion. The word predestinated is in the past tense, and our adoption as children—that is, converted persons—is plainly held out to be a consequence of our having been predestinated or elected.

The natural and obvious construction of the other passage will clearly tend to corroborate the idea of eternal election. It speaks of Christians having been from the beginning chosen to salvation. It is plain that, by this mode of speaking, their salvation is to be understood as the end or object of their election, and not as the cause of it. This gracious purpose God accomplishes by the appointment and use of appropriate means: "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

This, it is obvious, is the natural and rational order of things. In the common affairs of life, a rational man, who proposes to himself the accomplishment of some important object, will, in the first place, direct his thoughts to the object to be accomplished, and then to the adoption of *suitable means* for effecting it. Something like this, we think, agreeably to the apostle's doctrine, is the order of things in our election of God. He teaches that the object of God's gracious purpose in election is the everlasting salvation of his people, and that for the

accomplishment of this gracious purpose he has appointed faith and sanctification as the proper means. He has appointed the word of truth to be the instrumental means of the conversion and salvation of his chosen people, and sends his Spirit to renew them in holiness, and make them "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." He represents both the end and the means of its accomplishment as the object of the divine purpose from eternity; but, in the order of things, the end first, and the means last.

Our election of God, according to his divine oracles, we also believe and thankfully acknowledge to be the effect of his distinguishing mercy and goodness. Distinguishing grace, we know, is a mode of speaking which many pious people regard as being highly objectionable. But, if it is sanctioned by the Bible, we know of no good reason why it should go into disuse. We are warranted, we think, in using this mode of speaking, by all such passages of the word of Inspiration as speak of God's everlasting love to his people. What other meaning can we give to the words of the prophet Jeremiah? 31:3: "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." To the same purpose is that sublime declaration of the holy evangelist John, in his Gospel 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Possibly it may appear to some that this expression of the divine Redeemer is repugnant to the idea of God's distinguishing grace, because it represents him as loving the world without any notice of his making any discrimination. But from the concluding words of the verse, it is plain that the blessings of salvation are bestowed upon those only who believe in Jesus Christ. In the last verse of the same chapter it is declared, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." True Christians, in general, though they may not like the word *election*, do feel and will acknowledge that they are by nature no better than the rest of mankind. Each of them is disposed, like Paul, to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am." They all acknowledge that by grace they are saved, but they do not all choose to call it distinguishing grace. Let me ask here, dear brethren, Have any of us made ourselves to differ from those who are still impenitent? Have we chosen God or hath God chosen us? The beloved apostle John, we think, in his First Epistle 4:10, has given a very good answer: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

We observe, once more, that the decrees of God appear, from the sacred Scriptures, to be *sovereign, particular, and unchangeable*. By divine sovereignty in election, we would be understood as asserting that God does not choose men unto salvation on account of any goodness in them, or from his foresight of their repentance, faith, or Christian obedience; but that, in placing his love upon them and determining to save them, he had no other motive, as far as we can learn from his Word, than his "mere good pleasure," which he exercised according

to "the counsel of his own will." It is implied, also, in this doctrine, that God, in the determinations of his will, is not governed by the will of his creatures, but decrees, chooses, and determines, in an independent and sovereign manner, as becometh the infinitely wise and supreme Ruler of the universe.

Divine sovereignty in election may be evinced by a reference to Romans 9:11, 12, 13. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth; it was said unto her (Rebecca), the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." The instance alluded to in these verses presents the doctrine, not only of a sovereign, but also of a particular choice: Jacob and not Esau; the younger, not the elder. Indeed, a choice in every instance must imply some particular object or objects. A choice in any other sense is wholly inconceivable. The election of God is particular with regard to its objects. If it is not to be viewed in this light, it may well be accounted an inexplicable mystery. But, in addition to the instance of Jacob and Esau, we may direct your attention to what the apostle says in 2 Tim. 2:19. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his." These words plainly teach us, that election is to be referred to particular persons, or individuals. The obvious meaning of the words seems to be, that God has his own chosen and peculiar people who are all well known to him, and whom he favors with his gracious regards. Hymeneus and Philetus, it is true, had apostatized, and had corrupted some others; yet the Lord knew all those whom he had chosen and brought into his true church. These he knew and approved as persons distinct from those corrupt apostates. Upon them he fixed his seal, and it was his gracious promise, and his immutable purpose to keep them, by his power, through faith unto salvation, while others apostatized from the *profession* and not from the *possession* of religion.

In view of this comfortable assurance, we think, we are warranted in affirming, once more, that God's decrees and purposes are *absolutely unchangeable*. "He is of one mind," saith Job, "and who can turn him?" "My counsel," saith the Lord, "shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." This divine declaration had a primary reference to the deliverance of the Jews by Cyrus from the Babylonish captivity, but it may, with the same propriety, we think, be applied to all the promises and to all the purposes of God. Especially is it applicable to the gracious purpose of God, which relates to the eternal salvation of his chosen people. The benevolent Redeemer has confirmed this truth in words of great emphasis. Speaking of his own people, his gracious assurances are these: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." These attestations of the faithful and true Witness ought certainly to be viewed as establishing

the immutability of the divine decrees beyond all reasonable controversy.

This brief and imperfect view of the doctrine of the Bible, relative to the election of God, we submit, beloved brethren, to your candid and impartial examination, and proceed,

II. TO DEFEND THE DOCTRINE OF CHRISTIAN ELECTION BY GUARDING IT AGAINST MISCONCEPTION AND ERRONEOUS DEDUCTIONS.

1. The opposers of Calvinism are, we believe, all agreed in representing it to be a necessary consequence of the doctrine of absolute and particular election, that "part of mankind will be saved, do what they will; and the rest damned, do what they can."

No true Calvinist holds this opinion, or ever advanced it, either in preaching or in writing; neither is it a legitimate consequence of the doctrine of absolute election. But, although no denomination of Calvinistic Christians, as far as our knowledge extends, has ever avowed this absurd dogma, or made it, as has been sometimes alleged, a principle of their adopted creed, every controversialist almost, who has written on the opposite side, has imputed it to the doctrine of absolute and particular election, as a plain and necessary consequence of it. But we flatter ourselves that we shall be able to free the doctrine of particular election completely from this serious charge.

"Part of mankind will be saved, do what they will." No, my brethren, we never have avowed this absurd opinion, nor does the Calvinistic scheme, rightly understood, in any sense imply it. It is the doctrine of true Calvinists, that all who believe and are born again, and none others, shall enter the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, they teach that "the unbelieving, and the abominable, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." We not only teach and inculcate these doctrines, but we consider them as *constituent parts*, or branches, of the doctrine of God's electing love. A holy God, we believe, has not decreed to save his people *in* their sins, but *from* their sins. Such a decree would be inconsistent with infinite holiness. In the same purpose of grace by which a merciful God predestinated us to the adoption of children, he likewise predestinated us to be conformed to the holy image of his Son, Jesus Christ. He hath "chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." These were the principles laid down on this subject by the apostle Paul, and these are the principles held and taught by all true Calvinists. From such premises, is it a just conclusion or a legitimate inference, that the elect will be saved, do what they will? Do such principles imply, that any sinner of Adam's race will ever enter heaven without being born again? Or will it, can it, follow from such doctrines, that God has decreed to admit a part of mankind into heaven, into which his Word assures us no unclean thing can enter, without either conversion, or holiness? Is it not clearly deducible, from all that we find in the Scriptures on the subject of election, that God, in determining to save his chosen people, has appointed faith, conversion, and sanctification, as the proper and

necessary means of its accomplishment. Do not the divine dispensations, pursuant to this gracious ordination, illustrate and confirm this important truth? God the Father has, in his infinite goodness, sent his only begotten Son into the world to save us from our sins; Jesus Christ, in fulfilment of his Father's purpose of mercy, gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity; by the word of his grace he calls us to faith, repentance, and holiness; and the Holy Spirit convinces us of sin, and renews us in righteousness and true holiness. Surely there is nothing in a scheme of which these are the constituent parts, which can at all be construed as favoring an opinion, that any will be saved but the believing and the regenerate. "Except a man be born again, he *cannot* see the kingdom of God."

But what will you say, (some may inquire,) of the non-elect? Agreeably to the principles of Calvinism, will they not inevitably be damned, do what they can? No; we say none will be lost, but those who persist in sin, and die in impenitence. There is nothing in election which lays any necessity upon any sinner to live without God in the world, or to neglect the salvation freely offered in the gospel. Jesus Christ has assigned the true reason why the non-elect will be condemned, where he says; "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." The sinner's unwillingness to forsake his sins and come to Christ as the gospel requires him to do, will be the only cause of his perdition. The depravity of his own heart, not the decree of election, causes him to persist in his evil courses and to neglect his own mercy. Agreeably to the avowed principles of true Calvinists, sinners, who have been favored with gospel privileges, and have misimproved the day of grace and salvation, will stand convicted at the tribunal of Jesus Christ as neglecters of their own mercy. They will, by their sovereign Judge, be sentenced to depart accursed into everlasting fire, not because a decree of fatality had rendered their doom inevitable, but because *they were workers of iniquity*, and voluntarily chose to live "without God and without hope in the world."

Here, then, we might dismiss the subject, but we will further illustrate and confirm our own views.

2. Another difficulty, possibly, may remain in the minds of some pious people, which they would present in the following manner: *Would not the sinner have acted better if God had bestowed upon him converting grace? This, according to your principles, he did not determine to do; consequently, it must still appear, upon the principles of Calvinists, that the poor, unhappy creature was under a fatal necessity of being lost.*

It is, undoubtedly, according to the positive testimony of the Scriptures of truth, the prerogative of a sovereign God to have mercy on whom he will have mercy. Fallible man should not presume to except against the divine procedure, if God has determined to save some sinners by his free and sovereign grace, while he *permits others to follow their own corrupt inclinations, and perish in their impenitency*. It ought to be borne in mind, that *God is under no obligations to confer grace upon any man*, otherwise grace would be no more grace. If God were under obligations to save the elect, there would

be no propriety in saying, as Paul did to the believers of the Ephesian church: "By grace ye are saved." But every true believer knows, and feels, and acknowledges, that his salvation is wholly to be ascribed to God's free and sovereign grace. This he devoutly acknowledges in his prayers. This he delights to make the subject of his songs of praise. In his addresses to the throne of grace, he acknowledges the justice of God, should he condemn him for his many and aggravated iniquities, and places all his dependence upon God's sovereign, free, and undeserved mercy. He feels that, should a sovereign God now withhold that grace which he has so long neglected, he would have no just cause to complain. He does not presume to charge his sovereign Creator with partiality, because he may have bestowed his converting grace upon his neighbor and not upon himself; for he feels conscious that he has been greatly blameable for having neglected the means of grace, in which God has promised to bless him. Let it not be said, then, that the non-elect cannot be saved, because God does not bestow his grace upon them; since it is because *they neglect to meet God where he has encouraged them to expect his blessing.*

3. Here we often meet with another objection: *It is in vain to use means, since our fate, agreeably to your principles, is already determined in the divine decree.* The careless sinner, who cordially hates serious godliness, when he is exhorted by the ministers of Christ, or by his pious friends, to relinquish his sinful practices, and to give his attention to the duties of religion, will often retort and say: "You believe in absolute predestination. You hold that the elect and none else will be saved. If your doctrine be true, it matters not how I live. If I am elected, I shall be saved, let me act as I will; if not, I must perish. I cannot mend the matter by all my endeavors." Similar reasoning has sometimes been absurdly employed by certain misjudging predestinarians, and has, in some instances, been gravely administered as an opiate to lull an awakened conscience. Persons under the salutary pangs of conviction have, by such misjudging friends, been seriously rebuked for suffering themselves to be so needlessly alarmed, and instead of being urged to *close with Christ without farther delay*, as the only method to obtain true comfort, they have been advised to make themselves cheerful, easy, and contented, in their present condition; for God, they are told, is merciful, and if he has so decreed, he will certainly *save* them without this excessive and unnecessary terror and anxiety. Some other good people, too, entertain an opinion that the doctrine of absolute decrees and particular election has a natural tendency to lull those who are dead in sins and trespasses in their sleep of carnal security, to prevent the awakening of the ungodly, and to render professors remiss and formal in religion. Hence, they reject it as a doctrine of most dangerous tendency, and no doubt feel it to be their duty to attack it with most determined opposition.

As these misconceptions have occasioned the deepest prejudices against the doctrine of absolute and particular election, we will endeavor to obviate them as particularly as we can.

We will begin with the sinner, who neglects seeking his own salvation from the consideration, that if he is elected he will certainly be

saved, and therefore he need not give himself any great uneasiness on the subject, or use any great exertions to secure his salvation. But, permit me to ask you, my friend, if your present indifference is not owing to another cause? Your careless life, I am disposed to think, is not so much the effect of a persuasion that your destiny is already fixed, as it is of your love of sin, and your strong aversion to a life of holiness and self-denial. Your strong attachment to sensual indulgences; your carnal motives; and their combined influence in producing your careless mode of life, are very appropriately described by one of the old prophets: "But thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go."

But suffer me to try to prevent your farther revolt by a little plain and familiar reasoning. If you are one who believes in the doctrine of absolute predestination, I take it for granted you believe your *temporal affairs are as much the object of a divine decree, as those matters which relate to your eternal salvation*. You believe, we presume, that you will live just as long as God has decreed that you should, and possess just that *quantum* of worldly goods that he has ordained you should possess.

Now, I ask, how do you act under this persuasion in relation to your temporal interests? But, why do I state the question? I see the industrious farmer plowing his lands, and committing, in due season, his seed grain to the well prepared soil. I behold the laborious tradesman wearing out the day in the business of his shop, and the bustling merchant traversing land and sea to accomplish his schemes of emolument: All as industrious and persevering in their respective occupations, as if it had been revealed to them from heaven that it is the hand of the diligent alone that maketh rich. The children of this world do not reason upon the principles of fatalism and say: "If it is decreed that we shall live, we shall live, whether we endeavor to obtain the means of subsistence or not; or, if it be foreordained that we should be prosperous and wealthy, we shall be rich, whether we use proper exertions to secure the good things of the world or not." In their temporal concerns men never forget, that proper means are necessary to the attainment of important objects. It is no difficult matter to convince them of the necessity of using means in order to acquire a subsistence for themselves and families, or to amass a fortune. They easily believe that it is only the hand of the diligent that maketh rich. Why, then, should man's reason fail to do its office when their spiritual interests are pressed upon their attention? Why should they expect to secure the most important interest, the salvation of their souls, without employing suitable exertions for the attainment of such an important object? Since all things have been planned by a Being of infinite wisdom is it not reasonable to infer that in religion, as well as in other matters, he has established a *necessary connection between the means and the end*, and, therefore, is it not evident, that men cannot, without presumption, hope to be saved, unless they give diligence to make their calling and election sure? "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Let all who are acting upon the absurd principles of fatalism be persuaded to realize

their awful danger. You are in danger of reasoning your precious souls into remediless perdition. By neglecting the means of grace you keep yourselves out of God's way; your Bible lies neglected and gathers dust upon your shelf; your seat in the house of God is usually vacant; your days and nights are passed without prayer, perhaps without any serious thought about the future welfare of your souls. In the mean time, too, probably, your inordinate inclinations are gratified with avidity; your bands are made strong by the society of those who mock at serious godliness; and, in the end, it is to be feared your heart will become totally callous and quite insusceptible of any good impressions. Your careless indifference speaks a language of shocking import. It says to the only Being in the universe that can do you any saving good: "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." May the Lord, in mercy, show you, that the way of stupid carelessness in which you are walking is the broad, sure way to everlasting misery; that there is an indispensable necessity for your seeking God while he may be found, and calling upon him while he is near!

I have yet to expostulate a little with my friends, who very inconsiderately take part with the careless sinner, and insist that the conclusions he draws from the doctrine of particular election are natural and just. Some will tell me, he does not abuse the doctrine; he only carries it out to its legitimate consequences. Did they believe it, they would reason and act just as he does: drop all care about their salvation, and take their share of worldly pleasures and enjoyments. As they consider this to be the native tendency of the doctrine, they renounce it with abhorrence, and oppose it with zeal, as a most pernicious error. Here I see so much prepossession in my way, that I despair of removing it in every instance. Many very good people have been taught to regard particular election as being such a ruinous error, and have had their minds so repeatedly stunned *with descriptions of its horrible consequences*, that they are predetermined not to think well of it, or to allow any weight to the arguments by which its votaries esteem it defensible.

With respect to persons who labor under these prejudices, I must in charity believe they have no proper understanding of the doctrine of election, as held by true Calvinists. They do not understand it, because they are not in a state of mind to view it with candor and impartiality. Shall I try once more, my friends, to prevail with you to look at the doctrine of Christian election in the light in which it is held and taught by all true Calvinists, and in which, we think, it is taught in the sacred Scriptures. We believe and teach, that God, in decreeing to save sinners, has included in his plan *the proper means of qualifying them for future happiness*. We teach that, *the elect are "a peculiar people," purified from all iniquity, and "zealous of good works."* They are saved only through "sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth"—"Predestinated unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." I confess I can see in these Scriptural principles and statements, no foundation whatever to expect that any will be saved but the believing and the regenerate; and all such follow holiness, not from fear, but from love. I can see no encouragement for sinners to continue in their impenitence; not the

smallest ground for them to hope that they shall ever reach heaven, unless they will flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the precious gospel of Christ. I can discern nothing in these words of truth and grace to lead the impenitent sinner to remissness in the concerns of his soul, or to justify his persisting in his carnal gratifications. You may ask, What can he do if he is predestinated to perdition? But I ask in reply, *how is the sinner to know, according to the word of God, that he will, or will not, be saved, but from his embracing or neglecting the salvation freely offered to him in the gospel of Christ?* A knowledge of his election is no where in the Bible proposed, as a motive to excite the sinner to seek his own salvation. The promises and threatenings of the word of God are the proper motives to a religious life. With such solemn motives pressing him to attend to his duty, and to seek to secure his eternal welfare, what reasonable apology can the sinner plead for wilfully proceeding in the road to destruction? How is he to justify that desperate hardihood with which he is daily posting on to perdition? Does he not sin against God, not only *without his compulsion*, but by his *wilful* rejection of his proffered grace, and in defiance of his tremendous threatenings? He is not influenced, in any respect, by any thing in the divine decrees, to persist in his sinful course of life, or to refuse the grace freely tendered to him. His careless, sinful manner of living, is very aptly described, and accounted for, in one of the emphatical remarks of St. Paul: "But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Rom. 2:5. With relation to all sinners, who are in this manner hardening their own hearts, we must contemplate their just but awful fate with trembling horror. It is true, we cannot with certainty predict the perdition of the careless, delaying sinner; but we can, and we do, assure him, upon the authority of God, that there is no decree for admitting him to heaven in his present condition. We do solemnly warn him, that if he remains in his present impenitent state, he must certainly perish; that if he will not lay hold on eternal life, he must inevitably sink down into the gulf of despair and eternal death. We also exhort him, in perfect consistency with the doctrine of election, to amend his ways and his doings; and join himself to the Lord in the bonds of his gracious covenant; because, we believe, that if he is elected to salvation, it is in this way that the decree is to be effected. We exhort him to work out his "own salvation with fear and trembling," because "it is God that worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure;" and, because we think, it is the way alone in which he can reasonably hope to make his "calling and election sure."

Now, my brethren, even admitting that some misjudging people make the doctrine of election an apology for their living at present in the neglect of religion, and, according to their own way of speaking, are waiting till God shall, in some extraordinary manner, call and convert them, before they will give their attention to the plain duties enjoined in the word of God, this strange misunderstanding and abuse of the doctrine of God's absolute decree of election is no valid disproof

of that doctrine. If every religious tenet is to be disputed and rejected which has been misconstrued and abused, through the depravity and blindness of the sensual and prejudiced, we will have to renounce the precious doctrines of the gospel entirely.

4. Once more: We sometimes find it objected, that *the doctrine of election tends to discourage the awakened sinner, hinder his application to Christ, and prevent him from finding comfort in the promises of the gospel.*

It discourages the awakened sinner! When I shall have been convinced that the doctrine has this tendency, I will honestly renounce it. I hope I am solicitous to soothe the minds of the awakened by every proper topic of encouragement and consolation. In order to do this successfully, it is necessary to inquire into the cause of the convicted sinner's distress. His alarm and his discouragement arise from a discovery of the number and the greatness of his sins. It is not the doctrine of election that makes him a terror to himself. His discouragements are grounded upon the multitude of his sins, their long continuance, and deep aggravations. Exercises of this nature are needful and salutary, and every teacher of religion should be solicitous to see sinners the subjects of this concern. It is necessary that the sinner should see his sins in their true light; that he should be alarmed at the threatenings of the divine law, and have his proud heart brought down to the dust before a holy God. It is desirable to hear the transgressor confessing his extreme vileness, and acknowledging how justly he might be subjected to everlasting condemnation. When a person is brought to this sense of things, he feels no disposition to cavil at the doctrine of divine sovereignty and absolute election. He can adore and love a sovereign God, and believing he will certainly bestow upon him that grace which he freely offers him, he humbly but confidently approaches him as his Savior, claims his promises, and rests upon his mercy for free pardon and eternal salvation.

These assertions may seem strange to some, but we trust they may be satisfactorily illustrated by a few additional remarks. The terrors of the awakened sinner, as we before observed, are not occasioned by the doctrine of election. This doctrine, rightly viewed, tends to administer encouragement to the subjects of spiritual awakening. The circumstance of their conviction for sin and their concern about their eternal salvation affords rational ground to conclude, that they belong to the number of those whom God hath chosen in Christ, and that the purpose of his grace is about to be happily developed in their conversion. We trace the progress of a work of grace upon the awakened sinner, and finding evidence that he has been brought to sincere penitence and contrition for sin; that he has been enabled to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; is truly born of God, and sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, we can conclude, we think, upon sufficient grounds, that he is one of God's chosen people; nor can we see any thing to prevent the subject of these exercises to come to the same conclusion concerning himself. If awakening be preparatory to conversion, and if God, as we have stated before, has decreed to save sinners by conversion and sanctification, then, we think, the awakened sinner has

ample encouragement, from the very circumstance of his convictions, to conclude that he has been elected of God unto salvation, and that it is, therefore, at once his privilege and his duty, to *press into the kingdom of heaven*.

Christians are under obligations to praise God for a certain, sure salvation. God has made the salvation of his people, not only possible, but sure. In pursuance to the eternal purpose of God's love, Jesus Christ came certainly to save his people from their sins. We are under obligations to bless and praise God that the covenant of his mercy, which he has made with his people in Christ the Mediator, is ordered in all things and sure; that the Mediator is, in every respect, the Savior of all who believe in him, and is both the Author and Finisher of his people's faith. As the great and good Shepherd, he gives his sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand.

A few words in conclusion, to those who are yet strangers and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. To you, we would address the appropriate exhortation of the apostle Peter: "Wherefore, the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure." The doctrine of election does not preclude the diligent use of the means of salvation. You cannot be saved, continuing in carelessness and impenitence. To sit down at ease, and say you are waiting till God, by a kind of miracle of grace, *shall call and convert you, is a great perversion of the doctrine of his electing love*. If you realized the worth of your souls, and believed that you can only be saved by seeking and obtaining the grace offered in the gospel, surely you could not feel satisfied to live another day without making an effort to "flee from the wrath to come," and lay hold on eternal life. Your duty is to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. If you never feel any anxiety about the salvation of your precious souls, and never make any exertions for their salvation, you can never expect, on rational grounds, to be made the subjects of eternal life. If you are chosen to salvation, it is through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. Work, then, O work the work of God, while it is called to-day; the night cometh wherein no man can work. Amend your ways and your doings. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. These are duties, in the neglect of which you cannot hope for salvation; for God has positively ordained, that glory, honor, and immortality, shall be attained only by timely repentance, and patient continuance in well-doing.

THE
PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

VOL. V. PITTSBURGH, FEBRUARY, 1837. No. 9.

SERMON LXXXI.

BY BENJAMIN LABEREE.

Late President of Jackson College, Columbia, Tennessee.

DUTY OF SUPPORTING THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

LUKE 10:7. *For the laborer is worthy of his hire.*

The duty of active benevolence seems to be better understood and more generally practised by Christians, in the present, than in any preceding age, since the time of the apostles. The belief is becoming common, that a liberal and systematic appropriation of money, for the advancement of religion, is not less essential to Christian character, than the offering of prayer or the forgiveness of injuries. The prompt and cheerful response made to the various and repeated calls of benevolence at home and from abroad, is one of the most auspicious signs of our times. But the pleasure we take in bearing this honorable testimony to the pious liberality of many individuals and churches, is not a little diminished by some painful exceptions, that truth and justice require us to make.

In the midst of wealth and luxury, the public advocate of any large department of Christian enterprise, is not unfrequently repulsed by manifest indications of displeasure, where he had every right to expect tokens of cordial approbation. Instances are not rare, in which a sordid thirst for gain seems to have acquired a complete ascendancy over every generous feeling. The heart is firmly barred against the most thrilling appeals of want or of wo, and the hand grasps its golden idol with the tenacity of a dying miser. In surveying the deplorable condition of some of our churches, one would suppose, that the spirit of mammon had escaped from the nether world, gained access to the garden of the Lord, and seduced from their allegiance, not a few of the professed friends of Zion.

Wherever the church becomes absorbed in worldly pursuits, religion languishes, her institutions are poorly sustained, the claims of benevolence are generally unheeded, and the efforts of the minister, paralyzed. In many cases, one of the first symptoms of religious decline, is the reluctance with which Christians contribute for the support of their preacher. His services are neither appreciated nor rewarded, and to obtain the necessaries of life for himself and family, he is perhaps compelled to spend a portion of his time in some secular employment. From his worldly pursuits he enters the sacred desk, like the strong man shorn of his strength, and offers in sacrifice, the sick, the lame, and the blind. Then may be seen the powerful influence of mutual reaction. The more secular the minister becomes, the less are his people inclined to support him; and the less they are disposed to aid him, the more is he devoted to the world.

* Published by request of the Presbytery of West Tennessee.

The great Author of our religion has connected the prosperity of his church on earth with the instrumentality of a pious, active ministry; and has plainly pointed out many important reciprocal duties between the pastor and his flock. While the gospel herald is required to be wholly given to his work, a corresponding duty is enjoined upon those, who are profited by his instructions. They are taught that "the laborer is worthy of his hire," and are directed to afford him a competent support. This duty is in itself so reasonable and just that we are surprised it should ever be neglected by those, who can feel the claims of justice and gratitude; but our surprise is increased to astonishment, when we remember that this neglect involves a disregard of the explicit injunction of Jesus Christ.

It is my purpose, on this occasion, in a plain and practical way, to urge upon Christians the duty of affording their pastors a comfortable and respectable support.

I come not to plead my own cause, nor to enforce my own claims, nor to seek redress for wrongs of my own. I speak by the direction of others in behalf of that class of men, who have consecrated their time, their talents, and their all, to the public good.

I am not unaware how fashionable it has become in some circles to reproach and abuse the clergy. One says that they are aspiring after power and influence, ever ready to sacrifice the public good to selfish, earth-born ambition. Another goes yet farther, and affirms that they have dark designs of a political nature to accomplish, that they would fain append the church to the state and seize the reins of government. A third declares that the clergy are an idle, indolent, profitless class of men, who consume the products of the industrious without returning an equivalent. It is quite unnecessary that I should enumerate all the forms of scandal in which this hostility to the clergy has been exhibited by the depraved and vicious, nor does the occasion or my subject admit of a formal refutation of these calumnies. But the first argument that I shall adduce to prove that a pious, intelligent, industrious ministry are entitled to support, shall be based upon,

I. *The Benefits which the Civil Community derive from their Labors.*

That bad men have been found among the clergy; that ambition, knavery, and corruption, have sometimes been concealed under the "borrowed mantle of seeming goodness," no one will pretend to deny. Judas was a base traitor; Pope Alexander VI. was little less than an incarnate demon; Wolsey's heart was inflated with pride and ambition; and many others have inflicted incurable wounds upon the religion of Christ. But what then? Do the mal-practices of a few prove the corruption of all! Will the defection of a dozen soldiers cast suspicion upon a whole army of patriots! Will the acknowledged villainy of a score of public officers convince us that none are to be trusted? Would you pronounce him wise, who should affirm that neither light nor heat can proceed from the sun because a few dark spots are visible upon his disc? Equally wise and equally consistent are those, who cast indiscriminate aspersions upon the clergy, because some of the profession have disgraced their high and holy calling. Let every tree be judged by its fruit, and where censure is really deserved let it be freely bestowed.

The world has yet to learn the deep debt of gratitude justly due to preachers of the gospel. During that long and dreary period, in which the earth was enveloped in thick folds of intellectual darkness, by whom were the few scattered sparks of science and literature kept from total extinction? To whom is the world indebted for the preservation of those valuable monuments of ancient taste and genius, which have exerted such a happy influence upon the intellectual character of succeeding ages? History answers, *the clergy.*

Who has obtained for us the blessings of religious liberty? Who first opposed the formidable power of a corrupt and secularized church, that has done more to disgrace Christianity than all other causes combined? Who broke the chains of moral bondage and demolished the barriers that had long impeded the communication of thought and feeling? The history of the sixteenth century replies, a *preacher of Wittemberg*. He planted his foot fast by the standard of truth, and with the firmness and strength of an Hercules, resisted the powerful and repeated shocks, made by the united forces of ambitious prelates and misguided princes. Let the calumniator of the clergy carefully examine the records of history; let him make a collection of all the scholars, civilians, military chieftans, and potentates, who have ever rendered important services to mankind; let him select the brightest star from this brilliant constellation of worthies; and its light will be eclipsed by the superior lustre of that luminary, which guided the Protestant Reformation.

Who does not know that the moral and mental character of a people is moulded in a great degree by their religious guides? The remark has long since passed into a proverb, and the history of every nation confirms its truth. When Hophni and Phinehas became openly scandalous in their lives, as a matter of course, corruption spread among the people; but when Ezra and Nehemiah waged war upon wickedness in all its forms, reformation followed, and industry, sobriety, and social happiness were the natural and salutary fruits of their faithfulness and zeal.

But we need not recur to ages past for illustrations of this truth. Turn your eyes, for a moment, to the present condition of poor, degraded Ireland. Who does not feel like weeping over the poverty, the wretchedness, and the crimes of this unhappy country? The presence of a strong military force aided by the civil power, is scarcely sufficient to restrain the people from pillage, murder, and rebellion. Millions of money are yearly appropriated by the British government to keep the Irish in subjection. Turn now to Scotland, and behold her industrious, intelligent, and peaceable inhabitants. Contrast the morality, the comfort, and the thrift of her peasantry, with the vices, the squalid poverty, and the idleness of the same class in Ireland. What has produced this amazing difference among the inhabitants of sister kingdoms, almost contiguous? Other causes have doubtless had some influence, but if you leave out of view the religious institutions, the pious and learned ministry of Scotland, you omit the most efficient cause of her prosperity. Ireland is oppressed and down-trodden by a corrupt and vicious priesthood, that connive at crime and keep her enthralled in superstition and ignorance. Scotland is blessed with religious teachers, who endeavor to elevate the character and improve the temporal as well as spiritual condition of her inhabitants. These remarks are perhaps too unqualified; for, in Ireland even, there are some bright spots on which the eye may rest with pleasure. Her northern population is far more intelligent, industrious, and moral, than those of the south. The reason is obvious. In the north of Ireland, the people have long been furnished with religious institutions much like those of Scotland, while the south has been kept in degradation by the minions of the Pope. The picture of Scotland, too, has its dark shades. The Highlanders are generally poor, rude, and ignorant, for they have never enjoyed the advantages of a pious, industrious ministry. These apparent exceptions, when properly examined, go far towards confirming the truth of our position.

If one comparison is not sufficient, spread before you the map of Christendom, examine its brightest features, mark well the nations that are most prosperous and happy, and you will find their religious institutions upheld and directed by devoted preachers of the gospel. Were I to select a single instance to illustrate the happy influence and efficiency of the ministry in its social, civil, and moral relations; I would point you to the bleak and barren moun-

tains of France; I would introduce you to the parish of Waldbach in the Ban de La Roche, which was blessed with the labors of the indefatigable, enterprising Oberlin. The lot of this humble servant of God, was cast among these idle, ignorant, uncivilized mountaineers, but one step removed from actual barbarism. Under the guidance of his plastic hand, the character of the people underwent a complete transformation, and the face of nature seemed changed. Schools for children and youth were established, adult societies for the promotion of agriculture and the arts were organized, and the institutions of religion cheerfully sustained. The story of this marvellous reformation among semi-barbarians reached the city of Paris and elicited the warmest commendations from the French monarch, who conferred upon this mountain pastor, special tokens of his royal favor.

The king's ministers frankly confessed that Oberlin had given them important lessons in the science of government, and taught them the best method of civilizing a people and rendering them happy. Thus we see that a faithful minister in a retired parish, opposed by formidable obstacles, did more to promote the temporal welfare of a community, than a king and his ministers could do in the usual forms of legislation.

Make the survey of our own country; visit those towns and villages in which no spire points the weary pilgrim to his future home; where the sound of the preacher's voice is never heard, and you will find profaneness, intemperance, and vice, in its most shameless forms, triumphant. Notice the order, the morality, and the general intelligence of the inhabitants of that village, which, for some years, has been favored with the regular and faithful ministrations of pious clergymen; and you cannot but feel the importance of sustaining a well-educated ministry, even on the ground of its utility to civil society.

The expense of erecting jails and penitentiaries; the salaries of judges, sheriffs, clerks, and lawyers, is no small tax upon the community. All this is supposed to be essentially necessary to the well-being of society. Laws must be enforced, crimes detected and punished. Would it not be a most important improvement in our system of criminal jurisprudence, if means could be devised to prevent those crimes, which it is the design of the law to punish? And will not that legislative assembly, which shall construct a code of laws to destroy the power of temptation and thereby to prevent the commission of crime, deserve the highest honors that a grateful people can bestow? Why then should the gratitude of a nation be withheld from the clergy, who are laboring to implant virtuous principles in the human heart, that temptation may be deprived of its power and the law of its victim? Nor are their labors without success. Ask our judges and they will tell you, that nearly four-fifths of the criminal cases, that come before them for adjudication, had their origin in intemperance. To the same cause may be traced no small portion of the misery and wretchedness in our country. Now the fact is well known, that where the temperance reformation has succeeded, crimes have been greatly diminished; and in some places jails have become untenanted, and criminal courts find no business. I do not claim the merit of these happy results for the clergy exclusively: they have had many prompt and efficient coadjutors; but who does not know that they have been the prominent leaders in this great and noble enterprise? Their agency in advancing the cause of virtue and morality in the community, is no less conspicuous in other departments of Christian enterprise. But let this suffice.

The remark is no less true than true, that our government is based upon virtue and intelligence. Ministers of the gospel, we have seen, are the successful advocates of the former, but what have they done in the cause of education? Let the present state of our schools, academies, colleges, and universities answer. By general consent the work of education seems to be assigned to the clerical profession. In our country we have about *ninety* col-

leges and universities, and more than nine-tenths of their presidents, and a large proportion of their professors, are clergymen. How is this? Because men of suitable qualifications in other professions cannot be obtained. The road to wealth or to fame does not pass through the trials and drudgery of teaching. Those who so eagerly pant for civil distinctions or princely fortunes would sooner see barbarism overrun our land and the dark ages return, than to turn aside from their selfish pursuits and engage in the business of teaching. And yet some of these very men will talk flippantly about the ambition and political designs of the clergy!

I am prepared, then, to say without fear of contradiction, that the clergy, as a class, have done more, and made more sacrifices, to advance the cause of education and virtue, than any other class, or all other classes, legislators included, in the whole extent of our country. If, then, it be true, as all agree, that virtue and intelligence are the pillars upon which our free institutions rest, it appears that ministers of the gospel are rendering most important services to their country in supporting these pillars of government. Are they not then entitled to support?

Enough has been said upon this point; more perhaps than was necessary; but there is some ground to fear, that the abuse heaped upon the clergy, by malicious and designing men, may have had some influence upon a few of our churches, and suggested to them the necessity of humbling their ministers by the severe process of *starvation*.

II. *Humanity and Justice require that the Clergy should be Supported.*

"Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn," is the dictate of humanity as well as the command of God. To withhold from those animals, that labor and wear out their lives, in our service, the food necessary to sustain them, is a practise at war with the best feelings of our nature. What would be thought of that master, who should make large exactions of labor from his servants and refuse to furnish them with comfortable food? Or of that father, who should task, to the utmost, the physical energies of his sons, and suffer them to famish for want of sustenance? Would not an indignant community freely bestow the epithets *inhuman*, *hard-hearted* upon such men? If humanity requires that brutes and slaves should be comfortably provided for, does it not also require that those should be sustained, who are engaged in promoting the public good?

The claims of justice in this matter are plain and imperious. Her demands are answered when something like an equivalent is returned for services rendered. She demands that the judge or the sheriff, who enforce the execution of law, should be well paid for their labors. She demands that the soldier, who fights the battles of his country, should receive compensation for his services; that the mechanic and the physician should not go unrewarded. If the judge and the sheriff, the physician, the mechanic, and the soldier must receive recompense for their time and trouble, does not common justice as loudly demand that preachers of the gospel shall be requited for their arduous and self-denying labors? If the amount of compensation is to be measured by the benefits each class confers on the public, we have already seen that the clergy will have no mean appropriation.

The question here arises, who shall support them? If it be true that they are public benefactors, if the community at large are so much indebted to the clergy for the beneficial results of their labors, ought not all bear an equal share in sustaining them? It would certainly seem reasonable, that those who enjoy the benefit should reward the benefactor. On the obvious equity of this principle, governments have been established, religion appended to the state and supported by law. The consequences have been most disastrous to the

vital interests of religion. Hypocrisy was then mantled in the specious garb of virtue, pride triumphed over humility, and ambition in her purple robes paraded the temple of God and offered unholy fire upon his altar. Too often, far too often, has this most unnatural and unscriptural alliance been formed between church and state, and all who sincerely desire the peace and prosperity of the church will not fail to offer their fervent prayers, that God in his mercy will never again permit the fatal experiment to be made. How then shall the ministry be supported? By those, I answer, who can appreciate the importance of ministerial labors, not only in their relation to the temporal interests of the civil community, but more especially as they are connected with the salvation of souls. If the demands of impartial justice require that the preacher be sustained by the public, his claims upon the church are far more imperative and solemn. None can so well estimate the value of religion as those, who have felt the power of truth in their own hearts.

III. *The Divine Command requires that Ministers of Religion should be supported by the Church.*

Under the Mosaic dispensation we find that the Priests and Levites were maintained by the contributions of the people. One tribe out of twelve was set apart to perform the public duties of religion, and all the other tribes were required to devote a tenth part of their corn, their fruit, and their cattle, to the maintenance of these ministers. In Numb. 18:20, we read: "And the Lord spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel. And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation." The first fruit of corn, of wine, and of oil, and the first of the fleece of sheep, was to be reserved for the use of the priests. In addition to these tithes and first fruits, God assigned for the habitation of the Priests and Levites, forty-eight cities, with fields, pastures, and gardens—a most ample provision for their comfortable support.

I am not ignorant that objections have been made to the application of the Mosaic law to the Christian church; but I would remind the objector that the abrogation of the ceremonial law has not affected the immutable principles of justice. The law and the gospel on this subject speak the same language, with only this difference: the former prescribes the precise amount that every one must appropriate to the support of religious institutions, while the gospel permits the degree of benevolence to be determined by the promptings of a pious, devoted heart. When our Savior first sent forth his disciples to preach the gospel, he directed them to depend for food and apparel and all the necessaries of life upon those to whom they preached. "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; for the workman is worthy of his meat." When he subsequently commissioned and sent forth the seventy, he gave them similar instructions. "Go your ways, behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes, and salute no man by the way. And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house. And in the same house remain eating and drinking such things as they give: *for the laborer is worthy of his hire.*" Had he chosen, he could have invested his disciples with power to work miracles to supply their wants, and rendered them independent of the church and the world; but for wise reasons he determined otherwise. But was not this method of supporting preachers intended exclusively for those disciples, whom he addressed? Certainly not. To show that it was not of temporary or local application, in each case he accompanies his instructions with the annunciation of an important principle.

"*The workman is worthy of his meat.*" "*The laborer is worthy of his hire.*" He thus instructed them to place their claims for support upon the permanent, immutable principle of justice.

In th 9th chapter of First Corinthians, the apostle has given the church very plain instruction on this subject. Owing to peculiar circumstances at Corinth, Paul and Barnabas thought it not best to enforce their rightful claims upon that church. They chose rather to labor with their own hands, than to incur the odious charge of preaching the gospel from mercenary motives. But says Paul to them, "Have not I and Barnabas power to forbear working?" That is, "If we choose to claim our right of being supported by the church, can we not do so?" He clearly maintains his right, but for reasons of a prudential nature, in this particular case, he waives the exercise of it. He says, "Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man, or sayeth not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care of oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes no doubt this is written; that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power, but suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple, and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." He here proves from the law of God and the command of Jesus Christ, that the church is bound to support her ministers. Paul says to the Galatians, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate to him that teacheth in all good things." In other passages, the apostle inculcates the same duty. But we need not multiply proof. It ought to be sufficient for the Christian to know, that "the Lord hath ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel;" the meaning of which obviously is, that preachers of the gospel must not be compelled to resort to secular employments to obtain the means of subsistence; they must live by their profession.

IV. *The Practice of the Primitive Churches ought to stimulate Christians to the Performance of this Duty.*

Very early in the history of the church, those, who embraced Christianity, had all things common. "Neither was there any among them that lacked, for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to every man according as he had need." The Macedonians are highly commended by Paul, because, in a great trial of afflictions, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. In like manner, the Philippians receive his commendation, because they had promptly contributed to his necessities.

During the first three centuries, the clergy were supported by the voluntary contributions of the faithful. At first their offerings were daily or weekly; afterwards, they were presented once a month. Near the close of the second century Tertullian says: "Every one brings a moderate contribution, once a month, or when he chooses, and only if he chooses and is able; for there is no compulsion, but the gift is spontaneous, being, as it were, the deposit of piety." The amount thus contributed by the church was sufficient to support the clergy, to relieve widows and orphans and such persons as were suffering perse-

cution. The measure of individual benevolence we have no means of ascertaining. In the third century, however, Origen remarks, that "the command concerning the *first-fruits* of corn and of cattle should still be observed according to the letter." In the fourth century St. Ambrose claims the payment of tithes as required by the law of God. "It is not enough," he says, "that we bear the name of Christians, if we do not Christian works. The Lord exacts of us the annual tithe of all our cattle. Whosoever is conscious that he has not faithfully given his tithes, let him supply what is deficient. And what is the faithful payment of tithes, except to offer to God neither more nor less than a tenth portion, whether of your corn, or your wine, or the fruit of your trees, or your cattle, or the produce of your garden, your business, or your hunting. Of all substances that God has given to man, he has reserved the tenth part to himself; and, therefore, man may not retain that which God has appropriated to his own use." Augustine, Chrysostom, and Jerome, all urge upon the church the same duty, and it was commonly practised by those who felt the obligation of the divine command. Thus far these liberal contributions seemed to have been altogether voluntary, and they were appropriated in part to the maintenance of the clergy. Towards the close of the eighth century, after Christianity had become greatly corrupted, the payment of tithes became a law of the empire. Charlemagne ordained, "that every one should give his tenth, and that it should be disposed of according to the orders of his bishop." It appears, then, that the early Christians, in the freshness and vigor of their piety, made ample appropriations for the support of religious institutions, that the apostles and their successors for several centuries, were maintained by the free-will offerings of the churches. Nor was their charity confined to members of their own communion. Pagans, infidels, and Jews, experienced the blessings of Christian benevolence. That great enemy of the church, the Apostate Julian, bears testimony to the liberality of Christians. In writing to a Pagan priest, he says: "Let us consider that nothing has so much contributed to the progress of the superstition of Christians as their charity to strangers." How ought such examples to rebuke those churches in our day, that so grudgingly contribute to the maintenance of their own faithful ministers.

V. *I derive an Argument for the Support of the Ministry, from the dealings of Providence with the Churches.*

We are often permitted to learn the will of our heavenly Father, from the intimations of his providence and the dispensations of his grace. We shall ever find his purposes thus expressed in perfect accordance with the more explicit declarations of his Word. What, then, is the voice of God's providence to the churches? Examine the records of past ages, or cast a broad glance over the present state of Christendom, and where will you find that the religion of Christ has exerted its happiest influences? Is it not among those Christian communities which have enjoyed the uninterrupted services of pious, intelligent pastors, who are relieved from the pressure of want and from secular cares by the prompt and generous contributions of their flocks? Will you find those churches in a healthful, vigorous state, to which the truth is dispensed at distant intervals, and is never followed by faithful pastoral visitation? 'Tis true they may occasionally experience a temporary revival of piety. Now and then, the elements may be thrown into commotion, the waters may be troubled, and here and there, one of the halt, the lame, or the blind, may be healed; but such churches are seldom, if ever, permanently pervaded by the abiding leaven of godliness. They do not seem to enjoy the smiles of a gracious Providence.

Under the watchful care of a faithful, well-educated pastor, a church usually advances regularly in piety and intelligence. Her members are well-instructed in the principles and the duties of the gospel, and are taught to exemplify the religion they profess in their daily deportment. Discipline, so necessary to the peace and purity of the church, is kindly but vigorously enforced. The various plans of benevolence that so happily characterize the present age, receive a cordial and liberal support. The youth, as they reach maturity, are favorably impressed with religious truth, and children are trained up in the way they should go, in the domestic circle and in the Sabbath school. Discord and animosities are banished, and the social affections cultivated and strengthened. In their worldly business even, such a community are generally prospered—not that Christians are exempt from the disappointments and casualties incident to this state of trial—but the order, sobriety, and industry inculcated by Christianity, secure to its professors an advancement of their temporal interests. Hence the farmer sees his fields waving with plentiful crops, the mechanic is furnished with punctual and profitable customers, and the merchant is seldom compelled to call in the aid of law to enforce his claims. They realize the fulfilment of the divine promise—"The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

Let us now look at a different picture. A preacher is settled over a penurious people, who offer him a salary barely sufficient, with the most rigid economy, to defray his necessary expenses. At the close of the year he finds himself considerably involved in debt, and obliged to violate his promise to his creditors, because more than half his salary remains unpaid. Confiding, however, in the integrity of his people, and believing they will redeem their pledges, he pursues his course, struggling with pecuniary embarrassments, till the end of the second year leaves him overwhelmed with debts, which he knows not how to pay. His church begin to complain that his salary is too large, and advise him to follow the example of Paul and labor for his own support. Chagrined by such complaints, and goaded by the importunities of his creditors, he determines to be independent of his parishioners, and therefore purchases a farm, or opens a school, and divides his time between his church and his secular business. His mind gradually becomes imbued with a worldly spirit; his heart loses its interest in the duties of pastoral life; and his sermons, dull, common-place, and oft-repeated, are delivered to a sleeping congregation—a fair index of their spiritual state. The church, encouraged by his example, eagerly engage in worldly pursuits, and strive to outdo each other in the acquisition of wealth. No benevolent enterprise is patronized among them. They seem to be very conscientious in such matters, and are afraid if they give to any charitable society, their money will not be well appropriated; and they think, when the world is to be converted, the Lord will provide the means without imposing such heavy burdens upon his people. Their numbers gradually diminish, and few or none come to fill the vacancies, till at length the pastor and people, sunk in spiritual lethargy, conclude to dissolve the connection by which they have been so little profited. The minister departs, but the church shrink from the idea of calling another preacher; his salary would be a burden too intolerable for them to bear. Some *cheap* method must be devised, by which they can cover their disgrace and maintain a respectable appearance. A great meeting is proposed; a *revival preacher* is sent for, to come and arouse the church. Under this extraordinary exertion of "*moral power*" some faint symptoms of vitality are exhibited, but they are few and fitful, like the unnatural spasms of a lifeless body under the action of the galvanic battery. The experiment fails. Then follow strifes, divisions, and heresies. The better portion abandon the place, and the glory departs. The penurious, selfish, worldly church, learn too late,

that it is more expensive to support grog-shops, paupers, and officers for the detection and punishment of crime, than it would have been to have given their minister a respectable maintenance. In their case the Scripture is fulfilled—"There is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty."

Are these pictures of fancy? No, my hearers; nothing is wanting but the introduction of names to convert these descriptions into veritable history.

It is not uncommon, in this country, for two, three, or four churches, to unite in calling a minister, who preaches to them in regular succession. Is this practice to be defended? Some suppose it may be on the ground of absolute necessity; preachers are so scarce, that churches cannot in any other way be furnished with the bread of life. Instances of this necessity may sometimes occur, but they are by no means so common as many are accustomed to suppose. It is in vain for the human mind to attempt to improve the plan suggested by Infinite Wisdom. If a little spiritual instruction, once a month, is sufficient to give health and vigor to the soul, why has God commanded us to remember the *seventh* day and keep it holy? But what is the condition of the churches supplied in this irregular manner? Do they thrive and flourish? If your observation corresponds with my own, your answer will be decidedly in the negative. Like the field of the slothful, they are generally, if not universally, all grown over with thorns, and nettles have covered the face thereof. Among such churches very little interest is felt in the institutions of religion. Seldom do they engage in Sabbath school instruction, and if any religious and benevolent associations are ever formed, they are formed only to languish. The day of their formation is the period of their greatest glory. The amount of support which the minister receives bears an inverse proportion to the number of churches he attempts to supply. I know an aged father in the ministry, who has for several years been supplying four churches, preaching to each once a month, and he has received for his services in a single year *eighty-four dollars*. Having a large family to maintain he is compelled to labor upon a little farm to procure the means of subsistence, and on the Sabbath visits some one of his churches, performing the circuit once in four weeks. His feeble churches remain feeble still, and as soon as their minister leaves them, it is quite probable they will become extinct. If they would select some central location and all unite in giving their pastor a competent salary, and regularly attend upon his instructions weekly, they would doubtless enjoy the propitious smiles of heaven. Are they indolent, or why is it, that many professors of religion will not attend preaching, unless the meeting house is brought to their door?

In a neighboring state, all the Presbyterians in a large county, are connected with the same church, some of whom reside fifteen miles from the place of worship. They are punctual in their attendance at the sanctuary every Sabbath with their families, regarding the inconvenience of distance a small matter, compared with the enjoyment and advantages to be derived from weekly religious ordinances. By their united efforts, they are able to give their minister a handsome support; in return he devotes his time exclusively to their spiritual interests. The result is, this church is vigorous, influential, and respected by other denominations and by men of the world. Suppose, for their private convenience and personal ease, they were to adopt the policy against which I have been speaking, and divide this large and flourishing church into three or four little churches, and then rest content with preaching at distant intervals, how soon would they begin to languish, how rapidly would they decline, and how little would they be respected.

Some persons, who live so remote from any place of worship, that it is impracticable for them to attend preaching on the Sabbath, will perhaps be ready to ask, but what shall we do? If it is not possible for you to support the gospel among yourselves, with such aid as benevolent societies may furnish,

your duty is plain. Strike your tent, and say to your religious friends, "Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths." If you are situated on a bleak and rugged mountain, which, with your incessant labor, would, afford only a scanty subsistence, and you should hear of a pleasant and fertile country not far distant, where the industry of the husbandman received its rich rewards, would you not speedily change your location? Are not the spiritual interests of yourself and family of infinite more importance than your temporal prosperity?

Here I cannot forbear to notice the culpable conduct of some professed Christians, who, to improve their worldly prospects and accumulate wealth for themselves and children, abandon their homes, their church, and their preacher, plunge into the wilderness, and become wholly absorbed in "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches." Seldom if ever do they hear a preached gospel or receive any kind of religious instruction. The parents lose their relish for the Bible and its duties, and the children grow up in ignorance and sin; together they pursue the downward course to ruin. They desired wealth. "God gave them their request but sent leanness into their souls." The churches they leave are enfeebled by their departure and sometimes brought to the verge of dissolution; and well may they complain in the language of Paul, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present world, and is departed to Thessalonica"—some suppose he was engaged in a land speculation. Such Demases abound in our day to an alarming extent.

Emigration is by no means criminal. On the contrary, a pious colony may accomplish much good, by transferring their home to a new settlement, if they take with them and sustain the institutions of religion. When they "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and make their worldly gains subservient to the advancement of his glory, they may expect they will doubtless enjoy the smiles of a gracious and approving Providence. But those, who profess to serve God, while they are really the servants of Mammon, who prefer gain to godliness, who turn their backs upon the institutions of heaven, and voluntarily exile themselves from his sanctuary, who barter their religious privileges, and put in jeopardy the souls of their children for a few acres of land, will most surely be visited with spiritual famine, Heaven's heaviest judgment in this world; and in the world to come a more fearful doom awaits them.

The providence of God then speaks in a language not to be misunderstood, that those churches, which contribute cheerfully and liberally to sustain the weekly ministrations of the gospel, who are willing to sacrifice personal ease to enjoy the ordinances of God, shall be blest in "their basket and in their store," in their own souls and in the souls of their children, while the indolent, the penurious, and the worldly-minded professor, shall "walk in darkness seeing no light."

But some may ask, what does a comfortable and respectable support include? Without attempting to specify minute particulars, I will mention a few things that a generous people will carefully provide for, if they consult their own duty and the happiness and usefulness of their minister.

1. *Your Minister should be furnished with a Comfortable Habitation, and Decent Apparel.* These things are so obviously indispensable to his comfort and happiness, that no one would suppose they could ever be overlooked by any people; but a slight observation will convince us, that the common necessities of life are sometimes denied the minister. The remark was once made respecting a preacher. "If he were doing much good to his people they would give him a better coat." The meanness of his apparel was by no means conclusive evidence of his unfaithfulness. I know a devoted, zealous preacher, wholly given to his Master's work, who was exposed to the frost

and snows of a cold winter, because he had not the means to purchase an overcoat.

Paul says, that a bishop, or preacher of the gospel, "must be given to hospitality." In our times, frequent demands are made upon the minister for the exercise of this Christian virtue. But how can he perform the rites of hospitality, if he is not provided with the necessary accommodations? Is this always done? We are no advocate for ministerial extravagance. Extremes ought carefully to be avoided. His house, his furniture, his style of living, his dress, and that of his family, should be neat and comfortable, so as neither to give offence to the poorer class by the appearance of luxury and splendor, nor to repel the more refined and wealthy, by poverty and meanness.

2. *He must be Able to Educate his Children.* This is a common Christian duty, but it is especially incumbent upon a minister. As he will have no estate to bestow upon his children, he ought to give them an equivalent, in a good education. Were he to teach them himself, he would interfere with the appropriate duties of his vocation, and inflict a material injury upon his people. From the avails of his salary he ought to give his sons and daughters a respectable education.

3. *He Must have Books.* Paul exhorts Timothy to give attendance to reading. Amid all his cares and trials the great apostle himself was accustomed to refresh and extend his knowledge in the same manner. He always remembered "his books and parchments." It is a fact much to be deplored that most of our clergy are unable to purchase such books as are really necessary to aid them in their studies. Perhaps there never was a time when ministers had greater need of such auxiliaries. The sentinel, who in these perilous times guards the walls of Zion must be completely equipped and ever ready for action. Error in all its Protean forms grows rife and luxuriates in our soil. The old land marks of truth are removed, new schemes devised to rob Christianity of its glory and destroy its vital energies. Infidelity, too, has marshalled her forces and taken the field in battle array. Her banner is now waving in the breeze, alluring to her ranks, the dissolute, thoughtless multitude. Her stores of abuse and ridicule are well nigh exhausted, and she is now endeavoring to press into her service the aid of science. By deep research, she professes to have discovered, that Moses has made some important mistakes respecting the time of the world's creation; and that his account of the deluge cannot be sustained by the legitimate results of scientific investigation. Vigorous efforts are made, funds contributed, printing presses established, societies organized, and periodicals issued to oppose and overthrow the religion of Christ. The facilities that our country affords for intercommunication renders it easy for infidel societies in our large maritime cities to diffuse the poisons of their sentiments through all the veins of this extended republic. How shall the mischievous effects of this formidable array of wickedness be counteracted? Who shall resist and drive back this desolating flood of iniquity? Who shall expose the infidel's sophistry and unmask the turpitude of his dark designs? Who will show that the declarations of science and the revelation of God are perfectly harmonious? It must devolve upon preachers of the gospel; it is their appropriate duty.

To be well qualified for the wide range of ministerial duty, those who are set for the defence and propagation of the truth, must acquaint themselves with the original languages of Scripture, must survey the extensive fields of science and literature, must be familiar with sacred and profane history, and have a general knowledge of the political and religious doings of the present age. They must be ever ready to feed their flocks with the rich and varied instructions of divine truth, must bring forth from the treasury things new and old. For

these purposes they must have books. The minister who does not refresh and invigorate his mind by constant reading and study will contract and impair his own intellectual powers, and feed his flock upon stale truths and husky repetitions. Let him have a competent salary, so that he can make a liberal appropriation yearly for mental furniture, and his people will be richly paid in the freshness and vigor of his instructions, and the cause of truth will find a more successful and efficient champion.

4. *A Minister must be an Example of Liberality.* Precepts on this subject will have but little influence, if the preacher does not enforce them by his example, and show, by a cheerful obedience to the commands of his Master, that he loves the cause of doing good. But if his salary is so meagre that he has scarcely sufficient means to obtain the necessaries of life, the enjoyment of this pleasure is denied him. Will he not feel embarrassed in pressing this duty upon others, if his own name never appears among the contributors to the cause of benevolence? Many ministers have greatly promoted their usefulness by dispensing charity to the poor and unfortunate; and by contributing liberally to advance the cause of religion, their example has had a beneficial influence upon others. The minister who does not give is usually suspected of covetousness, often no doubt with great injustice; for there may be a willing mind, when the actual performance would bring distress upon his family. A kind and generous people will relieve their pastor from such perplexities, and furnish him with the means of gratifying his benevolent feelings, performing an important Christian duty, and setting a pattern for their imitation.

5. *The Minister ought occasionally to Travel for Health and Improvement.* By a constant succession of arduous duties, his health is often impaired, his mind exhausted and depressed. A change of scenes, and a temporary relief from cares and active duties, is the surest remedy. A journey to a distant part of the country, and the interchange of thought and feeling with his ministerial brethren, might be of essential service to himself and to his people. After this short suspension of labor, he would return to his charge with improved health, an enlarged stock of knowledge, and an invigorated mind. Many have thought that important advantages would result to the church if ministers from different parts should occasionally exchange visits of a kind and fraternal character. Local prejudices might thus be removed and the bond of Christian affection strengthened. Few are now able to travel on account of the scantiness of their salaries.

6. *The Minister ought to lay up something for his Wife and Children in anticipation of his own Decease.* I scarcely know an object better fitted to excite the compassion of a feeling heart, than the widow of a poor clergyman, left with a family of small children to the care of an ungrateful world, or of a penurious church. Accustomed to receive the respectful attentions of society, and to enjoy the comforts of life, she is at once overwhelmed with sorrow by her bereavement, reduced to a state of absolute dependence, and is soon compelled to feel the keen pangs of cold neglect. The respect and caresses she once received are bestowed upon another, and she is permitted to mourn over her miseries in solitary silence, or to repeat the tale of woe to her little associates in wretchedness. Ah! could the history of her sorrow reach the public ear, it would melt the icy heart of avarice, and relax the rigid grasp of the miser. If there is any thing aside from a consciousness of his own unfaithfulness, that can add keenness to the stings of death, it must be when the affectionate minister is called to leave his family to the complicated trials of affliction, ingratitude, and poverty. He must, then, he will, before that try-

ing hour arrives, make arrangements to leave them a pittance, at least, to sustain them in the day of their calamity.

The amount of salary must also be governed by the circumstances of time and place. More will be necessary in a city than in a village; more, in a village than in a retired settlement. And in the same place, an increase of salary may sometimes be needed to meet the increased expenses of living. In all cases, and at all times, it ought to be sufficient to answer the purposes I have specified.

I might now proceed to notice and answer the various objections that have been made against contributing to the support of the ministry, but I will not occupy your time. If the solemn considerations now advanced fail to convince professing Christians of their duty, I cannot hope that a formal reply to objections would produce any desirable result. The sordid incrustations of avarice have so completely encased the hearts of some, who bear the Christian name, that neither the voice of man nor of angel can penetrate such adamantine walls. We leave such to their own delusion. But there are many well-meaning Christians, who err in this matter for want of due reflection, and when their duty is clearly presented, they will, no doubt, cheerfully perform it. Such, we hope, will kindly receive a word of exhortation.

Are you favored, my Christian friends, with the services of a faithful, devoted pastor? How do you evince your gratitude for this inestimable blessing? Do you endeavor to increase his usefulness by anticipating his wants, by sustaining him in his trials, and rendering his situation comfortable and pleasant? If you subscribe liberally to his support, are you punctual in paying that subscription? Do not forget that your minister must have something more substantial than promises. Many a one has been under the painful necessity of disappointing his creditors, because his church failed to fulfil their solemn engagements. Do not permit the reputation of your preacher to be sullied by your culpable neglect. But if you contribute promptly to his support, do you regard the appropriation in the light of charity, and do you give to your minister as you would bestow alms upon a poor mendicant? If so you will deeply wound his sensibilities and do him manifest injustice. As well may you consider the bill of your physician, your merchant, or your mechanic, a charitable donation. If he has sacrificed the prospects of wealth and devoted his time and talents to the promotion of your dearest interests, are you not bound by every principle of justice and of gratitude, to furnish him with the means of subsistence? Call it not charity.

Do not, I entreat you, compel your minister to obtain support from secular employments. His mind will be distracted, his heart become cold, and his services of little worth. The duties of a gospel preacher would give full scope to the powers of the tallest angel, and shall frail man pretend adequately to discharge those duties with a meagre portion of his thoughts and a fraction of his time? Relieve him from this fatal necessity and permit him to bring to your service the best energies of his mind and heart. If, however, he voluntarily engages in worldly avocations, and preaches mainly to advance his own temporal interests, the less you give him, the more perfectly he will be paid. That man cannot profit his hearers, who enters the sacred desk, with his mind divided between a mathematical diagram and the messages of truth, or with a bill of sale in one pocket and the bones of a vapid declamation in the other.

But do you withhold a just and generous allowance from your minister, that you may accumulate a large estate for your children? If so, Heaven will doubtless chastise your avarice and your disobedience, by compelling you to witness, as many a parsimonious Christian has done, the rumseller and the gambler rioting upon the spoils of your estate.

Look around I beseech you, and behold "iniquity coming in like a flood," and threatening to overwhelm with its turbid waters, truth and righteousness. Who shall oppose this desolating tide? I know "the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against it," but where are the *standard bearers*? If they are left to faint and to famish unsustained by the church, how can they successfully fight the battles of the Lord? Again, look abroad upon the world and behold the fields already white for harvest; *but where are the reapers*? If those now in the field are driven from their work and compelled to minister to their own temporal wants, who shall raise up a company of youthful, vigorous laborers, to thrust in the sickle and reap this golden harvest!

If, then, Christian friends, you regard your own spiritual interests; if you would promote the present and future welfare of your families; if you can feel the claims of patriotism and philanthropy; if you would yield to the dictates of humanity and common justice; if you would obey the positive commands of God, and the express injunction of Jesus Christ, enforced by the cogent arguments of an inspired apostle; if you would imitate the pious example of the primitive Christians; if you would listen to the voice of God's providence, speaking a language of loudest terror to the covetous, but of comfort and consolation to the liberal; if you would be moved by the piercing cries of a dying world, and would be instrumental in saving souls from death, encourage the heart and strengthen the hands of your minister, by promptly and cheerfully affording him a competent support.

HYMN.

LET Zion's watchmen all awake,
And take the alarm they give;
Now let them, from the mouth of God,
Their awful charge receive.

'Tis not a cause of small import
The pastor's care demands;
But what might fill an angel's heart—
It fill'd a Savior's hands.

They watch for souls, for which the Lord
Did heav'nly bliss forego;
For souls, which must forever live,
In raptures, or in wo.

May they that Jesus, whom they preach,
Their own Redeemer, see;
And watch thou daily o'er their souls,
That they may watch for Thee.

DODDRIDGE,

THE
PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

VOL. V.

PITTSBURGH, MARCH, 1837.

No. 10.

SERMON LXXXII.

BY ELISHA P. SWIFT,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALLEGHENY, PA.

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION.

PSALM 68:28. *Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.*

THIS Psalm contains internal evidence that it was originally composed for the occasion on which the ark of the covenant of the Lord was brought into the city of David. An uncommon sense of the divine presence appears to have pervaded the minds of the people on that interesting day, and the joys of the righteous and the notes of national thanksgiving and praise, attended the ascent of this hallowed symbol to its destined place, in the centre of the metropolis of the kingdom, and the high place of Zion. We are safe probably in numbering *this* among those happy seasons under the old dispensation when the solemn exercises of religion were attended with a gracious refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

This Psalm, as would be extremely natural on the occurrence of a great national festival, celebrates the past deliverances and the future glories of the church of God. It adverts to the signal mercies of former centuries, and with these are interspersed prophetic allusions to the expected advent of Messiah—the extraordinary effusions of the Holy Spirit, and the goings forth of God in his sanctuary. Thus, whether we consider David as intending in the text, in connection with this memorable acknowledgment of a nation's and a church's gratitude to the God of Abraham, to implore the special blessing of Heaven upon the Zion of his own times, or whether we regard him as prophetically adopting the language and feeling which would exist when the time drew near that "Ethiopia should soon stretch out her hands unto God" (verse 31), and the kingdoms of the earth bring their presents unto Jerusalem (verse 29), and unite (verse 32) in the praises of her eternal King, *the sentiment* expressed must be in either case the same. The sentiment is this, that *when mankind, considered as individuals, churches, and nations, and portions of the human race at large, have experienced great favors from God, and are laid under peculiar obligations to Him, and have a great work to achieve, it becomes them, in view of the fact that these are likely to be suitably sustained in no other event, earnestly to implore the special effusions of the Holy*

Spirit; and the strengthening influence of revivals of religion. These were the circumstances of the Jewish people at the period at which this petition was offered. God had showered down upon them many blessings, and in their individual privileges and national and ecclesiastical pre-eminence, placed them in such a condition of great comfort and happiness, and possible usefulness to the world, as in a sort reduced them to the necessity, (in order to meet such a destiny,) of earnestly beseeching God to look in mercy upon those dangers in this respect to which they were exposed, and graciously to obviate them by powerfully strengthening that which he had already wrought for them. "Thou hast"—as though he had said—"thou hast done much for us, and much is now required of us, but our present situation and character is such as must lead us, (in despair of a hopeful issue in any other way,) to pray for the special dispensations of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen what thou hast wrought for us." In the application of the text to ourselves and to our own times, Christian brethren, it leads us to consider three things, viz. 1. *The necessity there would seem to be, in view of our great responsibilities and our present state, that we should experience a glorious revival of the work of God in this land:* 2. *The nature and genuine fruits of the blessing here indicated:* And 3. *The manner in which it is to be sought,* and the essential pre-requisites to a sincere presentation of the appeal, "*Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.*"

I. AND, IN CONSIDERING THE FIRST OF THESE TOPICS, WE SHOULD, (AS WE HAVE ALREADY SUGGESTED, AS TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE,) CONSIDER IT IN REFERENCE TO OURSELVES,

1. *As individuals:* And the inquiry, *what hath God wrought for us?* opens of itself a boundless field of meditation. Some things are common to all, while others apply to us either as unconverted sinners or professing Christians. God has given us all an intelligent, an accountable, and an immortal existence; a nature capable of indefinite attainments in wisdom, knowledge, and felicity. We belong to a race, also, to which, in the ruins of its apostacy, he has opened the glorious scheme of redemption; and in his own word set life and death before us. We exist at a period of the world, also, when the useful arts, the means of knowledge, and the facilities for individual comfort and social improvement, have made great advances. God has cast our lot in a Christian country, and in a Protestant land, where we have liberty to use his own word, and draw from its unerring pages a correct idea of the only way of salvation. He has, amidst the unnumbered blessings of a clear revelation, and of civil and religious freedom, given us the offer of his mercy; and added thereto the strivings of his Spirit. Now, if any of you to whom so rare a measure of worldly comfort, and prosperity, and perhaps affluence, is granted; and whom God has so highly favored as to the knowledge of his will and the means of salvation, are yet unreconciled to Him; *though you know that to him unto whom much is given, of him the more will be required;* and if you are hourly in danger of having all these blessings taken from you and of being irrecoverably lost, amidst such means of recovery; and if, with ten thousand motives to repentance, you have withstood all the

calls and strivings of departed years; *is it not*—if you are ever to be saved—is it not time that you should consider with what a deep responsibility you are putting off the claims of God? If there are many such neglecters in this gospel land, should not prayer be offered for a day of God's power, that sinners may not go down to death under so aggravated a condemnation?

Others of us, my brethren, have to add to the long catalogue of temporal blessings, greater than ancient Israel knew, the favor, perhaps, of an early consecration to God; and, at all events, of the actual commencement of a work of salvation in our hearts, and the possession of a good hope through grace, that God has reconciled us unto himself by the death of his Son. We have the word of God—our domestic altars—our social meetings and concerts—our quiet Sabbaths—and our stated communion seasons, to enjoy in peace, and with none to molest us. Our children are early led to the Sabbath school and to the house of God, and he thus affords us every facility for training them up for heaven. Our opportunities for active usefulness are abundant, and all that mercy and loving-kindness can do to make us faithful to our Savior, is exerted upon us. Now, Christians, if we look into the state of our own hearts—if we ask what does God most reasonably require of us? and what we, as individuals and as a congregation, are doing for him? will not these inquiries afford evidence that *we need* and should most earnestly pray for a revival of religion? But,

2. We must attend to the text in its application to the *church at large, or rather that branch of the visible church of Christ to which we belong*. In this Psalm it is clearly intimated that the Jewish church had incurred great obligations, and there was much danger of a corresponding failure and criminality, unless God in mercy interposed. And is it not so of our's as well probably as some sister denominations?

To the Presbyterian church in this country God has given, in many respects, a most honorable, and interesting, and instructive history. It has always borne its testimony against public sin; the vices of the times; vain amusements, unchristian conduct, and all manner of unrighteousness; and it has, for upwards of fifty years, as the minutes of its General Assembly will show, given the weight of its influence in favor of sound doctrine, real piety, active benevolence, and every form of public improvement; and, in promoting these objects, it has cheerfully acted with any and all who were willing to co-operate. Its policy has been liberal and disinterested; and in the early and middle parts of its history, to say nothing of later times, it was united and harmonious in itself; and it numbered in its ministry and in its communion many men who would have been an honor to any society, and a blessing to any age. Nor can we refer these, or its great increase to any thing but the grace and goodness of God. Indeed it is refreshing to look back to the days of Finley, and Davis, and the Tennents, and to some years about the commencement of the present century, (when it was the privilege of the General Assembly to record numerous and powerful revivals of religion,) and see how God appears to have been loading it with the debt of gratitude; and preparing it to fulfil an important part in the upbuilding of his kingdom. But, my brethren, examine its present condition, and let the question be asked, what is to be the issue if the Holy Spirit does not return in power to its churches? We

enter into no discussion here as to the causes of this change, but wish simply to fasten your minds upon the painful reality. Discord and strife have entered into its ecclesiastical courts, and the affections of its ministry and people are divided and alienated from each other. On questions of doctrine, and policy, and ecclesiastical responsibility, conflicting opinions and unkind feelings are developed; and the times and places on which good men used to meet to take sweet counsel together, are turned into the occasions of warm debate and unbrotherly contention.

In the mean while spiritual slumber would seem to have settled down upon the churches. God's people are conformed to the world; and, to a great extent, interest themselves in matters of religion no farther than to talk about existing dissensions.

To the ministers of Christ and the elders of the churches, also, it may not be as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon them, and those branches of Israel of which they are God's appointed watchmen, are like the vineyard whose hedges are broken down, or the daughter of Zion sitting in grief and solitude.

Religion dwells not in the daily thoughts and calls not forth the nightly intercessions of good men. Unconverted sinners, comprising in their list many of the baptized youth of the church, tread the downward path, unwarned of their danger, and unblessed with the effectual prayers of the children of God. The spirit of the world silently encroaches upon the church, and if vice and irreligion do not come in like a flood, they yield no ground to the ascending march of the kingdom of the Son of man. To this statement there may be, and I *would* fondly hope are, many exceptions, but that something like this is the humiliating and mournful state of things in our body, is declared by brethren of all parties, and in all sections; and it is of immense importance that we, as a people, should seriously consider what God has wrought for us, and how much we need to be aroused and awakened to pray for the return of his Holy Spirit.

3. But again, God's people, Israel, were to consider what He had wrought for their political and national usefulness and happiness, and the obligations which he had thence imposed upon them: and though *our* civil and ecclesiastical relations, unlike theirs, are entirely separate and distinct from each other, and though we are but one of the Christian denominations of this land, yet *we are not to forget our peculiar responsibilities as a portion of the American people*. God in his providence has not only cast our lot as Christians under a form of government, whose efficacy must depend upon the prevalence of religious principle, but where there is a great opportunity in the promotion of order and piety, not only of moulding and influencing the moral, and political, and spiritual destinies of this republic, but through the salutary influence of its institutions, of exerting a benign and powerful effect upon the course of events throughout the world. The early history of our country was strikingly providential, and its progress in population, wealth, and every public blessing, has been without a parallel. Here, on shores first sought by religious men from motives of religious freedom, God has established the rights of conscience; and planted down a system, which is to test both the efficacy of the plan of the voluntary support of the institutions of religion, and the

capacity of a people to maintain the privileges of self-government. On the results of this experiment, the events of the future history of this world, must, to human view, very much depend. The course of law and order here, must repose entirely in the will of the people at large, and that *will* reposes, for its safe and healthful character, upon a sound and wholesome public sentiment, sustained and influenced by the religion of the gospel. If the current of the national feeling finally goes in favor of immorality, irreligion, Sabbath-breaking, disorder, and political corruption, the question of the destiny of both will be speedily settled. If the result is otherwise, it is impossible to say what an amount of temporal and spiritual good it may be in the power of this nation, directly and indirectly, to impart to almost every portion of the globe. In the mean time, all forms of iniquity, and error, and disorganization, rush in, to try their fortunes in a land where they promise themselves present freedom and future ascendancy. The friends of God and the spirits of evil, plant themselves alike upon the banks of the stream of a nation's character, and the conflict has now begun in good earnest as to who shall direct its future course. Great and difficult questions, also, of common concernment, are arising to darken the prospect; and Europe, for the most part, is casting into the opposing scale, the multitudes of her emigrant population. The wrongs of the Indian, the desecration of the Sabbath, the prevalence of pride, and ungodliness, and corruption, and other things, would seem to lead some to think, that there are already general and national sins too great to be forgiven. These, my brethren, may be trite and familiar thoughts, but they present a subject of great responsibility, and they look to an issue, which must be contemplated both in heaven and in other portions of the earth, with the profoundest interest. Why should not the ransomed of the Lord in this land, by one united, and persevering, and holy effort, insure, by the grace of God, such a result as would form one of the most important events in the history of man? The great and merciful Lord of providence has set such an object before us, and we may trust that great as our sins have been, nothing has yet past that would imply its defeat, if the church of God were in good earnest to set herself to the work of repentance and reformation: and in doing so to carry her humble and fervent appeal to God for the shedding forth of his Holy Spirit in light and power, without which such a result would now seem to be impossible. Whatever may be the views of their coadjutors in the service of Christ in sister denominations, surely Presbyterians may well exhort each other to a sense of their appropriate responsibility, and resolve to unite their hearts in the petition of our text, that God would, in this respect, strengthen that which he has, in so much kindness, wrought for the American people.

4. *God has wrought for us, in common with all our fellow Christians, an opportunity of carrying forward a great and powerful work for the melioration of the condition of the whole human race.* And as he has thus set before us an open door, so he has made it a precious privilege, and an imperious duty, on all who would share in his favor, in the respective ways which his providence provides, to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. I need not remind you, my brethren, to what an extent the last half century has developed the

prospects of Christianity, and thrown around its professed friends a vast increase of responsibility. How have the elements of religious knowledge, and the means of active usefulness, been accumulating! How has increased intercourse spread abroad over the earth a knowledge of the superior arts and attainments of Christian nations? and how has the Lord prepared "in the wilderness and in the sea," a way by which "to go out with joy and be led forth in peace" to disseminate his everlasting gospel?

If we look abroad upon our church, to say nothing of others, how many benevolent associations are there—how many thousands of Bible classes and Sabbath schools—what large and important missionary and educational organizations—how many colleges and seminaries of various kinds do we see, which need the strengthening and sanctifying help of Heaven, and whose prosperity and usefulness turn upon the prayer of faith and the revival of religion in the churches. If God's people truly resigned their hearts to him, and were anxious for the honor of his kingdom; and ambitious to please him, would not the idea of being thus more and more associated with Jesus Christ and his holy angels, and with all good men, in the sacred cause of truth and righteousness, afford the most grateful satisfaction? Most certainly it would; and prophecy marks out the period of abundant activity, liberality, and prayer for the increase of Christ's kingdom on earth, as unexampled in the happiness and prosperity of the righteous.

Now, it should not be concealed, because it cannot be questioned, that in respect to the actual success of these benevolent enterprises in the conversion of sinners and the overthrow of iniquity, a dark cloud at present overshadows the kingdom of Christ. The fathers looked forward to these, as the times when the Spirit of God would be sent down in an extraordinary manner into the Christian camp; and an era of reforms and conversions dawn upon the world. In their anticipations, benevolent action was conjoined with a deep experience of the power of godliness; and the multiplication of the means of grace, with early and multiplied conversions to God. But what is the fact at present, as to the progress of religion and the growth of holiness in the churches at home? And, as to the foreign field, though much good has been done, yet those who have been sent abroad among the heathen, all unite, from the banks of the *Missouri* to the shores of *China*, in attesting that the *cause of Christ seems to linger*; and that the eventful crisis appears to have come when *prayer without ceasing* should be offered to a gracious God that he would pour out his Spirit from on high and melt the hearts of pagan sinners, while by the power of his grace among ourselves, the means and instruments may be provided for carrying forward and enlarging the efforts which they have commenced.

Thus, brethren, it is. To a great extent, Providence has succeeded the outward and preparatory work. Institutions for literary and theological science have been planted in the midst of us—the temperance reformation has nearly won the day—the whole Sabbatic, and missionary, and educational machinery of the church has been adjusted; and for the provision of elementary books, and Bibles, and Tracts, in our own and foreign languages, the press is in motion, and the work of translation far advanced. But at the eventful moment, darkness and uncertainty rests upon the cause of God both at home and abroad.

A voice from the throne would appear to say, "If my people, who are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land:" Since "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." O, that in view of such obligations and necessities, the followers of Christ might be constrained to unite humbly and cordially in the petition, "*Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us!*" What, then,

II. IS THE BLESSING WHICH OUR CIRCUMSTANCES INVITE US TO SOLICIT?

Is it not such a measure of strength from above as may revive, and sustain, and carry forward the work of God, and enable his church to meet the exigencies of her condition? An ordinary degree of spiritual influence there undoubtedly is in the true church of Christ at all times; and under the faithful preaching of the gospel and the due administration of the sacraments, there will be a gradual, though often a feeble and scarcely perceptible progress of salvation, both as to the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of believers. This, however, may not keep pace with the growth of sin; and, at all events, in a country like this, where the increase of population is so rapid, and in an age like this, when the increased demand for the means of salvation over the largest portions of the earth is so great, every prospect of an auspicious issue must be connected with such special out-pourings of the Spirit, as have in past ages been uniformly connected with every distinguished advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. We have already mentioned the indications of an uncommon divine influence, on the occasion of the removal of the ark to the city of David, and the candid reader of the Bible can hardly fail to perceive at one or two periods during the administration of Samuel, previously to that time, and in the reigns of Josiah and Hezekiah, after it, and especially in the days of Ezra, when the reading of the law to the assembled multitude of Israel, was accompanied with such remarkable effects, the marks of an unusual impression upon the minds of the people. Indeed, the prophets as well as the apostles constantly interwove the doctrine of special divine influences, not less than special and signal providences, (as forming a part of the established plan of God in the government of his church,) with all their communications. Thus, they spoke of the reign of the Messiah as a season of light, and power, and glory on earth, because God would "pour out a Spirit of grace and supplication upon the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem;" and, because, eventually, "when the Gentiles should come to his light, and kings to the brightness of his rising," "God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh," inasmuch "that nations should be born (as it were) in a day," until "all the ends of the earth should see the salvation of God."

The apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, explained the remarkable descent of the Holy Spirit then witnessed, to be but the fulfilment of this prophecy; and the *Acts of the Apostles* show that the great, and sudden, and astonishing effects which every where attended the preaching of the gospel, were occasioned by this power of the Holy

Ghost, and not by the mere novelty and splendor of apostolic miracles. These servants of God and their successors, so long as they were like Barnabas, themselves filled with the Holy Ghost, appear to have cherished and inculcated the expectation of frequent if not continued effusions of this kind. The spirit of revivals sunk beneath the weight of the Roman apostacy, but it measurably re-appeared with the Reformers and the Puritans. Among these were a host of men, as remarkable for their qualifications in knowledge and piety, as for their attachment to the pure doctrines of the Bible and the unction of the Spirit; and, in their times the inward experience of religion was great in the church, and the power of the word in many cases astonishing, unfavorable as the period itself was, (owing to many circumstances,) to become an era of revivals.

To mention the honored labors of Whitfield and Tennent, as remarkable in this country at least, for the spirit of prayer in the churches, which accompanied their preaching as its effects, and the Journal of Brainerd among the Indians, and the Narrative of Edwards of the work of God in his day, is but to record the return of the Author and the Spirit of revivals to the bosom of the churches. Nor can any person reasonably doubt the reality and purity of the great proportion of those seasons of *refreshing from the presence of the Lord*, which prevailed twenty, and thirty, and forty years ago; nor account for those extensive and permanent reformati—those numerous and astonishing conversions, and that subsequent and long-continued prevalence of practical religion which followed them, on any other principle. The great work which overspread the whole western country about the beginning of the present century, and the effects of which appear to this day, was, indeed, in many cases, attended with great bodily affections, but the ministers of that day appear to have accurately distinguished between this appendage and the inward experience of its subjects, and while they laid no stress upon the appearance itself, and did nothing to encourage it, they witnessed in the work itself, an excitement, which lasted for two or three years without abatement, and brought into the churches within a few months, larger accessions than in ten or fifteen years in the ordinary way. I may add, also, that the experience of more than a quarter of a century, during which most of its subjects have gone down to the grave, has shown that no additions have, in proportion to their numbers, turned out better.

Such, brethren, is the doctrine of revivals, as taught in the Scriptures and illustrated by facts, and it indicates a blessing too important and precious not to be most carefully and anxiously distinguished from its own accidental accompaniments, and from what, at best, are its mere appearances. It should not be forgotten, that, though the influence of the Spirit of God is in itself most pure, and holy, and true, yet still as it is exerted upon minds, all of whose thoughts, and aims, and motives, have the taint of sin, it must not be supposed, either that the judgments and affections of its subjects will thence be exact and unerring, or that the animal susceptibilities of man will not modify its effects. We look not, then, for a *perfect revival*, any more than we look for a *perfect Christian*, in order to satisfy us that it is the work of God.

Where revivals of religion, (as was the case with a great many of those to which I have referred,) are preceded by a state of spiritual

drought and general stupidity, and commence and continue without any extraordinary efforts whatever; and where, with the exception of those warm and active exertions, which ministers and private Christians will continually put forth in various ways when their minds become deeply interested, nothing but the plain and faithful preaching of the gospel in the ordinary way, and occasional conversation with the awakened and inquiring, occurs, there is no just ground, on any view of the philosophy of our nature, to suspect the genuineness of the work.

Facts abundantly show us, however, that when the great objects of religion are sought to be attained, by operating upon large masses of society at once, or even on an ordinary assembly, in a novel and extraordinary way, and by means which are reputed to possess a mysterious, divine efficacy, and when the people are taught to believe that there is a sort of indefinite divine energy operating upon them, the public mind may be brought into great excitement, where there is little or no heavenly influence. Let a mass of people be persuaded that their minds are so brought into near and powerful contact with God and other invisible existences, as brings their *eternal destiny to an immediate crisis*, and if the becalming, and sobering, and regulating influence of *divine truth*, is exchanged for passionate appeals, and extravagant and fanciful representations, and exhortations on pain of death and eternal reprobation, to do certain outward acts of compliance, it is impossible to say what sympathetic agitations and sudden transports of mind may be produced. Instead of the meekness, and humility, and solemn, pensive thoughtfulness, which becomes a deep-felt sense of the divine presence, these occasions exhibit the rash and extravagant conduct and expressions of some—the light and irreverent devotions and behavior of others—the zeal, and censoriousness, and spiritual pride, and forwardness of those, who conceive themselves to be highly honored and influenced from above, and the frenzy and outcries of such as apprehend that they are passed by. The main fact, however, which this admission implies, is that the human mind *may be* more or less excited on the subject of religion where there is no special agency of God; and that, therefore, instead of resorting to plans and measures calculated to do this, it is our solemn duty to guard against it, and put forward the marks of a divine operation, as that *alone* which we are authorized to encourage. And in doing this, every righteous man ought solemnly to consider what immense damage is done, if the prevalence of mere excitements tends to diminish the confidence of God's people in the reality and importance of those visitations of the Holy Ghost, which, in all ages, have been the glory of Zion. We have, for example, met in an inquiry room from thirty to fifty persons, who were suddenly brought together, as they verily believed at the moment, as subjects of special awakening, among whom there was not half a dozen who appeared, amidst much visible emotion, to possess any real conviction of sin, or any just idea of their true situation as lost sinners; while, at another time, we have met, under similar circumstances, a company of inquirers, among whom, with here and there an exception, one could trace, from day to day and week to week, the application of God's truth to the heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit, with as much distinctness and apparent certainty as a

physician would mark the progress of disease in the animal economy. Now, it appears to us plain, my brethren, that when stript of human extravagance—of fine wrought theories, as to the manner of originating and conducting revivals of religion, the whole subject is extremely plain and simple. We have in the Bible and in the history of the church, clearly laid down the doctrine of special and extraordinary visitations of the Holy Spirit, and it comprises a blessing which the children of God are to expect, and hope, and pray for, until the gospel of the kingdom becomes universal. We are taught, further, that there are periods when a common necessity may exist throughout the church, and when all eyes should be lifted to God, and all hearts prostrated before him, in trembling anxiety for the ark of the Lord. We have further the data by which, as honest men, we may distinguish between real and apparent revivals of religion, and our duty is to seek the blessing and reject its counterfeits.

The question, then, what are the marks of a genuine work of divine grace? must be answered substantially in the same way as we would reply to the inquiry, how are we to distinguish renewed from unrenewed applicants for church privileges? The operations of the Holy Spirit on the hearts, both of saints and sinners, in the conviction of sin, the production of spiritual life; and the maturing of the graces and fruits of holiness, are in their own nature and in their essential effects, the same in all cases and in all ages, and where these appear with unusual strength, and in a number of separate instances, at the same time, we call it a revival of religion. When God returns to pour out his Spirit upon a congregation, it not unfrequently happens, that, while some have been weeping in secret places, and mourning over the depressions of Zion, the *time*, and *manner*, and *circumstances*, in which “the Messenger of the covenant suddenly comes to his temple,” are such as evidently to show the hand of God, and strike his own people with surprise and astonishment. The pious seem at once to recognize the voice of their Shepherd, and many perhaps feel unprepared to greet the heavenly visit. Hence, if there have been variances, or alienations, among the members of the church, they make mutual concessions and seek reconciliation. If professors have been remiss in their attendance upon family, or social duties, they immediately reform, and the place of prayer is crowded with attentive and solemn worshipers. *Professing Christians*, each one, and without any sort of concert, begin to search their hearts and try their ways; and, after deep humiliation, and often after great distress, successively come forth to the help of the Lord, with new light, and joy, and power. Their lips are opened to speak for God, and with animated hope and holy joy, they love to testify for Christ and proclaim the wonders of his grace. They feel ready to take up every cross, and go forward in every duty with a meek sincerity and an humble boldness. Enlargement and prevalence in prayer, and a consciousness that God’s word is quick and powerful, gives them a firm expectation that He has *now* appeared to build up Zion, and will surely hear and answer his people in behalf of unconverted sinners. Hence they go to a throne of grace and to the sanctuary of God, *expecting* to feel his presence and to behold “his stately steppings.”

In these fresh anointings from on high, *ministers of the gospel* also share, and thence, they will have become more conscious of their own weakness and inefficiency, and more desirous that God himself should undertake for their perishing hearers. They will press the truth upon their people with more simplicity and earnestness, and in their prayers, and preaching, and intercourse, show a growing preparation for the day of the Lord. *Sinners* are awakened from the sleep of many years, and the word of God takes hold of their consciences. The guilt, and misery, and ruin of their situation, becomes to their minds a painful reality; and while they abandon their evil courses, and give close and earnest attention to the means of grace, they truly discover the enmity of their hearts to God, and become sensible that, without a change in the temper of their minds, they never can be happy. They become, as it were, experimentally convinced that they can do nothing to effect their own salvation, and they find rest and peace only when, as a last resort, and in a kind of despair of relief, they throw themselves into the arms of divine mercy. *Then* they are enabled to recognize the merits of Christ as the only and all sufficient ground of justification and acceptance, the Holy Spirit as the author of sanctification, and God himself as the blessed object of their heart-felt complaisancy.

Thus, without any visible, adequate cause, meetings become crowded, solemn, and impressive. Mountains of oppression are rolled away, and backsliders and wandering professors return to God. Christians are warm, fervent, and happy. The tongue of clamor is silent, and the countenance of levity begins to wear the aspect of concern. The moralist begins to examine the foundation of his trust, while the blasphemer, instead of uttering in profane mockery the name of God, *now* lifts his weeping and anxious eyes to Heaven and asks if there can be forgiveness for him. The current of iniquity is stayed, division ceases, and God's people take sweet counsel together; while mourning souls begin to sing for joy.

That which the eternal Spirit employs instrumentally to produce these effects is the *truth of God* most appropriately used, not by studied singularity of form or utterance, or in harsh and menacing language, but with heart-felt earnestness, and plain, direct, and pungent appeals to the conscience. The total depravity and corruption of the heart—the guilt and inexcusableness of continuing in an impenitent and Christless state; the work and offices of the Redeemer as constituting the only hope, and affording the only refuge for ruined man; and the sovereign, renewing operation of the Spirit, as that which alone can obviate the fatal effects of the moral blindness and blame-worthy impotence of lost sinners, and present any hope of their salvation, are among those doctrines which God has, at such seasons especially, owned and blessed. When the wakening up of believers has been sought, or new converts brought to the test of truth, the nature and evidences of faith, and regeneration, and evangelical repentance, and self-dedication, have been investigated; the tokens of delusion and false peace, and self-deception pointed out; and the duties, and exercises, and motives, and obligations, of those who profess to come out from the world and dedicate themselves to God, have been stated; and both actual and intended professors exhorted to make their calling and election

sure, and warned against inconsideration and insincerity in their solemn transactions with God.

Thus, we have seen that God's plan has ever been, to meet and provide for the exigencies of great and eventful occasions like the present, by the special out-pourings of his Spirit, and that these may be sought as to be certainly obtained, and so distinguished that there need be no mistake. That our social nature is suited to this plan, and our best system of securing the effusion itself, and of dealing with its subjects, is that found in the Bible. Let us, then, as we proceed, attentively consider how important the blessing is. Clear discoveries of divine things, strong faith, decided improvement in holiness, and a possession of the spirit of prayer among Christians, as well as the increased number of conversions in our churches, and the clearness of their evidences, and the decision of their Christian stand and character, not less than the subversion of immorality and licentiousness, and the maintenance, in their life and vigor, of all benevolent enterprises, must stand in intimate connection with the prevalence of revivals.

III. LET US NOW PROCEED, THIRDLY, TO CONSIDER THE MANNER IN WHICH THE REVIVING AND STRENGTHENING POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TO BE OBTAINED.

The text, you perceive, contemplates a solemn appeal to God, for help to withstand the influx of iniquity, and to sustain and carry forward his cause on earth. It implies, of course, that while we are doing, or are ready to do, all in our power, to maintain the purity, and growth, and honor of his kingdom, we believe the time has come, when we may properly ask and expect him, visibly to make bare his mighty arm, and pour out his Spirit upon his churches, with such marks of grace and energy in the suppression of iniquity, the reformation of morals, the fresh anointing of his people, and the ingathering of souls, as shall convince all that this is the work of God. Now, the simple statement of the case is enough to show, that when the people of a district, or congregation, suddenly pause in the heat and hurry of the world, and, without any previous heart-felt acts of repentance and reformation, and any sincere and strenuous efforts, faithfully and unitedly to carry forward the *whole work* of God among them, enter upon a series of protracted meetings, in which the neglects of years are attempted to be amended, and the duties of months to be thrown into the services of a few brief days, they do not present a fit occasion for the true and reverent presentation of such an appeal to God; and if he were to consider it in that light, soon would the glory of Israel be changed. God, it is true, is sovereign and unsearchable in his counsels, and he can, and sometimes does, pour out his Spirit where the divinely appointed method of preparing the way of the Lord, and seeking, through the medium of believing prayer, for spiritual blessings, is not employed; but when he has expressly informed us on what principles he will invariably return to his churches, with reviving grace and power, how inconsistent is it for us to neglect these, and yet make the appeal as though we were wholly engaged, and truly sincere? and expect a blessing, simply because such a thing has sometimes happened; and become discouraged if it does not come? It were just

as proper for sinners to ask and expect to be saved in their sins, as for churches to ask and expect revivals apart from the holy and sanctifying influences which they are intended to exert.

To open such meetings, therefore, with all the established forms of a revival season; or, to carry the idea that when a certain regular course of exercises, or discourses, have been gone through, God will come down in power upon a church, which has, it may be, slept in worldly conformity all the rest of the year, and because he has promised to hear and answer the prayer of faith, is calculated to foster and establish an illusion, and to bring down that high and holy standard which God has established. Real good may no doubt be done to individuals by such meetings, even where there is no general awakening, but the mistake is, that they are sought to be carried forward and urged under the idea that a special out-pouring of the Spirit exists, or is to be expected. But, my brethren, if to shun all this, and to avoid the abuse of the doctrine of special divine influences, we settle down into a state of cold inaction, to wait for an unsought revival; if, in dread of being burnt over, we are frozen up, the sin and the calamity in this case is more fearful than in the other. Fanaticism and extravagance are calamitous indeed; yet, in the midst of them, God may bring some to a knowledge of the truth; but, where the wise and foolish virgins all slumber together, and a lifeless formality presides over the established means of grace, there is deadness and gloom, without even an illusion to variegate the scene. How can God's people in either case make this solemn appeal to him, who hath said, "Turn ye, even to me, with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning"—"*Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts,*" if they have not sought to follow the prescribed course of duty?

Nor should ecclesiastical vigilance, in maintaining the doctrines and the order of the gospel, however useful and necessary, any more than the provision and support of institutions for the increase of the ministry and the spread of the gospel, be relied upon as that which will of itself insure the special dispensation of the Spirit, or in any measure supersede the necessity of close self-examination, a sincere repentance, and thorough reformation, and a return with all the heart, by earnest prayer, to him from whom we have departed. At the same time, it may be mentioned,

1. That if a people, would be enabled to offer this petition without hypocrisy and with good hopes of success, they *must engage heartily and actively in resisting the progress of iniquity*. It is a trite remark, that God helps those who help themselves. If immorality abounds—if the Sabbath is desecrated—if church discipline is neglected—if social and family prayer is omitted by professing Christians, and the spirit of the world prevails, and God's people lay it not to heart, and do not unitedly strive to accomplish a reformation, with what confidence can they address God on the subject, just as though they possessed *real concern* themselves, and were honestly trying to sustain his interests? Would they dare to appeal to him in behalf of their own sincerity, or could they possess any animating hope of being heard? The same remark applies to the cultivation of religious knowledge, and the careful instruction of the youth of the church in the principles of sound doctrine. The flower of the Redeemer's army, in its best

days, consists of a considerate, knowing, and thinking people, mild and courteous, but bold, resolute, and firm; enlightened in truth and ardent in piety, before whom infidel sophistry, and lawless immorality tremble. They are not to be caught by the bait of a specious but a corrupt and blighting literature, to sell the truth and applaud licentiousness and scepticism. They cannot be carried away by a single gust of religious or popular fanaticism, as chaff before the wind, or be brought over to compromise the convictions of duty and the sacredness of Christian example, for purposes of lucrative gain or political distinction. No; rely upon it, my brethren, the churches that God may be expected to signalize with *his* blessing must decidedly stand on the Lord's side; be true to his word and to his honor, pure in their principles, and righteous in their lives.

Let the children of the kingdom, then, acquire a just sense of the evil of sin, and reflect on men's ingratitude to God, and the dishonor done to his injured law, *until* they *can pray* to him, in a feeling and conscientious manner, that the wickedness of the wicked may come to an end. Let them converse with each other, and unite their counsels and their prayers in behalf of every proper and just method to effect a reformation, and persevere in this, not in an ostentatious and unkind way, but with the meekness of wisdom, and the affection of evangelical fidelity, warning and admonishing each other, if delinquency is found in the church. Where differences of opinion exist on the all-absorbing subjects of existing controversy, let Christians, in the spirit of moderation, unite in praying for better times. Let them consider how poor a compensation the cause of Christ will receive, if, in maintaining his truth, or repelling the wrongs of his law and kingdom, they lose his meek and heavenly spirit, and contribute to alienate the Holy Ghost from our church and land, at this most critical period in our history. Let them strive to give a new impulse to all the useful associations which exist among them, and revive such as have become extinct, especially restoring meetings for prayer and the means of Christian union and fellowship, and then they will have attained one important qualification to ask God's blessing.

2. If we would be prepared as a church to ask of God a revival of religion, we must *individually humble ourselves before the Lord, and endeavor to return unto him ourselves*. It is important for church members generally to examine and ascertain whether they have been truly made the subjects of a saving work of the Spirit of God, and whether their want of piety may not stand in the way of a revival. It is an awful thing to be a professing Christian, and yet not be prepared to take a lively interest in an event which is represented as filling angels and the saints above with unspeakable delight and joy; and yet many of us probably ought to examine ourselves whether this is not our case. If it is not, we shall certainly be willing to abandon all vain excuses, and set ourselves as Daniel did, to seek the face of the Lord God of Israel. We shall closely examine our past lives, and inquire into the present state of our minds, bringing both up to the test of God's word? Are our lives characterized by evangelical purity and a luminous consistency with our profession? Or, does formality and lukewarmness mark our intercourse with God, and coldness and unbrotherly feeling, that with our fellow Christians? Does parental kind-

ness and affection constrain us tenderly to admonish our households, and pray earnestly for the salvation of our children? Do we love the sanctuary of the Lord and the house of prayer, and give a constant, and a devout, and collected attention to its duties? In a word, do we *now possess* the life and power of religion in our own hearts, or is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed? Are we, as ministers of the gospel, and elders in the house of God, endeavoring, in season and out of season, faithfully to watch for the souls of our people? Do the public agents of the church—her beneficiaries, and missionaries, as well as Tract distributors, and Sabbath school teachers, all truly feel, in their respective departments of evangelical labor and responsibility, the *necessity of turning unto the Lord*, and thus obtaining the glorious presence and sanctifying power of God's Holy Spirit? Are our Foreign Missions, our Seminaries, and churches watered, as it were, with the tears of those who long for the outspreading of the Redeemer's kingdom? Now, if instead of this, our hope for and confidence in revivals is lost—if the public mind is carried away with other exciting topics, and the spirit of worldliness and slumber prevails, *we must repent* and turn to God, with weeping and mourning, and with all our heart. We may seek to devise a shorter and easier way, by which to secure the return of an absent Savior, but no other will be successful. Let us consider, then, to what an alarming condition the great interests of Christ's kingdom are to be reduced, if darker and still darker clouds should skirt the moral heavens, and an offended God leaves our churches, and benevolent enterprises, and our nation, to the consequences of a departed Spirit? Let us repent and forsake our sins, and engage faithfully in every duty, and then we can lift up our eyes to heaven with expectation and with joy.

Finally; if we would see a glorious day of strengthening from on high, we must become duly and deeply sensible that our *only hope* is in God, and carry this appeal to *him by humble, believing, and persevering prayer*. We must cease to rely upon an arm of flesh, and to put off, on vain pretensions, the claims of duty. We must consider how great and precious the blessing is, and how important it is that it should be obtained.

It often happens that in one year, during the prevalence of pure and genuine revivals of religion, more persons are converted to God; and the piety, and life, and usefulness of churches, is more improved, than in several years in the ordinary way. The attention of the irreligious is arrested, and salvation carried into the most unlikely neighborhoods and families. Divine grace raises up active and useful teachers for Sabbath schools, and young men of promise are brought into the church and trained up for the service of Christ. The hearts of the people are opened to give freely and liberally for the promotion of religion; and Christians, seeing and feeling the blessed effects of the gospel, and being united in love to each other, are ready to unite in every useful enterprise; and what they undertake, at such times, they prosecute with zeal and spirit. In times of revival, the foundations of society are shaken—open wickedness is banished—morals are improved—the world is brought to its proper place—the pursuits and intercourse of society are chastened—religious dissensions allayed; and from difficulties which threatened long and distressing perplexity, a way of escape is pro-

vided. Thus, God delights to pour out a blessing upon a grateful, devoted, and faithful people. To the obtaining of this mercy let us consider, that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." And shall we think it hard, when so much is at stake, here and elsewhere, at home and abroad, to be called upon in our closets, our families, the social prayer meetings, and in the house of God, to take this appeal to him? You have read of, and I trust many of you have known by happy experience, the efficacy of such humble, believing, heart-felt appeals, as the text suggests. The Bible records many animating instances; and it is one of the most precious facts connected with revival seasons, that the church acquires new impressions of the duty and the power of prayer. We shall soon be called, fellow-disciples, to think of these things, and to review our own course in life with reference to them, upon a dying bed. How bitter will be our reflections, if, amidst such surpassing urgency as now exists, we shall have neglected to take warning, and slumbered away the only period of supplication. On the other hand, if we now individually and collectively give ourselves to prayer, and resolve to make full proof of the promises of God—if Christians "take sweet counsel together," to lament after the Lord God of Israel, "until he return and pour out a blessing," what soul-refreshing seasons may succeed to the darkness and confusion which now prevails, as the morning dawn upon the mountains. *Come, then, ye tempted, desponding, and declined saints*, who have in times past knelt in secret wrestling with the Angel of the covenant, give up your delusive joys, your oppressive fears, and again present your intercessions to him who waits to grant a listening ear to your requests. May our gracious and sin-forgiving God, enable us who are officers in his church, and watchmen upon the walls of Zion, to stand between the porch and the altar, and cry aloud spare not, that Israel may be saved. To God's professing people of every station, we would address the apocalyptic exhortation of the great Master, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock"—"be watchful and *strengthen the things* which remain and are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God." Let aged believers speak to each other of the years of former times—let the mothers and the daughters of Jerusalem, whom, ever since the days of Hannah and Esther, and Mary and Lydia, the Redeemer has honored with a distinguished instrumentality in the promoting of his cause, commingle their united intercessions for the revival of the work God—let the youthful members of the Christian household, also, assemble together in the place of prayer, and encourage each other in looking for "the promise of the Father." If thus united, penitent and importunate, trusting in Him alone, this and other churches of our Lord, thus come up to the throne of grace, need I announce the certain and joyful issue—"And it shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer; and while they are yet speaking I will hear"—"AND YE SHALL KNOW THAT I AM IN THE MIDST OF ISRAEL, AND THAT I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD AND NONE ELSE."

THE PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

VOL. V.

PITTSBURGH, APRIL, 1837.

No. 11.

SERMON LXXXIII.

BY ANDREW WYLIE, D. D.

PRESIDENT OF INDIANA COLLEGE, IA.

THE DANGER AND DUTY OF THE YOUNG.

PSALM 119:9. *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?
by taking heed thereto according to thy word.*

THE course of life which a man follows, is, in the language of Scripture, called his "way." To "cleanse" one's "way," is, plainly, to follow a virtuous course of life, all vice being pollution and impurity. The doctrine of the text is, therefore, this, that,

**THE BEST AND, INDEED, THE ONLY WAY TO A VIRTUOUS LIFE, IS
CAREFULLY TO REGULATE ONE'S CONDUCT BY THE PRINCIPLES
AND PRECEPTS OF THE WORD OF GOD.**

This is the subject before us. But before we proceed to the consideration of it, let us ask, and answer the question, why the young should be especially regarded in this matter? It is surely not insinuated, that the middle-aged and such as are still further advanced in life are left to pursue their own course, as if they needed no further instruction, or it were a matter of no consequence whether they acted right or wrong. Not so: but the suggestion plainly is, that the young are especially in danger of falling into vice; and that, in the critical period of life which they are passing through, it is peculiarly important that they should adopt virtuous principles. Now these are highly important considerations, and exceedingly appropriate to the present occasion. Let your minds attentively dwell on them. And, to this end, suffer me to repeat them distinctly, that you may lay them up in your memory for future consideration.

1. Then observe, that the text suggests that the young are especially in danger of falling into vice. Do you believe this? Are you sufficiently aware of its truth, in reference to yourselves? If not, you are in a situation of extreme peril, like a man going unarmed into battle, or putting out to sea in a vessel provided with neither helm nor compass. In youth, passion and appetite are strong; imagination

glows with intense fervor; and the controlling powers of reason and conscience are weakest. The truth of these remarks all experience testifies. Besides, it is often no easy matter, even for those who have some considerable experience in the affairs of human life, to discern, at first, to what any proposed course may tend in the issue. The differences of things are scarcely distinguishable in their beginning. The silk-worm, and the tree on whose leaf it feeds, strongly resemble each other in the germs which produce them. So do the serpent and the bird. The road may ultimately lead the traveler far astray, which, at the starting-place, diverges but a very little from the right direction. Streams that flow, in the first part of their course, in a direction nearly parallel, separate at length widely from each other, and, becoming mighty rivers, discharge their waters into different and far distant seas. So it is with virtue and vice. In their nature they are essentially distinct; and the issues in which they terminate are as different as light and darkness, happiness and misery, heaven and hell: yet, one often puts on the appearance of the other, especially in their commencement; and the only difference between them is in a point—a minute particular—a single circumstance—or the modification of a single circumstance.

Experience, it is true, will enable a man to detect this characteristic difference under the appearance of general similarity. But the young, they want this experience. What shall they do? The text answers.

In one important and remarkable particular, the Bible differs essentially from all other books: it magnifies to the view that one point in which, often consists, as I have just said, the sole difference between virtue and vice; or to speak more correctly, it throws upon it a full and strong light—not the taper-light of human philosophy—but daylight—sun-light—meridian sun-light; nay, more than this, allow me to call it light breaking out from its very source, emanating from its fountain—“dark with excessive bright”—above these dim spheres—from God himself, who is light, “and in him is no darkness at all.” To speak, if I can, without a figure, the Bible calls us to the contemplation of virtue and vice in their principles, as they exist in the heart; and it calls us to the contemplation, with our minds impressed with those high and awful thoughts—a spiritual law—an inspecting Deity—a coming judgment, and eternal retribution. Now, coming to view things under the influence of such impressions, we shall see many to be vices which otherwise we might have mistaken for virtues; and many to be crimes of the deepest malignity, which, otherwise, would have seemed mere peccadillos. By this means may the benefit of mature experience be anticipated in early life; and those who are young in years become old in wisdom.

The text suggests,

2. That it is peculiarly important, that virtuous principles be adopted in youth, because that, in this critical period, the characters of men are generally formed. The tendency of our nature to run into habits is strongest in youth; and by the time that youth passes into manhood,

these have generally become so thoroughly wrought and set in the character, that they can never afterwards be extracted. How important, then, that you set out in life on the right course, with your resolution firmly fixed, by the divine aid, to persevere in it, whatever sacrifice it may cost you! A single error, committed in the outset, may betray you into a thousand others, which, though you may bitterly regret, you will never be able to retrieve. How often do we not see this to be the case with persons advanced in years. Most sorely do they grieve the consequences of their former folly; the misimprovement of advantages once enjoyed; time misspent; good counsel, given by parents and others, slighted and disregarded. Now, therefore, is the time to prevent these regrets, by avoiding the course which leads to them.

The text not obscurely intimates that,

3. Care and pains are requisite in order to a good and virtuous life. He that would cleanse his way must take "heed to it:" an expression which denotes caution, foresight, and prudent consideration. Now these are precisely the qualities in which young people are generally deficient. They are not conscious to themselves of any thing very evil in their character; nor are they aware that there is so much wickedness in the world as really there is. They have, as yet, met with but little to try them, and put their virtue to the proof. They may have many weak points, therefore, of which they have not the slightest suspicion; and even many seeds of wickedness, that lie dormant in their hearts, which only wait for some adequate temptation to call them forth. Hence they are confident in themselves. They see no danger; and of course feel not the need of caution. Their virtue is yet but negative; it is rather innocent than positively right moral principle; for that has its root in consideration, a state of mind to them almost wholly unknown. They have, as yet, little sense of obligation; no deep and settled conviction of moral and religious truth; no just views of themselves, nor of human life; nor any steady regard to a future state. Gay and thoughtless, their feelings mostly take their rise from the objects and scenes around them, and seldom from reflection. Such is the character of the young, in general; and though it is a character of comparative innocence, a little reflection will show that its innocence rests on a very precarious foundation. For, as the symmetry of the fairest countenance may be entirely destroyed by the slightest addition to its most prominent features; so as to give to the whole a hideous and distorted appearance; so, it requires the peculiar properties and tendencies of the young to be augmented in but a small degree, to give to the whole moral character the aspect of the most shocking deformity. Take, for instance, a simple young man, whose character is no worse than that which I have ascribed to the young in general, and let his inconsiderateness, by a little augmentation, run into recklessness; his confidence, into arrogance and self-conceit; his gait, into frivolity; his courage, into obstinacy and audacity; his love of pleasure, into profligate sensuality: and all that will be wanting, is

the impact of some adequate occasion to push him off his balance and plunge him, at once, into crime and ruin. It is true, indeed, as a general rule, that—"nemo repente fit turpissimus"—no one arrives at the summit of wickedness but by degrees. Yet history furnishes instances more than a few, of persons rushing forth, from the ranks of the comparatively young and the seemingly innocent, with a violence and an impetuosity which seemed to hurry them over the whole trajectory of the moral sphere, as if by the impulse of one fearful movement, landing them at once in the very extremes of wickedness. Nor is this so strange as to be altogether unaccountable. For innocence is not virtue: neither is the absence of any actual volition to sin, innocence: and the "fountains of the great deep" in man's corrupt nature, may be covered over and concealed by a superficial incrustation of seeming goodness, composed and held together by the restraints of circumstances; and, when this is the case, the first shock of the tempest will break them up, and a scene of moral desolation will ensue.

These remarks, for the justness of which I may safely appeal to the voice of experience, show us the need of something to supply to the young that caution and reserve, that prudence and foresight, and, in short, that strength of moral principle, which they have not yet lived long enough to have derived from habit and experience. And this, as I shall attempt to show in another part of the subject, to which we shall instantly proceed, is no where to be found but in the careful study of the Holy Scriptures.

There is no one, probably, that has lived to the years of maturity, in a Christian country, who has not heard and understood something of the doctrine of future retributions, as it is revealed in the Bible; and there is no one that has ever heard it who can avoid frequently thinking of it; and there is no one who frequently thinks of it, but will be, in some degree influenced by it. For as, on the one hand, it must be granted, that no one now in life knows, to an absolute certainty, the truth of the doctrine,—since thus to know it a man must actually prove it by dying and going to eternity,—and since, whatever evidence of it we may have here is only of the nature of faith, which, in its highest degrees, is still less than sight; yet, on the other hand, it is reasonable to suppose, even if experience were silent on the subject, that as, on the scale of moral evidence, there is a gradation from the lowest point on the scale, where the light of probability first faintly glimmers, till we reach the full assurance of faith, where the light of evidence shines with but a shade less bright than that of absolute certainty: since this is the case, I say, it is reasonable to suppose that a man may, by taking the proper course, have his mind brought up to such a state of habitual, constant, and settled satisfaction, in regard to the truth of the doctrine, as to feel no longer any serious doubts on the subject. Now, your philosophy has taught you—and your Bible will confirm the truth of it—that interest, or a regard to one's good upon the whole, is one of the two great principles on which the mind acts in coming to a decision in matters of practical morality; and fur-

ther, that hope and fear, which have been justly called the main springs of action, are moved by interest. It follows, that a belief in the doctrine of future retribution, must, in the very nature of things, exert an influence on these mainsprings, which will be transcendent; since that doctrine, as it is taught in the sacred Scriptures, carries our conceptions of the good we are to hope for, and the evil we are to dread, to the utmost boundary of thought itself. And, since the rewards expected and the evils dreaded, are to be bestowed and inflicted respectively on virtue and on vice, and on nothing else but virtue and vice—for so reason and Scripture jointly proclaim—it follows, that the influence of the doctrine must be as *salutary* as it is transcendent. Yet this influence, nobody will pretend, is too great even in those who most fully believe the doctrine. Do not the interests of public virtue imperatively demand that it should be much greater and more general than it is? And will there arise, think you, in the course of your future experience, no occasions which will demand all its strength? When you shall see, as you will see, should life be prolonged, others rising in the world around you to wealth and eminence by evil and dishonorable practices, will you be able to keep your minds free from vexation, mortification, and envy? Not by the mere force of a resolution to do so; not by a sense of propriety alone, unsupported by a belief of the doctrine in question. When you shall meet with unreasonable, selfish people—and you will meet with them—people, who will regard with an evil eye whatever credit and reputation you may honestly gain in the world, as if it were so much wrong and injustice inflicted directly on themselves, and who will lose no opportunity to oppose your interests and detract from your merits, actuated by the double purpose of gratifying their malice and raising themselves on the ruins of your reputation; will you be able to preserve your tranquillity? will you be able to avoid turning aside from the regular discharge of your duties to repel their attacks, and perhaps to hurl back upon them their own poisoned weapons; thus sacrificing the purity and peace of your mind on the altar of resentment? Not by the mere force of a resolution previously adopted; not by a sense of propriety alone, unsupported by a religious belief of the doctrine in question. When men, who have adopted for their motto the licentious maxim that, “the world is a cheat, and he is a fool who will not have a hand in it,” ask you to join their company, and demand of you either to unite in their measures or at least connive at them, and moreover, threaten you with their deadliest vengeance in case of refusal—and you will be fortunate if you do not meet with such cases—what shall prevent you from acceding to their infamous proposals? Not your resolutions to the contrary; not your sense of propriety merely, unsupported by a religious belief of the doctrine in question. When repeated instances shall occur—as occur they will, unless you take better care of yourselves than any good and virtuous person is ever likely to do—instances in which, after having labored to promote the interests of the public and of individuals to the very utmost of your abilities, with zeal, and dili-

gence, and vigilance, and care; watching as if your life were at stake for an opportunity to serve them, you will find yourself repaid with the blackest ingratitude, and when, on the back of that, as a justification of that same ingratitude, your beneficiaries become your accusers and lay to your charge the most atrocious villainies; what shall prevent you from becoming soured at such ill treatment—hating and loathing such miscreants; and hating and loathing your species because they belong to it; and wishing yourselves out of a world that contains such monsters? Or, at least, what shall prevent you from growing weary in well-doing, and ceasing to make further effort to benefit a race who know not how to distinguish a benefactor from an enemy? Not, I assure you, any resolutions you can make; not your mere sense of propriety, unsupported by a religious belief of the doctrine in question. Or, when scenes of worldly prosperity open around you, bright and glowing with whatever can regale the sense, or delight the fancy, or charm the affections—and possibly God may call you to this so severe a trial—what shall keep you from drinking in the fascinating influence, and becoming encrusted, stupefied, delirious? Not any resolutions to the contrary; not the most stoical fortitude; not the strength of mere human virtue, if not supported by a religious belief in the grand doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments: a doctrine which teaches us that to save life, in the sense of making the most of present circumstances, is to lose it for ever; that to live for pleasure here, is to incur the certainty of endless suffering hereafter.

But a severer trial than any of these is awaiting you. In what is called the Christian world, there is but too little of real Christianity. Some who call themselves Christians, are no better than infidels; some may be not even so good. And when you mingle among them and witness their course of life, differing in nothing from that of the mass of mankind, except, perhaps, that they are scrupulously nice and exact in their observance of certain modes and forms, and rigidly tenacious of certain peculiarities of their creed, while they hate and villify all who differ from them, you will perhaps be ready to say, So! here is Christianity; and I am bound to reject it with abhorrence. Not so; you must “cleanse your way” from the fatal errors into which a judgment so rash and unfounded would be likely to lead you, by “taking heed thereto according to the Scriptures.” There you will find, especially in the discourses of the Great Teacher himself, that Christianity is as different from the caricature of it presented in the lives of such men, as was the character of the ancient Pharisees from that of the divine Master himself.

Another doctrine of the sacred Scriptures, which furnishes a source of strong and peculiar motives to a virtuous life, is that of our redemption by the death of Christ. This is a theme, to contemplate which, we must rise far above the range of our ordinary conceptions; we must take our stand within the veil which separates the things of time from those of eternity; and, on an eminence, so to speak, near the throne of God; mighty angels, cherubim and seraphim around us; spirits of the

just made perfect chanting hallelujahs in our raptured ears; mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace embracing; sin and death vanquished; and a new order of things arising to view out of the ruins of the apostacy. And all this is the achievement of almighty love: for God is love. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world! Behold the way of access into the holiest, laid open by the blood of Jesus.

What motives to love God and keep his commandments are here! We know, we feel, that mere authority can never command our love; but we feel, also, that the love of God, our heavenly Father, can gain it. This, or nothing can.

But the Scripture doctrine of redemption exhibits also another trait in the character of God. See there, that bloody spectacle! Hark! that cry of agony: "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me!" Hark again: "It is finished!" That was a note of triumph. He dies—the God-man!—dies under the curse, a victim to justice, in our stead. Let not men hereafter make a mock at sin: for punishment from the Almighty follows it! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." True, he can, and will pardon the penitent; but "on the wicked God shall rain snares; fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." All this is consonant with right reason, which teaches that the attributes of God are proportionate. It clearly comports with the same character of perfect rectitude to punish vice as to reward virtue: and both are illustrated with equal clearness in the doctrine of our redemption. Whoever, consequently, believes this doctrine, in a right manner, must receive the impression of both on his heart; the one to attract, the other to awe; the one to encourage his confidence in its object, the other to prevent that confidence from degenerating into presumption and indecent familiarity. Can there be any state of mind either more proper in itself, or more likely to exert a good moral influence upon the character, than the one which is thus produced?

It is further to be observed here, that the position in which the doctrines of the Bible place every serious inquirer, in relation to the great question of his acceptance with God, is precisely such as is most favorable to virtue; because it gives scope for the fullest operation, at once, of both hope and fear. A state of perfect certainty would exclude one or the other. If we were sure of final happiness, fear, and if, of final misery, hope, would expire; and, in either case, we should have no stimulus to exertion arising from considerations of the future. A man may, indeed, pretend that gratitude for so great a boon as the certainty of his eternal salvation, supersedes the necessity of fear, by the introduction, in its place, of a more generous motive. To this I would reply, that, supposing it to be true, as some hold, that an inadmissible title to eternal life may be made out for a man in this world and that it is his privilege to know the fact; yet it might be well for him still further to inquire how he knows it. Is his knowledge of it complete? If he says it is, we may at once set him down for a con-

ceited Pharisee, who knows nothing as he ought to know, and especially on a subject which of all things most nearly concerns him, viz. himself. For the Scriptures assure us, that they and they only who persevere unto the end shall be saved—and to say nothing here in the way and manner of polemics in theology, who plainly show that they have but too little of religion, by their angry disputes about it, or rather about dogmas of their own, with which religion has really nothing to do—I say, therefore, that since no man's evidence of the goodness of his state can possibly be any higher in degree than that which he has of the purity and integrity of his character; and since that can never be complete while any parts of trial remain for him to undergo—for though he has stood the test of all that are past, there may remain yet one, more severe than the rest, which he will not endure—it follows, that he can never, so long as he lives, feel so perfectly assured of his final salvation, as to preclude all further occasion for fear. You will find the statements, exhortations, and approved examples of the sacred Scriptures all support this view of the subject; and you will, probably, also find in your progress through life—at least all shrewd observers of human character before you have found—that those men who are under no anxious apprehensions respecting their own personal prospects for another world—whether this proceeds from the hardihood of scepticism or the still more impenetrable hardihood of Phariseism—are not the men whom you may safely trust. The truth is, that whoever allows himself in any delinquency, either obscures the evidence of his acceptance with God, or violates the terms of it; and, in either view of the case, endangers his salvation: and, it is also true, that whoever considers himself out of danger in respect of his salvation, whether it be because he considers it already sufficiently secure, or because he thinks and cares nothing at all about the matter, will be regardless of moral obligation.

I would observe, in the next place, that the sacred Scriptures insist much and strongly on the necessity of honest industry in some useful calling. They allow no one to be idle; not only because idleness is destructive to our temporal interests, but also, and especially because it is the inlet to many and ruinous vices. No man lives for himself alone, but for the common good; and such as are raised above the necessity of laboring for sustenance ought to employ their time and means for the public benefit, or in administering relief to such as are in want. There is not the smallest difficulty, in our own country especially, for men of education to find situations in which their talents and acquirements may be put to some useful purpose. The civil offices of the government are open to them. The business of education presents a vast field of usefulness to such as possess the requisite qualifications. In no other field is there a fairer opportunity for disseminating the benevolent and pure principles of the Bible than in this. He who instills these principles into the youthful mind, labors in a vocation, which is, in itself, and ought to be esteemed, the most honorable and the most important; for its results, like the mind itself, are imperishable. There

is, indeed, but one other vocation in life so intimately connected with the cause of religion and humanity as this is. I refer to that of the pulpit. In some minds I am aware that the mention of this may awaken feelings of contempt. But though it has none of those circumstances which strike a worldly imagination to recommend it, and though it has become degraded in public estimation by causes which need not here be mentioned, it can never become dishonorable in itself; since, in the judgment of sober reason, it surpasses in importance all employments that are merely secular, as much as the concerns of the moral world are superior to those of the physical; eternity to time; or the immortal soul to the perishing body. The state of the world at large, and of our own country in particular, imperiously demands the addition of many more laborers in this holy vocation. It is, I believe, admitted on all hands, that public morals have greatly deteriorated among us in the course of the last fifty years. Should not the spirit of genuine Christianity move the hearts of our young men of talents and education to come forward in the strength of the divine Master to inculcate the same great principles which He inculcated, regardless of the shibboleths of sect and party, I know not what is to be done to check the progress of iniquity. Of no one truth, in relation to our beloved country, is my conviction more thorough, than of this, that its interests are identified with those of genuine Christianity—a religion as remote from superstition on the one hand, as it is from libertinism on the other. The freedom of our institutions looks for its support to the purity of public morals; and the purity of the public morals cannot be sustained but by the prevalence of that clear and vivid perception of right and wrong, and that deep sense of obligation and responsibility which the Christian system is so well calculated to inspire.

But it is time that I should think of drawing this discourse toward a close; and I shall do so, by calling to your attention the solemn reflection that your destiny for future life, and for that eternity which is to follow, is suspended on the course you are about to take, and will be greatly affected, perhaps decisively determined, by the very first steps of that course—perhaps by the resolutions you are this moment forming! Reflect, I beseech you, reflect seriously on what you have just heard. In you, we, in common with the rest of your friends, have much at stake. In you your country has much at stake. But this is nothing compared with what you yourselves have at stake. Take heed, once more, I solemnly warn you, how you treat the counsel given you in my text. By an authority the most august and venerable, the most sacred and tremendous, a volume of directions has been given to be your chart and compass on the voyage of life. Take heed to them. Unless you take heed to them there is no more probability of your going safely, than there would be, for a man benighted, traveling without a light and without a guide, by a way where at every step, frightful chasms yawned beneath his feet, and precipices approaching close on either side opened an abrupt descent to the abyss below. No more probability did I say? Not so much. For such a traveler might, by a sort of

miracle, feel his way on in the darkness, till he had passed the danger; and this may well represent the case of a poor heathen, to whom the light of divine revelation has been denied, and who, though surrounded by the gloomy superstitions of pagan night, may nevertheless grope his way through the perils that surround him to the light and joy of a better world. But yours is not this case. To you a light has been given; and you must either use or reject it. You cannot take a neutral position. God, in the dispensations of his wise and holy providence, has precluded that. He has apprised you of your danger; and offers you the means of escaping it. Here it is—the Bible. I throw it in your way; I put it in your hands—I recall the expression. It is not I, it is HE—He that made you, and who has ordered the circumstances of your birth, education, and lot in the world; it is He that has placed you in this dilemma. His hand has put into your way—into your hand—into your very souls—I mean, into your understanding, your memory, your conscience, his DIRECTORY of the WAY. This benefit has been—shall I say—forced upon you? It has been, at any rate, conferred upon you, without even the merit of seeking it on your part. God calls it his grace. And so, indeed, it is; a most free and precious gift. But, as I said before, it places you in a dilemma. You must accept it, or reject it; use it, or refuse it. And, if the latter be the alternative of your choice; if you reject this directory, this light of heaven—not the darkness of ignorance, but darkness of another kind, more deep, more dense, more rayless, more impenetrable, and bewildering will enclose you round—the darkness of obstinate and cherished hatred against the truth you have rejected. For, you must find reasons to justify you to your friends, to the world, to yourselves, for what you have done in rejecting the Directory of your God: and you will find them; or rather, you will find what, to you at least, will seem reasons satisfactory. And this is what will bring upon you that preternatural darkness, involved in which you will have to make your way amidst the snares and perils of a world dangerous to virtue, doubly so to such as have rejected the light of truth; for, to their eyes false lights will show themselves; songs of syren melody from enchanted halls will charm their ears; and a strange infatuation will possess their souls; and, as is usual in such cases, their confidence and presumption will increase as their perils multiply, and their way becomes more dark and slippery, till from above, at length, the tempest—raised by their own folly and the wrath of insulted Heaven—breaks in ruin on their heads. Such, sooner or later, must be the fate of all, whether young or old, who do not take heed to their ways according to God's word. Young gentlemen! receive it as my last counsel, my most earnest and solemn warning: Beware that this fate be not yours.

SERMON LXXXIV.

BY S. G. WARD.
OF KENTUCKY.

ON THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

ROMANS 13:11. *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep.*

We live in an age of wonders. Astonishing things have already taken place; and more astonishing, we have reason to believe, are just before us: things that will make the ears of those who hear them to tingle. Events follow each other with a rapidity heretofore unknown in the history of the world. The angel whom John saw fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, has evidently begun his flight; and neither earth nor hell shall stop his progress, till the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of Christ.

I am desirous that you should know the time in which you live, for if you do, you will know that it is high time for you *all* to awake out of sleep.

That we may clearly discern the signs of the times, it will be necessary for us to go back a little in the history of the world. Some of you, no doubt, recollect the period when a gang of infidels in Europe, and in this country, were banded together for the destruction of all religion; and when it was their arrogant boast that in fifty years Christianity would not be heard of but as a term of contempt. You may remember that the Christian religion was abolished, by a Legislative decree, in one of the most powerful and polished nations of Europe; and the Bible ignominiously dragged at the tail of an ass, and burnt. This was, we think, manifestly the time spoken of in Revelation, as the period of slaying the two witnesses. They were to be slain in the street—that is, in the most public part—of the great city, spiritually called, Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. This strikingly describes the city of Paris, the most conspicuous part of what constituted the Roman empire, in the bounds of which our Lord was crucified.

We fix the event of the slaying of the witnesses at the period of the French Revolution; for we are told that "the same hour there was a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of the *names* of men seven thousand."

The angel explained to John the meaning of the term "*the city*;" that it was the Roman Empire, which then ruled over the nations of the earth. This empire, as was foretold, was divided into ten kingdoms; of which France was the most important. An earthquake, in prophetic language, says Sir Isaac Newton, is a revolution. And we find, in fact, that in the French Revolution, seven orders of nobility were abolished—their *names* were slain—their titles were destroyed. Thus, this prophecy, which to the translators of our Bible was perfectly inexplicable, has been rendered by the fulfilment perfectly plain. An eloquent writer, who appears to have been an eye-witness, speaking of this period, says, "the plague spread with a rapidity that astonished heaven and earth. Life went out, not only in solitary instances, but by an *universal* extinction. Religion was dead; and her remains lay in the street of that great city, which is spiritually called Sodom and Egypt!"

At the end of three days and a half, the spirit of life from God entered into the witnesses; and they ascended up to heaven in the presence of their enemies! And we accordingly find, that at the end of three *prophetical* days and a half—that is, of three years and a half—from the going forth of this decree for the abolition of Christianity, it was repealed; and from this era we date the commencement of those great movements which are now doing such wonderful things for evangelizing the world. For at the end of three years and a half—that is, in the latter part of the year 1793—the first mission was sent from England to India. Then followed Missionary Societies, Bible Societies, Tract Societies, and Sabbath Schools, in rapid succession. Through the instrumentality of these measures, though they have been but about forty years in operation, surprising things have been done for the conversion of the world. I will tell you some of the things which have already been done. The Bible has been translated into more than one hundred and fifty languages, and more than fifteen millions of copies of it, and of the New Testament, have been printed, and circulated among the nations of the earth. A version of it has lately been made into the Chinese language, giving it, as it is said from the best authority, to a population of about four hundred millions of souls! More than thirty translations have been made of this won-

drous Book into the different dialects of India, which will enable it to be read by a population nearly as large as that of all Europe.

Thousands of missionaries, of various descriptions, are now laboring in the different quarters of the world; and through their instrumentality hundreds of thousands have renounced paganism; and have cast their dumb idols to the moles and the bats. More than two hundred thousand heathen youths, are at this time receiving a Christians education in the schools of these missionaries. Numbers who have been thus educated have already become preachers and teachers. Wonderful things have been done through the agency of the Tract Societies. Hundreds of millions of these little messengers have been sent out into the highways and hedges, and have compelled multitudes to come in. The Sabbath schools have been eminently blessed, as one of the means of building up the Redeemer's kingdom. Millions of poor children have thus received a religious education. And many of them have been rescued from ignorance, vice, and misery, and raised to respectability and glory.

Yes, my readers, we already hail the early dawn of that glorious day—"Foretold by prophets, and by poets sung"—when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of Christ—when, from this earth, as from one vast altar, pure incense shall ascend to the living God—when one song shall employ all nations, and all cry, "Worthy is the Lamb, for he was slain for us!"

Although we should not expect, as some seem to do, that the millennial sun will arise immediately, and throw his golden beams over the whole globe, so that there shall not be a benighted spot in it; but "one unclouded blaze of living light"—for in the natural day the sun does not arise at once out of darkness, and lay his glorious rays over the earth. Yet we have great reason to rejoice, and give thanks to God for what we already see; for truly many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which we see, and did not see them; and to hear the things which we hear, and did not hear them! We have our lot in a day, when wonderful things are doing; when God is carrying on a mighty work in this our world; and allows us the unspeakable privilege, the exalted honor, of being co-workers *with him*. He calls upon us, as by a voice from heaven, to *join with him* in this glorious enterprise! And, my Christian friends, the peculiarly important age in which we live, imposes upon us peculiar duties, and a peculiar weight of responsibility. If we know the time, we shall know that it is high time for us all to awake out of sleep. It is surely no time for Christians to sleep. The great Head of the church now expects that all his ser-

vants will be up and active. He is now gathering in his harvest. Read the language of Revelation respecting this period; and then cast your eyes abroad upon the fields—are they not white, ready to harvest? And is not the cry that God would send forth more laborers into the harvest? For that the harvest truly is great, but the laborers comparatively few! There is, then, a loud call upon all the laborers to be active and indefatigable. A voice from the temple of God calls to you, my brethren in the ministry, to thrust in your sickles and reap, for the time is come for you to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe!

But, my Christian friends, there is a loud call upon you *all* to awake out of sleep! You have all *one* talent, at the least; and the slothful servant had no more: and his sin was merely suffering it to lie idle. How many that profess to be servants of Christ, are acting in a similar manner! Saying, Lord, Lord, but neglecting to do the will of our heavenly Father. Sleeping in harvest, instead of engaging heart and hand in his work. Doing little, or nothing, for him who has done so much for us.

All the world is to be active—heaven, earth, and hell appear to be active—and shall we sleep? Satan is active, knowing that his time is short: he is mustering his forces, and disciplining his troops, and preparing for the approaching conflict. He and his agents are busily engaged, endeavoring to obstruct the progress of the gospel. Let not Christians show less zeal to do good, than the wicked to do evil. Let not those who are employed in the service of Christ, and who expect to receive the wages of everlasting life, be less active, less laborious, less indefatigable, than those who are employed in the service of satan, and who will receive the wages of death!

Christians are now called upon to *pray* much, to *do* much, and to *give* much. They should let their light so shine before men, that others seeing their *good works* may glorify our Father who is in heaven. They should show by their conduct that they do *really believe* the religion they profess; and that they think the soul of more value than ten thousand worlds! and then their admonitions will have weight. They may then warn the wicked of his way to flee from it; and their warnings will *tell* upon the hearts of sinners. All Christians ought now to make the salvation of sinners, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, the principal business of their lives; and rely upon it, their exertions will be like seed-wheat, and will produce some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred-fold. *Every person can do much*—much more than he thinks he can, if he will only engage *heart* and

soul in the cause of his divine Master. And the great Head of the church wants no *time-servers*, no *trimmers*, no *timid soldiers*. I repeat, that he now expects that every one of his followers will do his duty. Single individuals have often done wonders, when all their powers and faculties have been *intensely* directed to one great object.

Christians acting *singly*, *may*, and many of them *are*, doing much; but now is a time when they should act in *concert*. They ought—as was said of the Macedonian phalanx—to move like one body, informed by one soul; and then, like it, they would be irresistible. They are now all called upon to come up, *with one accord*, to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty. *And wo be to him who disobey the call!* Christians are now required to give much. They should remember that the silver and gold, all that they have, are the Lord's; and that they are merely his stewards, who must render a strict account. I have read of Christians who had many failings and many faults, but I never yet read of a *covetous* Christian. No, covetousness is idolatry—and we know that idolaters shall not inherit the kingdom of God. You *may* have your portion in this life, if you *choose it here*; but beware lest it be said to you hereafter, “Thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things!”

Our Savior said to the young man in the gospel, “Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven, and come follow me! When he heard that he was very sorrowful, for he was very rich!” We have reason to believe that there are many, who, like him, barter heaven for a little paltry pelf; not remembering who has said, “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” True, they cannot, like Dives, be clothed in fine linen and purple, and fare sumptuously every day; but, like him, they will lift up their eyes in torments, without a drop of water to cool their parched tongues, or allay the tortures of those everlasting flames! O! be not any of you like that wicked Esau, who for one morsel of bread sold his birth-right; for ye know that afterwards when he would have inherited the blessing he was rejected, though he sought it carefully with tears! You, whom God has blessed with abundance, may now do much with it, and thereby lay up for yourselves an exceeding great reward. A dollar, well bestowed, has been the means of an extensive revival of religion. A single Bible may diffuse the light of heaven through a benighted neighborhood. A *tract* has often been the means of saving a soul.

And what is the worth of a soul! Now is a time when a Christian might well wish for riches; for money may now be put out upon good interest: *it may be lent to the Lord*; and he will assuredly repay it, in due time, *a hundred-fold*. Let Christians remember, that the Lord loveth a *cheerful* giver—that “the *liberal* soul shall be made fat”—and that he who *watereth* shall be watered also *himself*: “he which soweth *sparingly* shall also reap *sparingly*,” but “he which soweth *bountifully* shall also reap *bountifully*.” True, you *may* hoard up your wealth, and refuse to give *one dollar* of it to him who gave it *all* to you—nay, who gave his own life a ransom for you; and, as was well observed by good John Newton, “God *may* quarter a physician upon you; and you *may* thus be *compelled* to part with more of your miserable money than God would have required—and *have the pain and suffering into the bargain!*” O! “set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth.”

“Lean not on earth, ’twill pierce thee to the heart!
A broken reed at best, and oft a spear;
On its sharp point peace bleeds, and hope expires!”

Remember that riches oft make themselves wings, and fly away, as an eagle toward heaven! And that if *they* do not *leave* you, *you* must soon leave them; and that very shortly, a coffin, a winding sheet, and a few paces of the poorest earth, will be all that you can have of your possessions. And, O! remember, that,

“Not all creation's luminaries quench'd at once
Were half so sad, as one benighted soul
That hopes for heaven, and *meets despair!*”

THE PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER.

Vol. V.

PITTSBURGH, MAY, 1837.

No. 12.

SERMON LXXXV.

BY THOMAS DICKSON BAIRD.

SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

Acts 2: 38, 39. Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

In relation to the ordinance of baptism, there are three things of which every conscientious administrator or observer of the rite ought to be fully persuaded in his own mind. That the ordinance is of divine appointment—that those to whom it is administered have a legal claim to the privilege—and that it is administered in a way that will not forfeit the divine approbation.

That baptism is of divine institution, is clearly established by the commission given by our Savior, Matt. 28:19, 20, and carried out by the precepts and practices of the apostles. But, as this is not a matter of dispute, amongst those we generally term evangelical Christians, we shall at present pass on to the other parts of our subject. With regard to the right of infants to this ordinance, which is claimed by many, there is more opposition; and on a subject of so much importance, it is not strange that much discussion should have been called forth, and sometimes with a degree of ardor and animation seldom exceeded on any subject.

If, indeed, the Great Head of the Church has appointed this ordinance for infants, no less than for adults, ruthless and rash must be the hand that would snatch the seal of God's covenant from their brow; but if the institution—so far as they are concerned—is destitute of divine authority or scriptural sanction, who can estimate the presumption of misapplying and perverting the ordinances of God's house, and the seals of his covenant, with a "Thus saith the Lord, when the Lord hath not spoken." In a matter, therefore, of so much moment, and involving so many solemn considerations, it cannot be impertinent, again to review the ground on which we stand, as the foundation of our faith and practice in relation to this matter.

The duties enjoined in the text, are repentance and baptism; the benefits promised, are the remission of sins and the gifts of the Spirit; and the encouragement offered, is the benefits secured in the promise of God, to the parents, and to the children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Scott on these words

says: "For 'the promise,' both the general promise respecting the Messiah, and the blessings of his kingdom, as made to Abraham their father; and the particular promise of the Spirit quoted from Joel, was made, or proposed, to them and to their children." And again: "The promise, as made to Abraham, included also his posterity; and that of the New Testament did the same to those who should be interested in it." "The male descendants of Abraham were circumcised, as included in the promise, and as a part of the visible church; and this passage may intimate, that the infant offspring of Christians, being also included in the promise, and in the covenant of their parents, and being a part of the visible church, should be admitted to baptism, which is the outward sign of the same spiritual blessings as circumcision was."

In the farther consideration of this subject, we shall attempt to establish the following propositions:

I. *That the Abrahamic covenant, in its principles and design, embraced the Christian dispensation.*

II. *That infants were included in that covenant as parties to its conditions and its promises.*

III. *That baptism has taken the place of circumcision, as the seal of the covenant.*

IV. *That the right of infants to this ordinance has been recognised by Christ, the apostles, and their successors.*

If we can sustain these propositions with scriptural arguments, the right of infants to the ordinance of baptism will be established on a foundation that cannot be moved.

I. The Abrahamic covenant, in its principles and design, embraced the Christian dispensation. See Gen. chapters 12, 15, and 17. The parts of the covenants with Abraham to which we now refer, are as follows: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Gen. 12:2, 3. "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them. And he said unto him, So shall thy seed be." "In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abraham, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates." Gen. 15:5, 18. In the 17th chapter these promises are renewed and extended, and the seal of circumcision subjoined, in confirmation of the faith of the believer, and the faithfulness of the Promiser.

1. There is the promise of an innumerable offspring. This promise has been fulfilled in the most enlarged sense of the terms in which it is expressed. Without including the numerous tribes, and innumerable multitudes of Abraham's race, that have for thirty-five centuries inhabited, or traversed the deserts, the rocks, or the fertile fields of Arabia; or the ten tribes of whom so little is now known; the Jews themselves, the special children of the promise, would be as difficult to enumerate as the stars of heaven, or the sands of the sea-shore. And when we consider the remarkable preservation of that separate and

wonderful people, through so many centuries of indescribable sufferings, and waste of life, we cannot but believe that "God has provided some better thing for them;" when in yet more resplendent colors, the wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness, of the God of Abraham to his seed, will be displayed in "redeeming Israel from all his troubles."

But the promise of God to his spiritual seed, or to "all the families of the earth," in the grandeur of the design, and the glory of the accomplishment, will fill, not the earth only, but also heaven, with songs of praise. By the figure of an olive-tree, the native branches—the Jews—are represented as broken off, and the Gentiles—or wild olives—as engrafted, and according to the promise, their re-ingrafting is sure, "for God is able to graft them in again;" so that when "the fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, then all Israel shall be saved." Rom. 11th chapter.

But the relation of the Gentiles to the Abrahamic covenant and its promises, is still more explicitly stated. Gal. 3:16. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." In this we see that the promise of the covenant refers immediately to Christ, the Spirit of God being his own interpreter. Again it is said, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:28, 29. It appears, therefore, that God promised to Abraham an innumerable seed—that this promise had an especial reference to Christ—and that all, whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, male or female, that are in Christ, are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. This is yet farther confirmed by saying, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Gal. 4:28. Take these texts, in connection with the promise, Gen. 12:3, "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," which is repeated and renewed under both dispensations, and the evidence is conclusive, fully sustaining our proposition that the Abrahamic covenant embraced the Christian dispensation. If thus far the promise has been accomplished, both in relation to the children of the flesh, and the children of the promise, how sublime and glorious will be the fulfillment, when the "fullness of the Gentiles shall come in, and all Israel shall be saved." It was in the contemplation of this glorious result, that the apostle, in an ecstasy of wonder and delight, burst forth into that inimitable exclamation, recorded in Rom. 11:33, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out!" But the promise, in its final, best, and most triumphant accomplishment, will include not only the restoration of the Jews—the ingathering of the nations—and the millennial period, but that "multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who will give glory to Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." Rev. 7:9, 10.

2. The possession of the land of Canaan was another part of the promise to Abraham, to be to him and to his seed "for an everlasting possession." This land, for its fertility and other properties, was

termed "a goodly land"—"the glory of all lands"—and "Immanuel's land." But with all the beauty, fertility, and strength of that country, no doubt much of the glory of that land was derived from its typical character. As the unbelief of those who came out of Egypt proved a forfeiture of their claim to the possession, and He, who made the promise, "sware in his wrath they should not enter into his rest;" so we are cautioned by the apostle, to "take heed lest we fall after the same example of unbelief." And as the Israelites rested from their journeyings and wanderings in the wilderness, when they obtained possession of the promised land; so, as the word of God declares, "there remaineth a rest for the people of God." Heb. 4:9. It is, therefore, manifest that the promise, in both its aspects, had relation to the Gentile world; and from the nature of the promises, and the signs of the times, we cannot doubt their final accomplishment, in the restoration of the Jews to their own land, and their enjoying it as an "everlasting possession," until the angel shall "lift up his hand to heaven, and swear that time shall be no longer."

II. Our second proposition is, That infants were expressly included in the Abrahamic covenant, as parties to its conditions and promises.

The particular account of this transaction, to which we would refer, is contained in Gen. 17:9—14. There we find children of eight days old are specified as parties to the covenant—that the same conditions are presented to Abraham, the head of the covenant, at ninety-nine years of age—Ishmael, the son of the bond-woman, at thirteen—and Isaac, the child of promise, at eight days old. The ordinance, however, not having been previously appointed, was of course unobserved by Abraham and Ishmael, as to the prescribed time of observance, intimating very plainly that time or age was not essential to its right administration, which is confirmed by other examples.

The inquiry has been made, "What advantage hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?" The same objection, in substance, is made respecting baptism, and the same answer will apply with equal force. That is, "Much every way, chiefly, because unto them are committed the oracles of God." They are placed under the influence of means which God has graciously adapted to the end, and in his goodness has appointed, for the ingathering of his people, and the building up of his kingdom in the world.

It is still, however, farther objected in connection with this, that infant children are incompetent to the comprehension, or fulfillment, of the obligations implied and imposed in the sacrament of baptism; and it is, therefore, inferred, that they ought not to be subjected to them. This position has nothing to sustain it, but either inattention or presumption. We think the former most general. Let it then be remarked, that, were we under no obligation to acknowledge or serve God, until we had covenanted or promised to do so, the objection would have some force; but as we are, from the first moment of our existence as rational beings, bound to love and serve God—and as we can by no means and under no circumstances divest ourselves of this obligation—we are bound to this service independent of any covenant transaction. Such an act, then, as covenanting in whatever form, is only the recognition of the ties by which we and our offspring are bound, and

implies our promise to bring them up under a sense of their responsibility in these matters.

This doctrine is, we apprehend, fully sustained in the covenant transaction recorded in Deut. 29:10—15, as follows: "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water: that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day: that he may establish thee to-day for a people unto himself: and that he may be unto thee a God as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day."

On this passage we remark, 1. That this covenant transaction, as appears from verse first, was by the express command of God, and "*beside*" the covenant that was made at Horeb. 2. That not only all ranks but all ages are included, even to *little ones*; and not only those that were present, but also those that were absent; proving clearly that neither age, presence, nor consent, are necessary to constitute obligation. 3. That an awful penalty is denounced against those who should, from any of these reasons, excuse themselves, or attempt to evade the force of their obligations. v. 18, ult. 4. That this covenant involved an explicit recognition of the Abrahamic covenant, in its application to little children. v. 13. These views are still farther confirmed by the following statement, where Moses is instructing the Israelites how to act when they obtain possession of the land of Canaan. "Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." Deut. 31:12, 13. Here then is the command of God to Abraham to enter his children of "eight days old" into the covenant of God—to Moses to bring their "little ones" into the same engagements—and then the children that have "not known any thing." Who has then a right to say that children are not competent, in the face of such commands as these? This proposition being established, we proceed to proposition

III. Viz. That baptism has taken the place of circumcision, as the seal of the covenant.

That baptism has been instituted in the room of circumcision, is manifest from the following, among other considerations.

1. From the nature of both. On this subject Jones says, "Circumcision was that rite of the law by which the Israelites were taken into God's covenant; and—in the spirit of it—was the same as baptism among Christians. For as the form of baptism expresses the putting away of sin, circumcision was another form to the same effect. The Scripture speaks of a 'circumcision made without hands,' of which

that made with hands was no more than an outward sign, which denoted 'the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,' Col. 2:11. and becoming a new creature; which is the sense of our baptism. Of this outward, and spiritual grace the apostle speaks expressly in another place: 'He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.' Rom. 2:28.

That the spiritual signification was the true one, and so understood from the beginning, is farther evident: Deut. 10:16. "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." And again, in Deut. 30:6, "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."

2. From the fact that circumcision was done away, it is manifest that baptism has been substituted in its place. As we presume no one will deny that circumcision has been discontinued by divine authority, there is left no seal to God's covenant, unless it is baptism. Is there nothing then to seal the promise of God to believers and their offspring? Is there nothing to strengthen the faith of believers in those promises? Surely not, unless baptism supplies that want. And farther, if baptism does not supply that place, the boast of the Jew as to the covenant privileges of their children, has become the reproach of the Christian, whose privileges, instead of having been enlarged by the present dispensation, must have been greatly impaired or some of them entirely taken away.

But if, as we contend, baptism is the seal of the covenant, it must have come in the room of circumcision, and the right of infant children to it is undeniable, as well as their competency; both of which are, in the word of God, placed beyond dispute, in the places already quoted.

3. The transfer of metaphor by the apostle, when speaking of these two ordinances, lead us to the same conclusion. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Col. 2:11, 12. We should suppose that it will be admitted by every candid mind, that the "circumcision without hands," the "circumcision of Christ," and being "buried with him in baptism," all mean the same thing, and very plainly intimate that the introduction of the one was essentially connected with discontinuance of the other.

4. This change of the seal was both appropriate and necessary, upon the change of the dispensation. For, as under the law, "almost all things were purified with blood," a bloody rite was best adapted to express what was intended by circumcision—because without shedding of blood there was no remission—but, when Christ had entered into the holiest of all by his own blood, and had made a full atonement for the sins of his people, shedding of blood was no longer required nor accepted; and a rite, which gives a more appropriate representation of the purifying efficacy of the word and Spirit of Christ, became necessary, especially where there is no longer "male nor female; but all

are one in Christ Jesus." "For the priesthood being changed, there is of necessity a change also of the law." Heb. 7:12.

Having disposed of this we next come to proposition

IV. That the right of infants to the privileges of the church, has been recognized by Christ, his apostles, and their successors.

From what we have already observed, it would appear to be abundantly sufficient to show that—except an appropriate change in the external form—neither the interest of infants in the blessings of the covenant, nor in the use of its seals has been taken away—the laws in their favor have not been repealed, therefore their claims must still retain their original force. But if we can also show that Christ and his apostles have recognized these rights, the question is settled.

1. It was admitted by our Savior. In the prophecy of Isaiah when unfolding the character of the promised Messiah, it is said, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs with his arm, he shall carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." To admit the highly figurative language of this prediction, does not, in the least degree, impair the fitness and force of its application, when we read that, "when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." "And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." Mark 10:14, 16. To ascertain the meaning of the term "kingdom of heaven," or "kingdom of God," which are used indiscriminately in the same sense, will assist us in the present inquiry. When it is mentioned as being *at hand*, it uniformly intends the gospel dispensation, and more generally the same at other times; and, as we suppose will scarcely be disputed, it means the same thing in this place. Here then it seems to imply that of these the church of Christ is to be composed and built up—of such it is to be constituted, and by them its privileges and blessings are to be enjoyed. But if it is supposed, as some have contended, that the expression refers to the kingdom of glory, it is not reasonable to conclude that those who are heirs of the kingdom above, should be unworthy to enter, *by the door*, into his courts below.

It is still, however, objected that, although he blessed the children he did not baptize them. But if we can show good reason for the omission, the force of the objection is destroyed.

1. John's baptism was not Christian baptism. We then remark that these infants were not baptized, inasmuch as Christian baptism was not yet appointed. The Jews, from time immemorial, had received proselytes by *circumcision*, *baptism*, and *sacrifice*, and the same ceremonies were observed with all—except females, who were not circumcised, and the practice of drawing blood from those who were proselyted from nations that used circumcision—when they became proselytes to Judaism. On this subject Rosenmuller says: "For since the apostles could not have been ignorant that the children and infants of proselytes from the Gentiles were not only called proselytes, and circumcised, which the *Mishna* teaches, but also baptized—which Wetstein on Matt. 3:6, proves abundantly from the *Gemara*—it never could so much as have entered their mind, that children and infants were to be expunged from the catalogue of disciples, or that they were

to be denied baptism, unless they had been excepted and excluded by Christ in express words; which we no where read."

Baptism, therefore, was no innovation or strange thing in the time of John, which is farther confirmed by the fact, that when the Pharisees examined him, there was neither surprise expressed nor inquiry made respecting the rite itself; but the authority by which he administered the ordinance, was the subject of question and cavil.

2. It is farther manifest that John's was not Christian baptism, from the manner of his preaching: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"—not, "it is come," but, "it is at hand"—admitting clearly that it was not yet begun. Still more, "The least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he," is used to show how far John was short of the greater privileges that would come after. Neither the keys nor the seals were committed to John, they were reserved for the apostles who opened the present dispensation on the day of pentecost, "to them and to their children, and to all that were afar off." John was only the *forerunner*, and it was Christ the *LAWGIVER*, who alone had a right to change or enact laws for his house.

3. Christ could not be baptized in his own name, nor did John baptize in the name of Christ, neither was purification from sin, the exercise of penitence, or other objects for which Christian baptism was instituted proper to him; and the re-baptizing of those mentioned, Acts 19:1—5, completes the proof that John's was not Christian baptism.

4. The reason of Christ's baptism appears to us abundantly manifest, without the incongruity of supposing it Christian baptism. Christ was baptized in order to his entering publicly upon the exercise of the duties of his priestly office. In the 4th and 8th chapters of Numbers, we may see the age at which the priests entered upon their official duties, and the ceremonies of their consecration. Washing with water, anointing with oil, and sprinkling with blood, were the principal rites. Christ at the same age was washed with water, anointed with the Holy Ghost without measure, and entered by his own blood when he offered up himself. Heb. 7:27. It was, therefore, that according to the law which was not yet abolished, he might "fulfill all righteousness," and enter legally upon his mediatorial work, and particularly upon his priestly office, that he was baptized and received the dove-like symbol of the affusion of the Spirit. Doubtless, too, it was not without regard to this event that John, his forerunner, was a son of Aaron, among whom the priests consecrated their successors. From this view of the subject, we conclude that Christ recognized the claims of infant children as far as the ordinances then in use would admit, and that whether the expression "kingdom of heaven" meant the gospel dispensation—which is our belief—or the kingdom of glory, our Savior's language was resting their character and rights on the highest authority and the strongest ground.

(2.) This claim has also been recognized by the apostles.

In Gen. 12:3, we have the promise to Abraham, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed:" a promise that we find often repeated under both dispensations. In the address of Peter, on the day of pentecost, he quoted several promises. The prophecy of Joel, Acts 2:16—21; of David, verses, 25—28, and 34—36; and then, as

some suppose, he refers to that to Abraham, v. 39, in these words: "For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Be that, however, as it may, there is no doubt about the quotation presented in the next speech—recorded in the next chapter. Acts 3:25. "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed." It is, therefore, a plain case, that these very promises—where all nations are included, and promises to the infant offspring of believers are made—are employed in urging upon the hearers the duty of being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. "The promise, as made to Abraham, included also his posterity, and that of the new covenant did the same to those who should be interested in it."—*Scott*. It does not at all impair the force of these examples, that the right of infants is rather assumed than expressed. It only shows that there were none at that time to dispute their claim, and therefore, no need of its defence. If their right had been abridged or taken away, an explicit mention would not only have been important but really necessary; but the language of the apostles is precisely such as it would have been, if it had never in their day been made a matter of question—which we suppose was the fact.

Of this we have another instance in First Corinthians. The Jews had been strongly cautioned against intermarriages with the heathen around them, and when guilty, were compelled to put away their wives and the children they had by them. Ezra 10:3, 44. The Corinthians appear to have received the impression, that this rule was applicable to those Christians that were united to heathens, and desired to be informed on this and on other points in relation to marriage; and whether such mixed marriages ought not to be dissolved. No, says the apostle, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." 1 Cor. 7:1, 14. The question here is, what does the apostle mean by the children being "unclean," or "holy." Nothing can be more extravagant, than the allegation that it means that the children on this account were illegitimate or legitimate, nor is any construction even plausible, except that which refers it to federal holiness, or the right of infants to their church privileges, in virtue of their parents' connection with the church; in which, if one makes a credible profession, the children are entitled to the ecclesiastical benefits promised to the offspring of believers. From these cases, without room to notice others, we think it unquestionable that the right of infants to the seal of the covenant, has been admitted by the apostles. And if the fact of their baptism is not specified in so many words, it is to be referred to their well known privileges, and the practice of the church in all its previous history; which would confirm the impression that different cases of the kind must have occurred among the various households baptized by the apostles.

(3.) The immediate successors of the apostles must also have known both their faith and practice on this subject, and of course, their testimony is not without its weight in coming to a correct decision in the case. Our Savior said, "Except a man be born of water and of

the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5. And Paul says, "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Tit. 3:5. From these expressions, and such like, some of the fathers, and also some of the moderns, by an abuse of language, or from error in doctrine, term baptism *regeneration*. Hence, "Irenæus expressly calls baptism regeneration, and says that *infants* were *regenerated*, i. e. baptized. Irenæus, and those Christians in an age so near the apostles, and in a place where one of them had so lately resided, could not be ignorant—they must have known what the apostolic practice was with respect to infant baptism, a matter of the most notorious and public nature."—*Read's Apology*. Tertullian, Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, and others of the early fathers, give the same testimony. Augustine says, "The question is not, whether infants ought to be baptized, for that nobody doubts." Fidus, a presbyter, had sent in an objection to the Council of Carthage, to which they returned unanimously the following answer, sixty-six bishops being present. "As to the case of infants, of whom you said they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, and that the ancient law of circumcision should be so far adhered to, that they ought not to be baptized till the eighth day; we were all of a very different opinion. Our sentence, therefore, dearest brother, in the council was, that none by us should be prohibited from baptism, and the grace of God who is merciful to all."

Thus we have, as we believe, offered sufficient evidence that the Abrahamic covenant, in its principles and design, embraced the Christian dispensation—that infants were included in that covenant as parties to its conditions and promises—that baptism has taken the place of circumcision as the seal of God's covenant—and that the right of infants to this ordinance has been recognized by Christ, his apostles, and their immediate successors. We, consequently, conclude that it is the privilege and duty of Christian parents to devote their infant offspring to God in this ordinance, and then to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

To conclude, baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, implies that we are baptized by the authority of that sacred Name, and have the seal of his covenant upon us. It implies that we are baptized into the faith and profession of the Holy Trinity, with a promise of obedience to his commandments.

In the baptism of infants, it implies our faith in the promise of God to us and to our offspring, and our engagement to train them up in the fear of God, and in the knowledge and practice of his holy religion. We must at the same time remark, that the negligence of parents respecting the spiritual training of their children; and the negligence of the church in not watching over them, or exercising discipline upon them, have done much to counteract the benefits of their baptismal engagements.

SERMON LXXXVI.

BY THOMAS DICKSON BAIRD.

MODE OF BAPTISM.

ACTS 8:30. *“And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him.”*

We have already stated, that every administrator and observer of this institution, ought to be fully persuaded in his own mind that baptism is of divine authority—that the recipient has a scriptural claim to the privilege—and that the form of its administration is not a contravention of any divine rule.

The first of these, viz. the divine institution, we have taken as admitted, and not requiring discussion—the second we have attempted, in the preceding pages, to establish in relation to infants—and the third now claims our attention.

We are indeed perfectly satisfied, that if the mode of baptism had been at all essential to its valid administration, we would have had more specific instructions, either by precept or example, in relation to it. But as the mode in general use is denounced with great confidence, and those who have been received in this form are declared unbaptized, and still out of covenant with God, it is not unimportant to inquire whether these things are so? Whether inquiry unsettle or confirm our belief on this subject, if it lead to or aid in the discovery or the establishment of truth, it will not be in vain.

It is true, the text before us approaches as near to an explanation of the form of baptism used as any other on record; but certainly there is nothing in it to decide the question of affusion or immersion. We are, however, of the opinion that, by attention to Scripture, we may discover, without much danger of mistake, the truth on the subject, if we diligently and conscientiously seek to secure it. In prosecuting this inquiry, we shall observe the following order:

I. *Consider the typical actions and representations by which Baptism has been prefigured under the former dispensation.*

II. *The prophetic allusions to it.*

III. *The examples of the New Testament in relation to it.*

I. The typical actions and representations by which baptism was prefigured under the former dispensation.

Some of the principal actions to which we refer, were washing with water, anointing with oil, and sprinkling with blood, which were employed to represent the purification and unction of the Spirit, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus. In allusion to this, the apostle speaks

of the laver, or washing-place of regeneration, the anointing of the Holy Ghost, and the blood of sprinkling. In the sacrament of the passover the sprinkling of blood was typically employed, as well as in the ratification of the Sinai covenant, and at other times similar ceremonies were used. Ex. 12:7 and 24:6—8, with Heb. 9:18—22. In the consecration of Aaron and his sons, we find washing with water, sprinkling with blood, and anointing with oil, the principal ceremonies used. We are not informed of the mode of washing; but the circumstances are not favorable to the impression that immersion was employed. The laver was placed between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, that the priests might "wash their hands and feet thereat." It could not be large, as it had to be carried through all their journeys. If, therefore, they were washed all over, it is probable that it was by affusion. It is a confirmation of this view, that, in allusion to this laver, the apostle says: "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing (or laver) of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, *shed upon us* abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior." From this phraseology, as well as from the circumstances we have noticed, it appears very plain that this washing was all performed by affusion, or *shedding upon* the subject to be washed; but the hands and feet are particularly specified as the parts to be washed thereat. The blood was applied to the extremities of their right ears, thumbs, and toes, and the altar and the people were sprinkled, as well as the priests. The priests, too, were anointed with the oil by its *being poured* on the head. This ointment, which they were forbidden to imitate, was peculiarly fitted to represent the inimitable graces of the Spirit. This ointment was never renewed, say the Jews, after the captivity, on which Patrick says, "Providence overruling that want, as a presage of the better unction of the Holy Ghost in gospel times, the variety of whose gifts was typified by the variety of these sweet ingredients." Leprosy was a loathsome disease to which our moral corruption is frequently compared, and the mode of ceremonial purification, as typifying the efficacy of the blood and Spirit of Christ when sprinkled upon the conscience, is thus recognized by David in his expression of penitence: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." Hyssop, scarlet wool, water and blood, were the ingredients necessary in preparing and applying the purifying mixture. Would our limits permit we might multiply references; but in the washing with water, which represents the sanctifying influences of the word and Spirit of God—in the application of blood, which refers to the atoning sacrifice of Christ—and in anointing with oil, which emblemizes the unction, gifts, and graces of the Holy Spirit—all are represented as *poured, shed, sprinkled*, applied with the finger, and similar methods of partial application, and especially to or on the head. And surely these actions refer to the same things represented in baptism.

II. We consider the prophecies and exhortations of Scripture, in relation to the subject.

In the predictions respecting the dispensation of the Spirit, we usually—not to say always—find some term employed expressive of affusion or sprinkling. Wisdom is represented as saying, "Turn you at

my reproof: behold, I will *pour out* my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." Prov. 1:23. Isaiah, speaking of the desolations of the Jews, intimates that they would continue "until the Spirit be poured out upon us from on high," Is. 32:15, plainly referring to the affusion of the Spirit under the gospel dispensation. Again, the same prophet says in another place, "For I will *pour water* upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Is. 44:3.

The prophet Ezekiel, speaking of the same events, says, "Then will I *sprinkle* clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Ez. 36:25. And in a promise securing to his people the permanence of these blessings, he says, "Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." Ez. 39:29. This mode of application is also used in relation to the special influences of the Spirit. "I will *pour* upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications." Zech. 12:10. Thus we see the constant phraseology of the Bible, in relation to these things, is altogether on the side of affusion or sprinkling. There is, therefore, nothing of weight to sustain the form of immersion, and still less to exclude all other modes of application.

III. Let us next consider the practice, or examples, recorded in the New Testament.

1. Of these examples the first that occurs is that of John's baptism. Although not Christian baptism, John's is introduced with much confidence as an example of the mode, and the *only* scriptural mode of administration. To this assumption it may be objected, that it would be necessary to sustain the exclusive mode by showing, not only that some had been immersed, but that none had been baptized in any other form, or otherwise some precept to forbid it. The friends of immersion are bound to do this, or their position is not supported.

With respect to John, the language of the sacred historian is, that they "were baptized of him in Jordan." Matt. 3:6, and that "Jesus when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water," v. 16. It has been demonstrated by a number of writers, that *into* and *out of*, which appear to contain the whole strength of the argument, are as correctly translated *to* and *from*, and frequently, will not bear any other meaning. But our limits, and a wish to be understood by the most unlearned, remind us of the expediency of passing this view, more especially, as it has been conclusively done by others. To the English reader, however, we would say, that the most zealous advocate of immersion, if dipping his feet in a small vessel, or passing through a small pond, even less than a foot deep, would never think of using other language than that he had went *into* the water, or through the water, and had come out of the water. Let this be marked as a *truism*, and then let us inquire, why it is that going into or coming out of water, on all other occasions, are unhesitatingly applied to partial, and even to very little wetting; but when they are applied to baptism, they must intend nothing less than the submersion of the whole body.

But why was much water, or many waters or streams so necessary, if a partial application were sufficient?

Judea was a warm country; ablutions of various kinds were very frequent by habit, for health and comfort, and for religious forms, and water for these washings and for drinking, for such a multitude, in a country in many parts of which waters were scarce, required a place such as the neighborhood of Jordan, where water was plenty. This is a very plain case. But still more: running water was much prized by the Jews, often called *living water*, and in the observance of some of their rites, it was positively required. For the cleansing of the leper—for the water of purification—and for other uses. See Num. 19:17, Lev. 14:5, 51, 52. In Jeremiah, Jehovah is denominated the "fountain of living waters." Jer. 2:13 and 17:13. Our Savior, at the well of Samaria, and on the great day of the feast, uses the same figure to represent heavenly or spiritual blessings; and in the Apocalypse, the believer is promised an introduction to "living fountains of waters," and to "drink of the waters of life." It is, therefore, no way surprising, that for the use of the multitude and for the purpose of a religious rite, a running stream or streams should be selected. If, then, John went so far as to lift the water with a vessel or with his hand, he went *into* the water and came *out* of it; and if he had any regard to the Old Testament observances, it was applied by sprinkling or by affusion. Assuredly, however, there is nothing to prove that immersion was the form, or that no other is lawful in the administration of this sacrament.

2. The day of pentecost affords us the next example. Christ said to his disciples, "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." Luke 24:49. Again, "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." Acts 1:5. Now, if baptism means immersion, they must have been immersed with the Holy Ghost. We shall see, however, in what form this baptism was effected. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:2—4. The rushing sound filled the house—those present were filled with the Spirit, not immersed with it—and the symbol of its communication, gifts and operations, sat on their heads, as tongues of flame. This was in exact correspondence with the actions, types, and predictions of the Old Testament, and the sprinklings and outpourings there mentioned. Certainly, then, immersion has nothing to sustain it in the prophecy or in the fulfillment, in the type or in the antitype.

We next remark, that when Peter addressed the collected multitude, it was the third hour of the day, according to the Jewish reckoning, that is, nine of the clock—after this the discourse took effect, but how much time he occupied we know not, only the historian says that, "with many other words he exhorted them." Now there is no risk in the assertion, that under these circumstances, immersion was not

only improbable, but impossible. We hear nothing of preparation for immersion in the place where they were—nothing of their retiring for the purpose; matters which would scarcely have been passed over by the history had they taken place; and the same remark will apply to the baptism of Paul, Cornelius, the jailer, and others. We conclude, therefore, that neither the time occupied—the circumstances attendant—the multitude assembled—nor the language in which the transactions are recorded, will at all sustain the opinion of immersion having been the mode of baptism on that occasion.

3. The last instance our limits will permit us to notice, is that from which our text is selected. Let us then notice, that the Ethiopian was reading the prophet Isaiah—that the Bible was not divided into chapters for twelve hundred years after the time when this occurred—the division was by prophecies or subjects, not by chapters—that the prophecy which the Eunuch was perusing is in the 53d, and commenced at the 13th verse of the preceding, or 52d chapter—and that the last verse of the 52d chapter, in this prophecy of the Messiah, says, “So shall he sprinkle many nations.” It was from this very prophecy that Philip “began at the same Scripture and preached to him Jesus.” Now when the passage they took spake of sprinkling, would the preacher say, not so, it must be immersion. Is it at all probable, that the Ethiopian or Philip would think of immersion, when considering this part of Scripture? Again, when the Eunuch yielded his assent to the gospel offer, and they had come to a stream, the abrupt manner of the exclamation would evince that they had no water, and perhaps no vessel in company. Whether surprise, or joy, or both, were expressed, his exclamation, “See, here is water,” or as the original, “See! water!” evinces much interest in the thing, but little about the form. But the history says, “And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him.” The argument here is short. If *into* necessarily means immersion, Philip was immersed as well as the Eunuch, for they went both into the water. As this is not supposable and not pretended, *into* does not necessarily mean immersion, and from all the circumstances we cannot see that it is supported here or any where else in Scripture.

1. From what has been said, we infer, that no language of Scripture, and no practice of the church, proves one single case of unquestionable immersion, in the administration of baptism.

2. That in some of the instances of baptism recorded, immersion was not only improbable, but seems to have been impracticable.

3. That the use of the word *into*, to mean immersion exclusively, is a straining of language beyond its proper or legitimate use, and entirely gratuitous.

4. That, therefore, immersion is not necessary; but the ordinance is rightly administered by sprinkling or affusion, which best represents the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus and the affusion of the Holy Spirit. May our desire and prayer be for more and more of his copious outpourings on his church and on the world!

In conclusion, let us remember the things represented in this ordinance; that is, regeneration by the Spirit of God—forgiveness of sins through his atoning blood—adoption into his family—and resurrection

to eternal life. These benefits are signified and sealed to believers; but the external form is altogether vain, to any who are not believers according to the scriptures, or their offspring.

As these are the things represented in the sacrament of baptism, so they are also the blessings pledged and sealed to the people of God, and to their children for ever. Those who are the spiritual children of God, are the true children of the promise, and heirs of its blessings.

In this ordinance, too, the parents, as Abraham and the Israelites in the time of Moses, as heretofore noticed, enter their children into the covenant of God, and engage on their part the performance of correspondent duties.

Thus they engage and profess to believe the truths of Christianity; and promise to teach them to their children, that it may be "well with them and their children for ever."

It implies also an engagement to observe the ordinances of Christ, or the institutions of the New Testament. Renouncing the world they become the professed followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and engage to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Of the baptism of children and the advantages attending its administration, it may be said as of circumcision: "Much every way, chiefly, because unto them are committed the oracles of God." Let them not only have the watch and care of parents and of the church, but the ministry of the word, the earnest prayers of the church of God and of his people; and let all remember that external forms, however scriptural, unless accompanied with the effectual operation of the Spirit of God, will be worse than in vain; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.

We would again take the opportunity to urge the remark, that the shameful negligence of many professing parents, with respect to the vows they have made when dedicating their children to God—the dereliction of duty on the part of the church in relation to their baptized youth, have done much to counteract the benefits of this ordinance, and to bring it into disrepute. It has put the most formidable weapon into the hands of its opponents, who can see no good effects from the use of the ordinance in this way. But if parents and the church were to use those means, and exercise that discipline, which their respective circumstances and obligations infer, by the good hand of God upon us, we would soon see a more important revival of true and genuine religion, than by almost all the other efforts of the present day, and thus by well-doing we would put to silence the accusations of others, while we could say of the ordinance, by its fruits it is to be known.