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“Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

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MOLE-HILLS AND MOUNTAINS,

OR THE

DIFFICULTIES OF CALVINISM AND ARMINIANISM COMPARED.

“You will, perhaps, ask, are there no *difficulties* to be encountered in embracing that system of evangelical truth, which is usually styled *Calvinism*? It ought not to be disguised, that there *are* in this system real difficulties, which, probably, no human wisdom will ever be able to solve. But are the difficulties which belong to the system of *Arminianism*, either *fewer* in number, or *less* in magnitude?” Instead of this, they are more numerous, and more serious; more contradictory to reason, more inconsistent with the character of God, and more directly opposed both to the letter and spirit of His Word. I rest in the *Calvinistic* system, with a confidence daily increasing, not only because the more I examine it, the more clearly it appears to me to be taught in the Holy Scriptures; but also because, the more frequently and the more carefully I compare the amount of the difficulties, on both sides, the more heavily they seem to me to press against the *Arminian* doctrine.

It is easy and popular to object, that *Calvinism* has a tendency to cut the nerves of all spiritual exertion; that, if we are *elected*, there is no need of exertion; and if *not* elected, it will be in *vain*. But this objection lies with quite as much force against the *Arminian* hypothesis. An *Arminian* who finds fault with the doctrine of predestination, as making out God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, &c. how shall he reconcile or clear the difficulties in his own way, namely, to believe, as he must do, that the Deity has created millions of human beings *knowing*, with *certainty*, before he brought them into existence, that they would prove incorrigible sinners, incur his divine displeasure, and that he in consequence should consign them to eternal punishment in the region of misery and woe? ‘All *Arminians*, though they reject the doctrine of *election*, explicitly grant that while *some* will, in fact, be saved, *others* will, in fact, as certainly perish. Now it is perfectly plain, that this position is just as liable to the abuse above stated, as the *Calvinistic* doctrine. For a man may say, “I shall either be saved,

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their own superior wisdom, strength or merit; in other words that they make themselves to differ—If I could admit the dreadful thought, that the christians continuance in his journey heavenward, depends, not on the immutable *love* and *promise* of his God, but on the firmness of his own strength, and the stability of his own resolutions; and of course, that he who is the most eminent saint to-day, may become a child of wrath, and an heir of perdition to-morrow—In short, if I could conceive of God as working without any providential design, and willing without any certain effect; desiring to save man, yet unable to save him, and often disappointed in his expectations; *doing* as much, and *designing* as much for those that perish, as for those that are saved; but after all baffled in his wishes concerning them; hoping and desiring great things, but *certain of nothing*, because he had *determined on nothing*—If I could believe *these things*, then, indeed, I should renounce *Calvinism*, but it would not be to embrace the system of *Arminianism*. *Alas!* it would be impossible to stop here. I must consider the *character* of God as dishonored; his *counsels* as degraded to a chaos of wishes and endeavors; his *promises* as the fallible and uncertain declarations of circumscribed knowledge and endless doubt; the best hopes of the christian as liable every hour to be blasted; and the whole plan of salvation as nothing better than a gloomy system of possibilities and peradventures; a system on the whole, nearly, if not quite, as likely to land the believer in the abyss of the damned, as in the paradise of God.”

DR. MILLER.

The Scriptural doctrine of the preservation and final perseverance of the Saints, plainly stated and defended.

A SERMON;

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ISAIAH XXVII. 3.—I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day.

The subject of this positive and encouraging declaration is the church; the whole body of God's chosen people, brought into a state of grace by a holy calling. It comprehends all who are savingly brought into his moral vine-yard, denominated, in verse 2d, a *vine-yard of red wine*, to denote its fruitfulness. It is under God's special care and protection. Its complete and final preservation is therefore, placed beyond a doubt; for, *I Jehovah do keep it*. The church called the body of Christ, composed of all really regenerated persons, in every period of time, is God's holy Zion; a "city of solemnities"—his Spiritual "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." Isa. xxxiii. 20. And although God "sift the house of Israel among all nations," and in all periods of time. "like as corn is sifted in a sieve, *yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.*" Amos ix. 9.

It is our wish and design to examine into the subject before us coolly and deliberately; and at the same time, with as much simplicity and perspicuity as we can, for the sake of the weak and feeble minded.

The doctrine is simply this: Of all who have ever truly believed in Christ, or who have ever been brought into a state of salvation, none of them are ever suffered totally to fall away and finally to perish; but are graciously preserved in their continuance in a state of grace to a state of glory.

In making this proposition a subject of particular examination, we shall

I. Adduce several direct scripture proofs and arguments in support of the doctrine.

II. Answer the principal objections and arguments against it.

I. In the outset our text must not be forgotten: it is very direct and positive—to the very point itself; *I Jehovah do keep it; I will water it every moment.* Here God's spiritual vineyard, his true church, with all her real members, is not only the object of his special protection, in his holy keeping, but is also, *every moment*, under his divine influence. It is, to be sure, surrounded by enemies, assaulted by sin and the devil; but, *lest any hurt it*, he will keep it constantly, *night and day.*

2. In Psalm xxxvii. 23, 24, it is declared, by the Holy Ghost, that, "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.*" This text is very plain and pointed. It supposes that a good man, a saint, may fall. But it likewise asserts, most positively, that he shall not totally or finally fall; or which is the same thing, "*he shall not be UTTERLY CAST DOWN.*" The reason assigned is, "*for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand.*" This reason is entirely sufficient; and satisfactorily accounts for another declaration in Proverbs xxiv. 16, "A just man falleth *seven times*, (i. e. *very often, frequently*.) and riseth up again."

3. Another direct proof, in support of our doctrine, is in the 28th verse of the same Psalm. There it is most unequivocally asserted, that, "The Lord—*forsaketh not his saints, they are preserved forever.*" This text could not be more express. It surely does not admit of one of God's saints finally perishing. Their final preservation is here most positively asserted and expressly maintained. There is not one sentence in all St. Paul's writings, where some think this doctrine is only to be found, and which they attempt to explain away, more explicit than this declaration of the

inspired Psalmist. This is also strongly supported by God's declaration of his Saints, Isa. lvi. 5; "I will give them an everlasting name, *that shall not be cut off*;" and also in Job xvii. 9; "The righteous shall *hold on his way*; and they that have clean hands, *shall grow stronger and stronger*."

4. Another proof no less positive than the foregoing, is Rom. viii. 30. "*Whom he justified, them he also glorified*." None but saints are justified. All such are freely justified, graciously pardoned, fully acquitted, and accepted in the beloved. But if *one* of these is lost forever, if *one* should fail of eternal glorification, then the latter member of this text not only falls short of the truth, but is placed in direct contradiction to the former. If the number *justified*, and the number *glorified* be not exactly the same, then the declaration is not true. This conclusion cannot be evaded. The dilemma, and the responsibility are with our opponents.

5. John iii. 4—"Can a man enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" *Physically*, this is impossible. And, by analogy, extending and applying the metaphor, the very one adopted by Christ himself, is it not *morally impossible*, for a soul born of God, to enter a second time into a state of total depravity, and enmity against God, become an unborn, unregenerated child of wrath; and then be born again and again, perhaps an hundred, if not more than a thousand times, during the course of three-score years and ten? Really I cannot see how the opposing principle, carried forward, can refuse to admit the sentiment, however absurd, that a soul may pass from death to life and then back again, with every vibration of the pendulum of a clock. The principle long ago asserted, and adopted as the creed of a large denomination, is this; "He who is a child of God to-day, may be a child of the devil to-morrow."* And why not, with equal propriety, maintain, that, he who is a child of God this hour may be a child of the devil the next? The principle does not forbid it. Our assertion, therefore, is neither unreasonable, nor extravagant.

6. In Luke x. 42, our Lord says, "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall *not be taken away from her*." Which declaration is in perfect accordance with that concerning his sheep, John x. 28, 29; "I give unto them *eternal life*; and they shall *never perish*, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.—And none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." Now if the saints have *eternal life*—and shall *never perish*,—the good part shall *not be taken away* from them,—and none shall be able to pluck them away from Christ or from his Father, surely that must indeed be an adventurous mortal who can gainsay all this, or attempt so to explain it all away, as to make the words convey a contrary meaning, or admit of a contrary sentiment.

*Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, adopted and recommended by Bishops Coke and Asbury. Page 95.

7. In Rev. xvii. 8, the names of God's people are represented as being "written in the book of life from the foundation of the world;" comp. xiii. 8: xx. 15. In reference to this fact Christ authorises all his true disciples to "rejoice, because," says he. "your names are written in heaven." Luke x. 20. Here, upon the principle we maintain, all is consistent, plain, safe, and easy. There is no uncertainty; there shall be no disappointment; the wise shall inherit glory; their record is on high; they have an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. But the reverse, by extending the figure, exhibits the book of life, with alternate entries and erasures, as one of the most mutilated, uncertain records in the universe. It also demands a suspension of the exercise of rejoicing, on account of a name written in heaven, by rendering it altogether uncertain whether in the issue, that name shall be found in heaven, or in hell.

The same soul chilling principle will likewise interfere with the "joy that shall be in heaven,"—even the "joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." Luke xv. 7, 10. For on the ground, that such a penitent convert, the cause of so much angelic and celestial joy, may after all, totally apostatize, turn an impenitent rebel, and finally be damned forever, their joy was groundless,—for a matter of no certainty at all; their high gratification is turned into disappointment and mortification:—and really, give to this heart-sinking, joy-invading sentiment a speaking voice, and it cries aloud to all the heavenly hosts, who raise their joyful acclamations, on every occasion of a returning penitent, and cautions them not to rejoice too soon, but to suspend every joyful expression, relative to this new subject of Christ's kingdom, as it is quite possible, if not highly probable, that he, "who is a child of God to-day, may be a child of the devil to-morrow," and, in the end, descend to perdition, and lie down in everlasting burnings.

8. From this gloomy joyless region, let us retreat to a more cheering atmosphere which sends forth its celestial, soul refreshing breezes, by the inspired breath of the Apostle in Heb. vi. 17, 18: "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto 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." What a host of proof and argument is here! All God's children, his believing people, are denominated *Heirs of promise*: they have all fled to Christ by faith, as their "*Refuge*" and hiding place. They have *strong consolation*: the ground of which is, "*the immutability of his counsel*," respecting their everlasting inheritance. This is confirmed by *two immutable things*, God's *promise* and God's *oath*. Now if any of these heirs of promise should be suffered to lose their inheritance forever: or if they are even liable to the forfeiture of it eve-

day and every hour, where is their "strong consolation?" Where is their refuge? What becomes of the *immutability* of God's counsel? Yea, what becomes of his *promise*, and his *oath*? But our enquiries are unnecessary, "it was impossible for God to lie;" the inheritance of his saints is sure, and they are preserved forever.

The same inspired writer, in the full assurance of one under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, was "*confident of this very thing*, that he which has begun a good work in you *will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Phil. i. 6. This is a very positive testimony. It speaks the language of assurance and infallibility.

When God gives a *new heart*, and a *new spirit* in regeneration, then, truly, is there a good work *begun*. This work will be perpetuated under the fostering influences of the Holy Spirit: it will be performed until the day of Jesus Christ. Of this important fact an inspired Apostle, infallibly directed, was "*CONFIDENT.*" With such an instructor, and having God's never-failing word, promise, covenant, and oath to this very point, may we not also be *confident of this very thing*, likewise? But if the contrary sentiment be true the Apostle had no ground for his confidence; he was mistaken—at least uncertain, contrary to his own positive assertion, whether this good work might not be destroyed, the work of the spirit reduced to nothing, and the subject of it, once an heir of heaven, be found, on the day of Jesus Christ, departing from the judgment seat, under the curse, down to perdition, with the devil and his angels. It is very certain the Apostle did not believe the doctrine of falling from grace, when he was so confident of the reverse: and it is equally certain the Holy Ghost never dictated such a sentiment.

Another inspired teacher has represented the spiritual heirs, as born of God to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading, and *reserved in heaven* for them. And to prevent any failure or disappointment in their possession and enjoyment of it, he declares they "*are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.*" I. Pet. i. 5. This declaration is very pointed and expressive. The heirs of glory are *kept* by the power of God; not without the exercises of religion, but *through faith*, unto salvation; or to an *inheritance reserved in heaven* for them. In the creed before alluded to, (page 90) it is admitted, and declared, that, "It is the power of God only, and not our own, by which we are kept one day or one hour." This accords with Peter's declaration: and with our text respecting the body of Christ, the church—"I the Lord do *keep it*—I will keep it *night and day.*" Add to this, the words of Christ, Mat. xviii. 14, "It is *not the will* of your Father in heaven, that *one* of these little ones should *perish.*" Then put all these together—the *will* and *power* of the Omnipotent Jehovah, equally concurring in the salvation of his people, it seems to us truly marvellous how any candid person can withhold his assent to the doctrine we advocate; and more so, how any should so

vigrously contend for one so contradictory to all these declarations.

9. The doctrine we advocate is further confirmed in Rev. xx. 6; "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." The first resurrection is that of the soul and is therefore *spiritual*. John v. 25: Collos. ii. 12: iii. 1. &c. And whether it relates to particular persons, when they become regenerated, or to the church in the commencement of the Millennium, it makes no difference; the *principle* is the same. The unregenerate are spiritually dead already, and when their bodies go to the grave, this may be termed the *first death*. But when the soul and body depart together, under the *curse*, into the lake of fire, "*This is the second death.*" Rev. xx. 14. But over spiritually risen souls, who are therefore of the *first* resurrection, it is positively declared. "The second death," eternal perdition. "*hath no power.*" The real believer "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation;" because, says Christ, "*he is passed from death unto life;*" and because his "*life is hid with Christ in God,*"—"Who shall also confirm them unto the end." John 5. 24: Col. iii. 3: I. Cor. i. 8.

10. Another proof we adduce in support of the doctrine is Rom. xi. 29; "The *gifts* and *calling* of God are without repentance." It is said, speaking after the manner of men, and in reference to the outward dispensations of his providence, that it repented God that he made man, that he gave him *bring*. But there is no intimation that it ever repented him that he gave him *grace*. The "*calling*" of God is a holy, spiritual, and effectual calling. His "*gifts*" are, grace, repentance, faith, and eternal life. These he graciously bestows. And he neither does, nor ever will, repent of these gifts and callings, so as to revoke them: for this is the meaning of the text. Truly *the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent*. His purposes are eternal; his promises free; his love is unchangeable; his wisdom unerring; his goodness sovereign; his power infinite. "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Prov. xviii. 10.

It is on this ground, St. Paul, with holy exultation, breaks forth in the following triumphant language; "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, 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. viii. 38. 39.

To this heart-cheering, soul-animating language, which secures the complete happiness, and final triumph of all God's adopted sons and daughters, it is suggested with sceptical opposition, and soul-chilling suspicion, that the Apostle did not insert *sin* in the catalogue: and therefore sin may separate us from God; or, the saint by falling into sin, may separate himself from the love of God in Christ Jesus, and so be lost eternally. To this it is replied, Rom.

vi. 14; *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.* The Apostle John declares that whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he CANNOT sin; because he is born of God, I. JOHN iii. 9. They shall not, says God, *depart* from me. Besides, if one could thus break away from God, and perish eternally, then contrary to the Apostle's assertion, here is one *creature* that can separate himself from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

If any of God's children do ever totally and finally apostatize we should expect to find them, on the day of judgment, among those described, by our Lord, in Matt. vii. 23; "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: we have eaten and drunken in thy presence." I say, if all who ever fell from a state of grace to final perdition are not found here, they can be found no where. But this is placed beyond doubt, by Christ the judge, himself, in his reply in the next verse; "And then will I profess unto them I NEVER KNEW you." But in II. TIM. ii. 19, it is expressly declared that, *The Lord knoweth them that are his.* "I know my sheep," says Christ, the good shepherd, "and am known of mine." But if any of Christ's sheep are finally lost, how can he profess unto them, at the day of judgment, *I never knew you?* They must have been known, owned, and acknowledged to be his own sheep *here*:—they heard his voice—were regenerated—believed in his name—followed him—he knew them as his *property*, by gift—by purchase—by redemption;—he knew them as his *members*—his *followers*—his regenerated and adopted *sons and daughters*. Is it possible he can ever address any such, at the last day, saying *I never knew you?* The conclusion is unavoidable: none of Christ's members perish: none of his sheep are ever lost:—"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For this is the will of him that sent me, that *every one* which seeth the son, and believeth on him, may have *everlasting life*: and *I will raise him up at the last day.*"

11. I shall offer but one argument more on this head, which must remove all doubt, if any yet remain. Suppose a sinner, one hundred years old, after living all that time in enmity and rebellion against God, should repent and be converted; his sins are all *blotted out*—his iniquities all forgiven—he is justified, freed from condemnation and accepted as righteous in the beloved. God himself 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.*" Suppose he lives in this gracious state, a true child of God, only one year; and then totally falls from it; he lives in sin and rebellion, as he did at first, one year more; and then dies, and goes to judgment. Does he have to account for, and is he actually condemned on account of the sins of *one hundred years*, or for the sins

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of only *one* year? Not the former, evidently, for they were all *blotted out*—all actually forgiven, and not to “*be mentioned unto him*” any more. To say they were pardoned *conditionally*, is absurd; for that were no pardon, no justification at all. To apply the figure that the Holy Ghost useth—how can any thing be “*blotted out*”—conditionally? It is either really, and actually done, or it is not done at all. The only alternative left, is, that the man is condemned for the sins of only one year—the year he lived an apostate. But how then is he “*judged according to his works?*” How does he “*receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done?*” If his sins, before, and those after conversion stand in proportion as one hundred to one, and he receives punishment only for the latter, how does this accord with the *rule* of judgment. And what shall be the award, for his life of holiness one year? From this dilemma there is no way to escape, but by adopting the sentiment we advocate; and which is so well expressed by the Apostle;—*Whom he justified, them he also glorified.* We proceed

II. To answer the principal arguments and objections. To enumerate, all must not be expected. They are numerous and various; some are taken from the Scripture; some from supposed facts or instances of real and *final* apostacy; some from the evil tendency of the doctrine; and some from the reason, and nature of things. The principal, most plausible and common, of these, shall be attended to.

1. It is urged there are several passages of scripture which teach or imply the reverse of the doctrine we have attempted to establish.

But have we not positively established the point we set out to prove? More *direct* proof, we believe, cannot be adduced on any other subject in the Bible. The scriptures do not contradict themselves. They do not teach two sentiments directly opposed to each other. Those that appear in contradiction, therefore are capable, by the correct rules of interpretation, of an explanation, or construction, perfectly harmonious. We fearlessly assert, there is not one *direct* passage in the Bible to prove the *final* apostacy of a child of grace. The strongest admit of argument and evidence, only by way of construction and implication. Let us examine an instance or two.

Ezek. xviii. 24; “When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, &c. in his sin that he hath sinned, &c. he shall die.” This same declaration is first found in chap. iii. 20.

The most common, and I believe, correct answer to the objection founded on these words, is, “that by the righteous man is here meant, only one who had that external righteousness, which entitled to outward prosperity, according to the peculiar covenant which God made with the nation of Israel.” Any one, by a careful perusal of the whole chapter, may plainly see, that God’s argu-

ing and exhortations with that people, was on account of his *temporal dispensations* towards them. The "righteous man," in the evangelical meaning of that phrase, (see Isa. xlv. 24: Jer. xxiii. 6: Acts xiii. 39: Rom. iii. 21, 22: v. 1: x. 4 &c.) is not to be recognized in the whole chapter. And we have only to pursue this righteous man a little further until he is found, introduced by the same prophet, chapter xxxiii. 13, in a dress and character that cannot be mistaken. "When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live: *if he trust to his own righteousness*, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered," &c. Here is a key that at once unlocks the difficulty;—a mirror, in which is seen the proper character;—a man who is only *externally* righteous, under the peculiar covenant which God made with Israel as a nation;—a man whose righteousness is called *his own righteousness*, in which, it is intimated, he might "*trust*" for safety, under the national covenant; in which, says God, "*he shall surely live.*" But with regard to our personal justification, and acceptance before God, it is expressly declared that, *by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight.* Another passage, supposed to imply that saints may finally fall, is Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6; For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away to renew them again to repentance."

That the persons here described, were not real christians, the Apostle himself has fully decided. Their character is plainly delineated in the eighth verse, by the image of *the earth which beareth thorns and briars*; and is evidently expressed in contrast with that of real christians in the seventh verse, under the same figure; but of different quality, and *which bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed.* Of these, the Apostle is persuaded *better things*, and things that *accompany salvation.* Moreover, upon a close inspection of the phrases in the passage, it will be found that they do not amount to a description of real Christianity. They indicate the miraculous powers, possessed by many, in those days, who did not belong to christians, *as such.* Two of the expressions: viz. *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 were characteristics sustained by Balaam, Saul, Judas and others who never were sanctified;—never were the children of God by faith in Christ. All the other expressions are indefinite. They do not describe character explicitly and definitely. They may be applied to such men as Herod, Felix, Agrippa, the stony ground hearers, and others enjoying peculiar christian advantages, who still continue to be unregenerate sinners. So that the expressions taken separately, or all of them together, do not necessarily involve the real christian character.

And even when construed most favorably for those whom I oppose, taking in the whole connection and drift of the passage, it will be found, at best not only a mere constructive, ambiguous support of their doctrine, but really takes a decided attitude against them, by the Apostle himself. This is not all: their interpretation of the passage directly contradicts 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 again to repentance*. Either they should renounce the above article of their *creed*, or their *construction* of this text.

It is again contended that our Saviour's words, in John xv. 2, 6, support the sentiment I oppose, "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."

To this it is replied, that our Lord is here instructing his disciples under the similitude of a vine and its branches, a figurative representation of truth. In such cases, we are not to expect that every minute circumstance in the similitude should be exactly answered by something in the explication. We are chiefly to attend to the general scope of the subject designed to be set forth. In the *visible* church there are some members in Christ *nominally* or *professionally*, only; and there are others *internally* and *vitally* united to him. *These* are members, or branches by *real implantation*; *those* are only such by *external profession*. Let us make the trial: "Every branch in me that beareth *not fruit*,"—was there ever such a branch internally and vitally in Christ?—one that did *not* begin to bear fruit the very moment of its vital and spiritual union? We must believe there never was. Those fruitless branches therefore, which God, in his righteous judgment cuts off, or taketh away, are only *nominal* or *hypocritical professors* of his name. But on the other hand, *every branch, that beareth fruit* (now mark it) *he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit*. Here the good work is carried on. The vital branches are not suffered to die. All such *do* bear fruit. The divine husbandman cultivates them and causes them to bring forth more fruit. This is the doctrine of the saint's perseverance, exactly. Those that are taken away, and cast into the fire, were merely superfluous suckers, that did more harm than good. They had only the *visibility*, not the *reality*, of branches:—*they never did bear fruit*.

The Apostle's care, *lest when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast away*, has been urged against the doctrine I advocate. But this only proves what we contend for; that all who obtain eternal life, must and shall persevere in the use of the appointed means by which it is to be obtained; they are kept, by the

power of God, *through faith*, unto salvation. To obtain the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls, it must be done in the way of watchfulness and holy diligence. The following case of illustration, in Acts xxvii. 22—24, 31, is exactly in point: "I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be *no loss of any man's life among you*," for, *the angel of God whose I am*, hath said unto me, "lo God hath given thee all them that sail with thee." Their final preservation was *certain*. The Apostle was well assured of this fact. It did not however make him either forget, or disregard the appointed means; for when the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, having let down the boat into the sea, he said to the centurion, and to the soldiers, *Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved*. Though God, by a special messenger, had told him none should be lost, yet their preservation must be effected in a particular way. This is exactly what we mean by the final perseverance of the saints; none of them shall be lost; they abide in Christ, the divine ark of safety; they persevere, in the way of holiness, *through faith*, unto eternal salvation.

It is deemed unnecessary to listen to objections, from this quarter any longer. The doctrine against which I contend is not supported in a single, unequivocal declaration of the scriptures. But, on the contrary, they do assert in the plainest and strongest terms, as we have already shewn, the opposite sentiment; not merely in some few dubious and equivocal expressions, but in multitudes of the most clear, plain, and express texts of scripture both in the Old and New Testaments.

2. It is objected against our doctrine, that it is contrary to fact and experience. It is asserted that Saul, David, Solomon, Peter and Judas did fall from grace; some of them totally, at the time, but afterwards recovered; others of them finally and forever.

A very brief attention to each of these instances is all that our limits will admit of, in a discourse of the present character. And with regard to Saul, there is no evidence that he ever was a saint. But there is much to the reverse. It is true, that *the spirit of God came upon him*; and that *he prophesied*: and so did Balaam, by the same spirit. This is, therefore, no evidence of his being a subject of grace. But it is further said, that he should *be turned into another man*—that *God gave him another heart*. This was true, not only of Saul, but of thousands beside him. A man, under a change of outward circumstances, may have *another heart*, but not a *New Heart*; nor a *New Spirit*; he may be turned into *another man*, by a partial reformation in his *disposition and conduct*; and yet not be a *New Man*. Had this been said of Saul, that he had a *new heart*, and was turned into a *new man*, it would have altered the case radically and essentially.

The case of David comes next; and is attended with more difficulty. The objection shall be placed in its strongest aspect.—"David was a murderer; but the Apostle John expressly says, "No

murderer hath eternal life *abiding in him.*" He must therefore, it is concluded, have fallen from grace, into a state of total apostacy, during that period, though afterwards recovered.

To this I answer; If David was a murderer, in the sense intended by John, then the case is in point. But this is not the fact. John's murderer must have *hatred* and *malice prepense* in his heart, to constitute that character;—"Whosoever *hateth* his brother, is a murderer," &c. Let any one deliberately read the history of the case respecting David and Uriah; and then ask himself, candidly, if he believes that the former was really actuated by *hatred* and *malice* towards the latter. No one can believe it, for a moment. In the first instance, being left to himself, he was overcome by the force of temptation to fall into sin with the wife of Uriah; then to conceal his own crime and her infamy, he adopted a more generous stratagem, which did not succeed. The next miserable step, his order to Joab respecting Uriah, was prompted by the same motive; and did not proceed from *malice prepense*. He cannot, therefore, in strict propriety, be denominated a murderer, in the sense intended by John. It is not a single action, but a *series of actions*, that constitutes a *character*; so likewise does it require a *series of affections* to constitute a *temper* or *disposition*. Now, although David was not free from the crime of "*blood guiltiness*," from which he earnestly prays to be delivered, in his penitential Psalm, yet he was free from that general hatred of good men, that constitutes the real character of a murderer. That he most shamefully and grievously transgressed, and thereby fell disgracefully and deeply, there can be no question. But that he totally lost every principle and vestige of the new man, though greatly shrouded and deeply obscured, we do not believe. In support of this opinion we have his own words, in the penitential Psalm, before alluded to, and written on this very account, where he prays, "*Take not thy Holy Spirit from me.*" This language conveys a different idea from that of total destitution, or entire dereliction. The same remark will apply to the case of Peter. His trial was great; the temptation strong; his strength was feeble; his enemy powerful, desiring to sift him as wheat; his denial of his master was cowardly and sinful; the manner in which he did it disgraceful and wicked; his fall was deep and heavy; but not *total*. For, with reference to this melancholy circumstance, while under this severe trial, his Master declares to him, "I have prayed for thee, that *thy faith fail not*;" which would not be true, if Peter fell into a state of *total apostacy*. The expression, "when thou art *converted*, strengthen thy brethren," simply means, when he was *recovered* from this trial, he was to employ his dear bought practical knowledge in behalf of his brethren, in a way of caution, counsel, and encouragement. Neither of those cases, however, prove *final* apostacy: for David and Peter are both in heaven. . . And if they were *total*, at the time of their delinquency, how did they become renewed again? seeing,

according to our opponents' construction of a former passage, "It is *impossible*, if they shall *fall away*, to *renew them again* to repentance?" Their scheme is as destitute of harmony, as it is of proof.

The case of Solomon, I. Kings xi. 1—8, has been adduced as an instance of total and final apostacy. It is asserted by some, that he never repented, and that he went to hell. It is admitted that, "a more melancholy and astonishing instance of human depravity, is not to be found, in the sacred Scriptures, than that recorded in these verses." It is admitted that, after the example of his father, Solomon married several women, and extending the principle much further, he did not stop until he had got together an immense number; so that they *turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father.* Thus he *did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father.* It is also true, that the chapter concludes with an account of his death, without giving any of his repentance. Another sacred writer, in II. Chron. ix. gives an account of his wisdom, riches, prosperity, and death, but mentions nothing of his idolatry. So that the "silence in the book of Kings no more *proves* that Solomon did not repent, than the silence in the book of Chronicles *proves* that he did not commit idolatry." That he did repent, and publicly declared that repentance, before his death, is made evident, and quite satisfactory, to all who read the book of Ecclesiastes, written in his old age, some years *after* these melancholy events. There he acknowledges, *vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* He particularly confesses, in his own case, "*the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness.*" (See chap. vii. 23—29.) This case, therefore, does not prove the point for which it is adduced.

But it is contended that Judas is a great instance of final apostacy from a state of grace. That this man, "by transgression fell, from the ministry and apostleship, that he might go to his own place," Acts i. 25, there is no doubt. But that he fell from grace, there is not a shadow of proof. He never had grace. He is expressly called *a thief—a devil—an unbeliever*, and the *betray*er of his master. This base character and conduct was the subject of prophesy upwards of a thousand years before it happened: Ps. xli. 9; comp. John xiii. 18, 26. He was moreover called *the son of perdition*, who at last hanged himself, and went *to his own place.*

A learned commentator,* in connection with those who reject our sentiment, has attempted to prove, by a long tissue of fanciful and erroneous criticism on a single word, that Judas truly repented of his wicked conduct, and so, contrary to the declared belief of all his denomination, asserts that he died a real penitent, and

* Dr. A. Clarke.

went to heaven. That Judas "*repented himself*," is declared by the Evangelist, Matt. xxvii. 5. That his repentance in several respects *resembled* true repentance, might be easily shewn. But that it was a spurious repentance, defective in *its origin*—in the *object of his sorrow*—in *its extent*—in *its result*, can be as readily shewn, if it were necessary to do it here. Besides, our Lord has settled this matter in his last prayer to his Father; "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." But here, at first view, a small difficulty presents itself. If Judas was given to Christ, in the covenant of redemption, it may be said, and yet was lost, he must have fallen from grace totally and finally. To this it is replied: If this man were really given to Christ, in the covenant of redemption, and afterwards lost, the objection would be valid. But this is not admitted; nor can it be supported. It is more natural to understand Christ speaking of his apostles, his immediate attendants; and of whom he says, *I was with them in the world*. They were given him as such; they were his visible members and followers; one of these was lost. Christ well knew the character of this traitorous disciple, from the beginning. He knew who would betray him. He did not deal with him as a judge, but permitted him to remain a member of his *visible* kingdom. The difficulty may be obviated in another way. Let the particle *but* be here used to express *opposition*, instead of *exception*; and then the whole meaning of the phrase may be completely expressed thus: *Those whom thou gavest me I have kept; and none of them is lost: but the son of perdition 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 is confirmed by what he says in John vi. 39; "This is the Father's will, that of all which he hath *given me*, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."

We are constrained to assert, on the fullest conviction, that not a single instance can be produced, of a real christian, that ever did totally and finally apostatize. "If his children forsake his law, and walk not in his judgments; if they break his statutes, and keep not his commandments: then will God visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, his loving kindness will he *not utterly take from him*, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail."

If it be further objected, that many have made a high profession of religion; appeared warm and zealous in the cause; had a long, uninterrupted, and confirmed standing in the church; and were in the judgment of charity, real christians; yet, notwithstanding all, did, to all appearance, totally apostatize; act wickedly; were cast out of the church; and died impenitent. To this I would reply, in language that cannot be mistaken, and in words that more plainly account for, and more decisively explain this matter, than any ever written: "They went out from us, but they *were not of us*: for it

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." I. John ii. 19.

More plain words to express the reason or *cause* of apostacy there cannot be, while they also fully establish the point for which we contend. The inspired apostle had *no doubt* about the continuance of real saints. But the contrary doctrine most probably contradicts the apostle's declaration.

3. But it is again objected, that this doctrine affords great encouragement to carnal security and presumptuous sin; that its advocates being persuaded of their safety, may conclude they shall certainly be saved let them do what they will, live as carnal and slothful as they please. To which we reply; that the abuse of a doctrine is no evidence against the truth of it. And what doctrine of the Bible has not been abused or perverted? The divine forbearance is so treated 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*." Can the divine forbearance be chargeable with this wicked conduct of the sons of men? Just with as much propriety as this doctrine can be chargeable with the abuses of formalists and hypocrites, who know not the Lord Jesus Christ. The thousands of truly pious persons who firmly believe this doctrine, are totally insensible of its having any such tendency, as the objection ascribes to it. And, it must be presumed, they have a much better right to know this fact, than those who never believed in the sentiment. How can they tell, against the experimental evidence of others, that it has any such tendency? Have they ever witnessed it in the conduct of those who give as good evidences of piety, as themselves? Besides, the objection is an express contradiction in terms; and is as absurd as it would be to say, that a *truly good man shall be saved*, though he should, at the same time, become a *very bad one*. For no man can be a *true believer*, who does not *will to live in a holy manner*; it being the very nature and tendency of grace to lead to righteousness. If any believe the doctrine, to whom the argument in the objection is applicable, we unhesitatingly pronounce them no christians.

But the strength of this argument was tried long ago, by the devil, on our Saviour himself; "If thou be the Son of God, *cast thyself down*; for it is written, he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall *bear thee up*, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." The grand proposition in the devil's argument was this: If thou art the Son of God, his angels will certainly preserve thee; thou canst not be hurt. And now comes the conclusion; Therefore without any danger, thou mayest cast thyself down from this eminence. But as this argument had no force on Christ, neither has it with his true followers. With one remark more, we shall close our reply to this objection. The devil in pretending to quote Ps. xci. 11, 12, which is a special

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promise of the Messiah, craftily *left out* that part of the text which relates to Christ's being kept "in all his ways" to which God should call him: compare Matth. iv. 5, 6. The words, *in all thy ways*, are in the promise in the Psalm alluded to, but designedly left out by the tempter in the quotation he made to Christ. He knew they would directly contradict him, and defeat his intention; for his aim was to get him to take a step *out of his ways*, intimating, with a lie direct, that there would be no danger, for his God would keep him. Does not the objector and the devil run too much together on the same argument?

4. But it will still be urged, that this doctrine supersedes the use of means, and renders cautions, exhortations, warnings, &c. unnecessary. Why employ them, if there be no danger of being lost? I reply; Let the objector go and ask Paul, why he was so inconsistent, as to declare to the centurion and the soldiers, "Except these abide in the ship *ye cannot be saved*?" though God had just before assured him that none of them should be lost. Let him ask the old patriarch Jacob, if the *absolute promise of God, 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," destroyed all motives to his activity, and cut all the sinews of exertion, and rendered all means useless, or inexpedient? Let him ask Joseph, why it became necessary for him to be *warned in a dream, to take the young child, and his mother, and flee into Egypt*, because Herod would seek the young child to destroy him, when it was so well known that he could die no where but on the cross, and that the wicked Jews themselves at another time, could not lay hands on him, because his hour was *not yet come*? Let him ask the great God, if he have temerity enough to call in question his ways, why he has *chosen men to salvation, as the end, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth, as the means to that end*? The very doctrine of perseverance implies the use of means, and that the means are equally appointed as the end. Exhortations, admonitions, and conditional promises, are considered, by the pious abettors of this doctrine, as some of the means appointed for the promotion of their own personal holiness; and, consequently, that very perseverance, which is the principal subject of them.

5. The last objection I shall notice is, that this doctrine is inconsistent with *free agency*; that for men to be so kept by the power of God, as to render their falling away impossible, cannot be consistent with their being left to act as free agents.

To this it is replied; It is no infringement of man's free agency for God, by his providence, or by his Holy Spirit, to restrain and keep him, in a measure, from sin and folly. It is no infringement to be made *willing in the day of God's power*; or for his Maker to work in him, "*both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.*" But further, if being kept from total apostacy, in this world, destroy-

men's freedom, it must be equally so, in the world to come. The perseverance of angels, and glorified saints, is rendered absolutely certain, by the power and unchangeable promise of God, throughout eternity. But who ever yet thought that their security, or the certainty of their continuance, for one moment caused any diminution of the freedom of their agency? According to this objection there can be no such thing, in this world or the next, as the confirmation of a rational being in a state of holiness or happiness, without destroying the freedom of his will, and making him a mere machine. But this is not true, at least as it respects the next world. And why should it not, in the nature of things, be as possible for moral agents to be secured from apostacy and perdition in this world as the other? Surely there can be nothing at all inconsistent in the one case more than in the other.

It only remains that we apply the subject in a few practical inferences.

1. Hence we may see the importance of the doctrine of the infallible salvation of all true believers. It is important to their comfort and encouragement in all their arduous conflicts in their spiritual warfare, to inspire them with courage and fortify them with patience to run the race set before them. The infinite *love*, the unchanging *faithfulness*, the unerring *wisdom*, and omnipotent *power* of the eternal Godhead, stand pledged for their complete and everlasting salvation. The loss of one of them would be such a reflection on his divine attributes, his promises, covenant and oath, that the thought cannot be endured for one moment. Who can suppose that God would, as the first mover in the salvation of man, arrest the course of a sinner, subdue his rebellious soul, bow his stubborn will, change his wicked heart from enmity to love, give him a title, by adoption, to eternal life, as a joint heir with his Son Jesus Christ, and after all relinquish the work his own divine power had wrought, and suffer it to be lost by sin and the devil forever? Is God *able* to keep his people from falling? Why ask the question? Hear the voice of the Holy Ghost; "Now unto him that is *able to keep you from falling*, and to present you *faultless* before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." &c. Jude 24. Is he as *willing* to do this, as he is able? There is no doubt of it; "It is *not the will* of your Father which is in heaven, *that one of these little ones should perish*. 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." Matt. xviii. 14: John vi. 39. God's *ability, willingness, promise, covenant, and oath*, if all these do not secure the infallible salvation of *all* his saints, we may despair of the certain salvation of any one of them. The final perseverance of the saints is believed by both saints and angels in heaven; otherwise, their rejoicing at the conversion of a sinner is premature, not to say inconsistent and groundless. This doctrine is likewise a subject of joy and comfort to saints in their

journey and warfare here below; but the opposite is gloomy and joyless in the extreme.

2. We infer the importance of this doctrine likewise, in regard to the conversion of sinners. Ministers of the gospel are here furnished with a powerful motive to labor in winning souls to Christ. They may be *certain* that the souls converted by their ministry, shall not perish eternally, but shall be as stars in the crown of their rejoicing. To induce the ungodly to forsake their ways and become reconciled to God, they can assure them that *grace bestowed shall not be in vain, and the good part which they shall choose, shall not be taken from them*; that the gift of God is *eternal life* in Christ Jesus our Lord. On the contrary, what inducement would there be to labor to make proselytes and convert souls, if, after all, sin and the devil are suffered to destroy this work, and drag these souls down to perdition as fast as they are converted. Judge ye who has the most encouragement to labor, the minister who believes the doctrine I advocate, or the one who believes the reverse? Who labors with the greatest certainty, encouragement, and cheerfulness—the man, who has a certain title to his land, and is well assured it cannot be lost, or the one whose title is precarious, the reward of whose labor is uncertain in consequence of it, and who does not know whether he shall ultimately hold his land, or enjoy the reward of his labor?

3. Let believers be hence exhorted to be careful to maintain this doctrine pure and entire. The *way* and the *end* of the righteous must never be separated; for these two hath God inseparably joined together. Saints are not to be saved without persevering; they are not kept *by the power* of God, without being kept *in the grace* of God. But let the evident design and tendency of the doctrine be constantly kept in view, and it will not only strengthen them in all their conflicts with the enemies of their souls, but likewise animate them with the cheering hope of certain success. A mansion of rest, a crown of righteousness, a kingdom of glory, are all at hand. The Lord give success: *so run that ye may obtain.* AMEN.

ORIGIN OF CHRISTIANITY.

No conformity of circumstances can account for the *origin* of christianity. A Being, known to the world only as a Jewish peasant, delivered a system of doctrine, which overthrew, not merely some feeble philosophy, or some harsh and unpopular superstitions, but both the theory and establishment of the state of religion, guarded and fought for by the armed strength of the most powerful government of the greatest of all empires. Thousands and tens of thousands owed their daily bread to their connexion with that religion. Millions on millions had identified it with all their conceptions of life, of enjoyment, and of that obscure hope in which the heathen