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**SERMON LXXIII.**

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**THE CONSERVATION AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE  
SAINTS.**

**PSALM 37:23.** *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 12:3: ‘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 ‘quickened’ 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 exhortations 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 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.*