



THE

DOCTRINE OF ELECTION,

BY

GARDNER SPRING, D. D.

ALSO

THE DOCTRINE

OF THE

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS,

BY

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C BOSTON:

DOCTRINAL TRACT AND BOOK SOCIETY.

1851.

44.42.16
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1859, July 18.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE doctrines illustrated and established in the following pages have ever been regarded, by the Christian church, as precious revealed truths, and as holding an intimate connection with the experience and hopes of the children of God. They were so regarded by the Reformers, and by our Puritan fathers. The evangelical churches of the present day hold the same precious truths. They consider them as exalting God to his own place on the throne of the universe, and as giving both elevation and depth to the experience of Christians, and confirmation to their hopes. There are those who have rejected these doctrines ; in some cases from a disrelish of the truth itself, as presenting God and his government in a light which disturbs their guilty consciences and takes away their false

hopes. They are indisposed to submit to a sovereignty so absolute as that of a God who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. In other cases, these truths are rejected from misapprehensions of their real import. They are opposed from what they are *supposed* to be, rather than from what they *really are*. Such persons only need light to remove their mistaken conceptions. To them, and to all, it is highly important that these revealed doctrines should be clearly stated and illustrated, that they may be intelligently and cordially received. Such is the design of the following pages. May each one, into whose hands they may fall, candidly and carefully read them through ; and then judge according to the evidence presented. And may God attend, with his blessing, this and every effort to promote a saving knowledge of divine truth.

BOSTON, *May*, 1851.

DOCTRINE OF ELECTION

ILLUSTRATED AND ESTABLISHED.

WHATEVER may be our views concerning the doctrine of election, in whatever perplexity and darkness it may, to our minds, be enveloped, or however strenuously we may deny it, it is involved in no such perplexity as is sometimes imagined. It is one of those important, plain, practical truths which must be believed and loved.

In endeavoring to give as scriptural and intelligible view of this subject as I can, I propose

To illustrate the doctrine;
To evince the truth of it; and
To vindicate it from objections.

I. I am^d to illustrate, or explain the doctrine of election.

This is the more needful, because it is sometimes identified with things that are not true, and often confounded with things that are true, but which are foreign to the subject. Let it be observed, therefore, —

1. *That it is no part of the doctrine of election, that God created a part of mankind merely to damn them.* This is often said by those who wish to bring the doctrine into contempt. But it is not true. The ultimate object for which God created all men, is the advancement of his own glory. He *will* punish multitudes of the human race “with everlasting destruction from his presence;” but he did not bring them into being merely *for the sake* of punishing them. “God is love.” There is not one malevolent emotion rankling in his bosom. It is one of the foulest stains that was ever cast upon his spotless character, to admit the thought that he brought creatures into being merely for the purpose of making them forever miserable. *In itself*, he desires the salvation of every living man. We have his oath, “that he has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth.” If he destroys the wicked, it is be-

cause their perdition is inseparable from the promotion of his own glory, and the highest good of his kingdom, and not because it is well pleasing to his benevolent mind, or the ultimate object of their creation.

2. *It is no part of the doctrine of election, that Christ died exclusively for the elect.* Such a representation is an unjustifiable perversion of the doctrine, and exposes it to unanswerable objections. Though there would have been no atonement, but for God's design to save the elect, and though there could have been no designs of mercy toward the elect, without an atonement ; yet the doctrine of atonement and election are two distinct things. Much idle breath and illiberal crimination might have been spared, by giving them that place in the Christian system which they hold in the Word of God. It has never yet been proved that Christ died exclusively for the elect. If language has any meaning, we are bound to believe that "he tasted death for every man." One would imagine that if the apostle had intended to put this question forever at rest, he could not have said more than he has in these mem-

orable words: "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

3. *It is no part of the doctrine of election, that the elect will be saved, let them do what they will.* The immutable law of the divine kingdom has made personal holiness essential to eternal life. It is not less certain that "no man will see the Lord, without holiness," than that no man will see the Lord, unless he be of the "election of grace." The elect cannot be saved, unless they possess supreme love to God, sincere contrition for all their sins, and faith, unfeigned, in the Lord Jesus Christ. The elect can no more enter heaven without being prepared for it than the non-elect. If a man continues stupid and secure, if he never reads the Scriptures, if he never attends upon the word and ordinances, if he is never anxious for the salvation of his soul, if he never repents and believes the gospel, if he never becomes the follower of the meek and lowly Jesus; he may rest assured there is nothing in the doctrine of election that will save him. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

4. *It is no part of the doctrine of election, that the non-elect will not be saved, if they do as well as they can.* If they would “repent, and believe the gospel,” there is nothing in the doctrine of election that would destroy them. If they would become reconciled to God, he would regard them with favor. If they would “come to Christ,” they should “in no wise be cast out.” Let the non-elect do their duty, and they will be saved. Nay, let them possess one holy desire, and they will be saved. And, if they will not do this, it does not become them to wrest the doctrine of election, and say it is an essential part of it that, do what they will, they must be lost. Not one of the non-elect will be lost, unless he persist in impenitence, reject the offers of mercy to the last, and die in his sins.

5. *It is no part of the doctrine of election, that the non-elect cannot comply with the terms of the gospel.* The efforts to vindicate the doctrine of election, without separating it from this unscriptural notion, have not only proved futile, but done harm. There is but one thing that prevents the non-elect from

accepting the offers of mercy, and that is, their cherished enmity against God. We are well aware that the Scriptures represent it to be *impossible* for men to do what they are *unwilling* to do. Hence, says our Savior, "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him." His idea, doubtless, is, that men cannot come to him, *because* they are unwilling to come; for he had just said, in the course of the same address, "And ye *will not* come unto me, that ye might have life." He supposes that *mere unwillingness* renders it impossible for them to come. This mode of speaking not only runs through the Bible, but is agreeable to the plainest dictates of reason and common sense. All the inability of the non-elect, therefore, to comply with the terms of the gospel, arises from their unwillingness to comply. Their inability is of a *moral*, and not a *physical* nature. It is a criminal impotence. It consists in nothing but their own voluntary wickedness. While, therefore, it is proper to say, that men *cannot* do what they are unwilling to do, it is also proper to say, that they *can* do what they

are willing to do. It is no perversion of language to say, that a knave *can* be honest, or that a drunkard *can* be temperate; for every one knows that they could be, if they would. Hence it is no perversion to say that a sinful man *can* become holy, or that the non-elect *can* comply with the terms of the gospel. Their unwillingness lays them under no *natural* inability, and may at any time be removed by their being willing. The non-elect are just as able to repent, and believe the gospel, as the elect, if they were but disposed to do so. They are as capable of doing right as of doing wrong. The doctrine of election leaves them in full possession of all their powers as moral agents, and all possible liberty to choose or refuse the offers of mercy. But for his voluntary wickedness, Judas was as able to accept the gospel as Paul. The non-elect are able to comply with the terms of the gospel, if they choose to do it. It is, therefore, their own choice, and not the decree of election, that shuts them out of the kingdom of heaven. All representations of the doctrine of election, therefore, that deny the non-elect *natu-*

ral power to comply with the overtures of mercy, form no part of that doctrine, as it is exhibited in the Bible.

But, if none of these things belong to the doctrine of election, what is it? For the sake of a clear understanding of the subject, several things must be particularly observed.

1. All mankind are, by nature, in a state of sin and condemnation. They are “estranged, from the womb.” The “imagination of man’s heart is evil, from his youth.” By the apostasy of their first parents, sin and the curse are the birthright of all their natural descendants, from generation to generation; so that, by their offence, all their posterity come into the world with a corrupt nature, and under the wrath of God.

2. Notwithstanding the native corruption of the human heart, and the lost condition of all mankind, by nature, God has provided a full and complete atonement for all their sins. The atonement was made, not for the elect, or non-elect, as such, but all men, as *sinner*s. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth on him might not perish, but have

everlasting life." The atonement of Christ is sufficient for all, adapted to all, offered to all, and, irrespective of the divine purpose as to its effectual application, made as much for one man as another.

3. Notwithstanding the unlimited provision of the gospel, all, with one consent, reject the overtures of mercy, and will not come unto Christ, that they might have life. Left to himself, every individual of the human race will reject the Savior, and plunge to perdition. No sense of guilt and danger, no consciousness of obligation and duty, no pressure of motives, will constrain a living man to lay down the arms of rebellion, and be reconciled to God. If the Spirit of God does not appear, in the glory of his grace, to wrest the weapons of revolt from his hands, and make the sinner willing, in the day of his power, all are lost, and Christ is dead in vain.

4. This sad result God has determined to prevent. He does not mean that all mankind shall finally perish. He does not intend that they shall rob him of his glory, nor his Son of the reward of his death. Some

he saves. There is a *part* he rescues from themselves and from perdition. This number is *definite*. His eye is upon them. When in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity, he sends his Spirit to convince them of their lost condition, to show them their need of mercy, to make his word quick and powerful, to create them anew in Christ Jesus, and to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. He begins, carries on, and completes the work, and receives them, at last, to "the glory which is to be revealed."

5. God does this *from design*. Who are saved and who lost, is not, with him, a matter of indifference. He has not committed the destiny of souls to the obscure omnipotency of chance. He *formed a purpose* to renew, and sanctify, and justify, and glorify a certain part of our fallen race. He formed this purpose from eternity. This design is an eternal design, this determination an eternal, irrevocable decree.

6. In doing this, it is important to remark, that God is governed by a wise regard to his own good pleasure. He does not sanc-

tify and save one part of mankind rather than another because one part is better than another. The elect are no more worthy of being made the objects of regenerating and redeeming grace, than the non-elect. When the design of saving them was formed, they were not in being, and "had done neither good nor evil." During the whole of their unregenerate state, they were opposing God, and contemning the Son of his love. The moment before their regeneration, they were his determined enemies. It could not, therefore, have been from regard to any thing in them, that *they* were taken, and *others* left, but from a regard to the mere good pleasure of God. It was a *sovereign* purpose. It was that all the glory might redound to God's great and holy name.

7. Nor is it less important to subjoin, that this sovereign and eternal purpose was formed in view of the atonement of Christ. In its practical influence, it regarded men as already fallen, by their iniquity, and beyond the possibility of deliverance, except by atonement. When God determined to save a part of mankind, he had it in prospect to

provide such an expiation for the sins of the world, as to justify him in the unlimited offer of pardon, and in the full and complete justification of all who accept it. He owed it to himself, in forming the purpose to save, to devise a consistent method of salvation. It would have been a violation of the rights of moral government to have received rebels into favor, "without the shedding of blood." Hence, the elect are said to be "chosen in Christ." In other places, they are said to be "Christ's seed." In others, they are represented as "given to him" by his Father. When, in the covenant of peace, he engaged to lay down his life for the sins of the world, a stipulated number was "given him" as his reward. In view of mankind as already plunged in guilt and ruin, and of Christ as making an adequate atonement, God "chose them to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth."

This is what we suppose the Scriptures mean by the doctrine of election. The apostle represents himself, and the Christians at Ephesus, to be "chosen" — "chosen in Christ" — "chosen in him before the foun-

dation of the world;" and that, not upon condition they *would be* holy, nor because of any foreseen holiness; but "that they *should be* holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated them unto the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ, unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

With this illustration of the doctrine we pass, —

II. To show that it is true.

We think the truth of this doctrine may be evinced, —

1. From the divine immutability.

God is unchangeable. "He is of one mind, and none can turn him." But if God is unchangeable, then every thing that has been, or will be, was unalterably fixed and determined in the divine mind from eternity. Hence it is written, "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." Hence God himself claims this exalted character: "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times,

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the things that are not yet done; saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." If we could suppose the Deity to be wiser, and better, and mightier at some times than at others, we might suppose that, with every accession of knowledge, goodness, and power, he would form some new designs. But he is always the same. And as his character never alters, so his purposes never alter. Hence the divine immutability secures the doctrine of election. If the divine mind has formed any new purpose with regard to the salvation of men, then he has altered his plans, and is mutable; but if he has always been of the same mind, then, unless he actually saves the whole, he must have formed the purpose of saving a part. Every individual he saves, he must have "always meant to save," he must have always chosen and determined to save. But this is nothing more nor less than the doctrine of election. All the objections, therefore, that are made against the doctrine of election, are levelled equally against the divine immutability.

2. The doctrine of election may be con-

clusively argued from the divine foreknowledge.

The mere light of nature is enough to teach us that God knows all things, present, past, and to come. It is impossible that a being of infinite wisdom should commence a system of operations, without knowing what he is about to do. If God does not know all events before they actually take place, then his knowledge may increase, and he may be wiser to-morrow than he is to-day. In short, if he does not foreknow all things, he may, not only from day to day discover things that are new, but he may deduce new results from them, may misjudge in his arrangements, and be frustrated in his purposes. But the Bible puts this question beyond a doubt. "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." It is a settled point, then, that God knew from all eternity every thing that would take place.

God, therefore, *knows* who will at last be saved. In the ages of eternity, he beheld the long track of time from the fall of Adam to the general judgment, and fixed his eye

on every individual of the human family, that would at last enter into his kingdom. He knew the *exact number*, and he knew with absolute certainty. I say, he knew *with certainty*; for there is nothing else that deserves the name of *knowledge*, except that which is certain. God did not know how many and who would *probably* be saved, but how many would *certainly* be saved. Absolutely to foreknow a mere contingency, is impossible. To know who might be saved, and who might not be saved, is to know nothing about it. Certainly to know that a thing *will be*, and yet certainly to know that it *may not be*, is the same thing as certainly to know, and not certainly to know at the same time; which is palpable contradiction. It must be conceded, therefore, that God must have known with *absolute certainty* the exact number of those who would be saved. But how could this be known, unless it were a determined event? If it were undetermined, it was uncertain; and if uncertain, it could not certainly be known. Let any man but an atheist look at this with an unprejudiced mind, and he

must receive the doctrine of election. How could God know from eternity how many would be saved, unless he had from eternity determined to save precisely this number? In eternity, there was no being but God himself. There were no heavens and no earth; no angels, and no men. God existed alone. And when he existed alone, he *certainly knew* how many intelligent beings would exist, and how many would be saved. But where did he obtain this knowledge? Not from any other being beside himself, for there was no other; and not from himself, unless he had formed the determination to save them; for if he had not formed the determination to save them, he could not have known that they would be saved. It is just as certain, therefore, that God *determined* from eternity who would be saved, as that he *knew* from eternity who would be saved. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." But this is nothing more nor less than the doctrine of election. All the objections which lie against the doctrine of election, lie, with equal force, against the divine foreknowledge.

3. In proof of this doctrine, we shall make our appeal to the Holy Scriptures.

We consider the doctrine unanswerably demonstrated from the preceding considerations; but "to the law and the testimony." We receive the Scriptures as the word of God, and the infallible rule of faith and practice. Here, then, we have a standard to which every thing must bow. From this oracle there is no appeal. Let us go, then, to the Bible; and let us go, not to alter, not to expunge, not to supply, not to wrest from its plain and obvious meaning a single word; but simply to inquire what the Lord hath spoken, and to yield our preconceived opinions to the paramount authority of eternal truth. Here, if we are not deceived, you will find the doctrine of election revealed as plainly as language can reveal it.

Before we extend this investigation, let me beg you to read, with care, the words of the apostle, in Eph. i. 3, 4, and 5: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; according as he hath chosen us in him before

the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." "According as God hath *chosen* us in Christ;" and, as though this were equivocal, he adds, "According as he hath *chosen* us in him, *before the foundation of the world*;" and to give emphasis to the sentiment, he subjoins, "Having *predestinated* us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of *his will*." Is not this the doctrine of election?

Turn to the eleventh verse of the same chapter: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being *predestinated* according to the *purpose* of him who worketh all things after the *counsel of his own will*." Does this bear no resemblance to the decree of election?

The same thought you will also find in that noble challenge of the apostle, toward the close of the eighth of Romans. Paul had hopes of an elevated character. He

“knew that all things worked together for good, to them that love God.” And how did he know this? He looked through the miseries and the darkness of time, to the counsels of eternity. “And we know,” saith he, “that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his purpose*. For whom he did *foreknow*, he also did *predestinate* to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did *predestinate*, them he also *called*; and whom he *called*, them he also *justified*; and whom he *justified*, them he also *glorified*. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of *God’s elect*”? How characteristic of this noble apostle, to say, in the opening of this epistle, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”! and how delightful to hear him thus glorying in electing grace!

In the ninth chapter of the same epistle, there is a remarkable passage, which, with all their efforts, the opposers of this doctrine

have found it hard to pervert or misunderstand. The apostle's affection for his countrymen had led him to see, with grief, that "all are not Israel which are of Israel," and, in this lamented fact, to acknowledge that the destinies of men were in the hands of a sovereign God. He saw sovereignty every where. He could not tell why Ishmael might not have been as fit a subject of the promise as Isaac. Both were the seed of Abraham, and yet it was the pleasure of God to fix his love on Isaac. Hence it is written, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called." "And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac, (for the children *being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil*, that the *purpose* of God according to *election* might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,) it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger; as it is written, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.*" *Think of this.*

In the Second Epistle to Timothy, the first chapter and the ninth verse, we have this unequivocal declaration: "Who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, not ac-

according to our works, but according to his own *purpose and grace*, which was given us in Christ Jesus, *before the world began.*" And, in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, the second chapter and thirteenth verse, we have this declaration: "God hath *from the beginning* chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." If there is any import in language, these passages of Scripture expressly assert the doctrine of personal, unconditional election to holiness and eternal life.

Though all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and alike entitled to our confidence, yet it is desirable to throw together the thoughts of our Savior on this interesting subject. There is no doctrine which he more frequently enforced, and in which he more greatly rejoiced, than the doctrine of election. It was a common observation with him, that "many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. xx. 16, and xxii. 14.) He told his disciples, "*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit.*"

(John xv. 16.) The same sentiment he inculcated in his reproof to the mother of Zebedee's children: "To sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them *for whom it is prepared* of my Father." (Matt. xx. 23.) Again he says, alluding to the promise of the everlasting covenant, "All that the Father *hath given me*, shall come to me." (John vi. 37.) In the tenth chapter of the same evangelist, he likewise speaks of his elect with peculiar tenderness. He calls them his flock, his "sheep," for whom he preëminently laid down his life. "My *sheep* hear my voice, and I *know* them, and I give unto *them* eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, that *gave them me*, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." In the same chapter he told the Jews, "Ye believe not, *because ye are not of my sheep.*" In his prayer in the garden, he prayed for the elect, and for them only. These are his words: "I pray for *them*; I pray not for the world, but for them which *thou hast given*

me." (John xvii. 9.) Christ also speaks of the impossibility of "deceiving the *elect*," of "shortening the days of tribulation for the *elect's* sake," and of God's avenging "his own *elect*." (Mark xiii. 22; Matt. xxiv. 22; and Luke xviii. 7.) Such declarations do not need any comment, and we believe they do not admit any evasion. You may pervert and disbelieve them, but they are the words of Christ, and not one of them shall pass away. Future scenes shall reveal their unchanging verity, in signals hung out from the rending earth and the blackened heavens. The day is on the wing, when you shall "see the Son of man coming in the clouds, with power and great glory." The voice of the archangel will then proclaim the doctrine of election. "Then shall the Son of man send his angels, and shall gather together *his elect* from the four winds." (Mark xiii. 27.) And when gathered before him, what will he say? What will he say? He will preach the doctrine of election to an assembled universe, as though "seven thunders uttered their voices." Turning to those on his right hand, he will say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit

the kingdom *prepared for you, from the foundation of the world!*" The top-stone of the Christian temple will then be brought forth with the shoutings of electing grace.

But it is needless to multiply testimony. I have often been surprised that men, who profess to receive the Bible as the rule of their faith, should question the truth of this doctrine. It must be, either that they do not read the Bible, or that they pervert its plain and obvious import; or that they feel at liberty to deny what God has expressly revealed. I should feel myself acting by far the more consistent part to disavow the truth of revealed religion, than to avow it and deny the doctrine of election. Search the Scriptures, and remember that no truth, however unpleasant, if found there, is to be treated with indifference and disrespect. You are bound to believe what is true. The claim of God upon your faith is as imperative as his claim upon your practice. You have no more right to disbelieve the doctrines of the gospel, than to neglect its duties. Both are crime, both are rebellion. If you have difficulties in viewing this subject, be willing to

sit at the feet of Jesus, and "learn of him." Submit your all to the decisions of his Holy Spirit. But we pass, —

III. To vindicate the doctrine from all reasonable objections.

Objection 1. Why did God determine, in the purposes of his grace, to make one man differ from another? Why did he not determine to save all?

Answer. It is easy to inform you: "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight!"

Obj. 2. But if I am not one of the elect, what is there for me to do?

Ans. Your duty, or abide the consequences.

Obj. 3. But if I am not one of the elect, how am I to be blamed for not being saved?

Ans. Because you do not choose life, when life and death are with equal sincerity set before you. You are bound to be saved. It never was your duty to be lost. I know it is certain you will persist in sin, and perish, if God does not stop you, and if he has not, from eternity, determined to stop you. But are you not to be blamed for your invincible perseverance in iniquity? If it is

certain that a man will commit the crime of murder, if God has not from eternity determined to prevent him, is he not to be blamed for committing it?

Obj. 4. But if I am not elected, how *can* I choose life?

Ans. Just as easily as you can choose death. Your rational and moral faculties capacitate and oblige you to choose life. The doctrine of election does not infringe upon your moral agency. It leaves you in full possession of all possible liberty to accept or reject the Savior.

Obj. 5. But if the doctrine of election be true, God cannot be sincere in the offers of mercy. How is it compatible with the sincerity of the calls and invitations of the gospel to all men, that he should have determined to make only a part accept them?

Ans. Beyond all question, the calls and invitations of the gospel are made to all. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." No sinner has the warrant to exclude himself from this gracious overture. The invitations of mercy are addressed to all alike, and with as much sincerity to

each one, as though *he* were the only sinner in the world. But to obviate this objection conclusively, it will be well to consider, *What is necessary to constitute a sincere invitation?* We reply, —

1. That the blessing offered *be in actual existence, and at the disposal of the offerer.* If a man invite me to a banquet which is not in being, and which he has not ability to provide, every honest mind will pronounce the invitation insincere.

2. That the offerer *be willing his offer should be accepted.* If a man invite me to a banquet, and I ascertain that he does not wish me to accept the invitation, I should consider the invitation insincere.

3. That the invitation be made *upon practicable terms.* Should you invite me to a banquet, upon condition that I first pluck the sun from its orbit, I should consider you insincere. And, —

4. That the offerer *be willing to impart* what he offers to all who will accept it. If you invite me to a banquet, and I accept your invitation, but am refused a seat at your table, I should be justified in considering the invitation insincere.

We submit to the objector, whether in any case where these four things combine, there be not a sincere invitation. Abstract from an invitation either of these properties, and I acknowledge it is insincere. But nothing is more true, than that the invitations of the gospel combine all these properties.

Pardon and eternal life are in actual existence, and at the disposal of a sovereign God. Christ died for the non-elect, as well as for the elect, and therefore God *has mercy to offer* to them as well as the elect. If the atonement had done nothing for the non-elect, so that they are precisely in the situation they would have been if no atonement had been made, then there is no sincerity in announcing *to them* the overtures of mercy. If there is no salvation provided for them, so that God offers what he had not to bestow, then his offers are insincere. But salvation is provided. "All things are ready." "There is bread enough, and to spare."

God is willing the invitations of his grace should be accepted. He is willing every man should come. "As I live, saith the

Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn and live." Nor is there any dishonesty in these professions. If he were unwilling the non-elect should accept the offers of life, or if he did any thing independently of their own voluntary agency to prevent their accepting it, there might be. But it is not so. He never did, he never will, do any thing to prevent a sinner's accepting the Savior, if he is willing to accept him.

God has also made the offers of mercy upon terms that are practicable and reasonable. If he had not, the charge of insincerity would remain unanswered. All that is required on the part of those to whom the invitations of the gospel are addressed, is a right disposition of heart, or, in other words, a disposition to make the invitations of the gospel welcome. There is nothing in the way of accepting the offer, but a perverse will.

In connection with this, God is willing to bestow mercy on all who will accept it. He has said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will no wise cast out." Nor has there been

an instance in which this declaration has proved untrue. So long, therefore, as God has mercy to bestow; so long as he is willing to bestow it; so long as he is willing it should be accepted; so long as he offers it upon reasonable terms, and actually imparts it in every instance where it is not perseveringly rejected; it cannot be said that he is insincere in the offers of mercy. The sincerity of his offer does not depend upon the perverseness which rejects it.

Obj. 5. The doctrine of election represents God as being *partial* in the dispensations of his grace; and the Scriptures declare that "there is no respect of persons with God."

Ans. That God is *discriminating* in the dispensations of grace, is most cheerfully allowed. He doubtless does more for the elect than for the non-elect. He makes them willing in the day of his power; he renews and sanctifies them; he matures them for the glory which shall be revealed; he finally advances them to heaven. This he designed to do for them from all eternity, while none of this he does for the non-elect. But though he is thus discriminating, he is not

partial. *Partiality* is a *capricious* preference of one before another; and if it could be proved that the favor which God exercises towards the elect were the result of *mere caprice*, he would be chargeable with criminal partiality. Partiality is a disposition to favor one before another *without reason*; and if it could be proved that God has no reason for the eternal difference he makes between the elect and the non-elect, he would be chargeable with partiality. Partiality is an undue respect *to the persons* of men; and if it could be proved, that in the method of grace, God regards the elect rather than the non-elect, from an undue respect to *them*, or *their persons*, he could not be acquitted of the charge of partiality. God is not partial, because his sovereignty is neither arbitrary nor capricious, but in all its diversified operations, under the guidance of unerring wisdom and infinite goodness. God is not partial, because, as the moral governor of the world, he uniformly treats men according to their real character and conduct. He does not, through any "respect of the persons of men in judgment," or through the

unguarded influence of any private partialities, condemn and punish the righteous, nor approve and reward the wicked. When I see the Sovereign of the universe regard the prayers and alms of the devout Cornelius, a Roman centurion, with equal complacency as though he had been a Jew, I can repeat the sentiment of Peter: "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Obj. 6. The doctrine of election represents God as unjust.

Ans. It will not be pretended that he is unjust to the elect. If there be injustice, it is toward the non-elect; and if he is unjust to the non-elect, it must be that *he treats them worse than they deserve*. But how does he treat them? He casts them out into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. And is this worse than they deserve? Is not this the just desert of every child of Adam? How, then, can God be accused of injustice, if, in his great mercy by Jesus Christ, he is pleased to save a part of the human family, while he punishes the other

part in proportion to their deserts? If he would not be unjust in punishing the *whole*, surely he would not be unjust in punishing a *part*. But, perhaps, I ought to blush for attempting to answer an objection so full of impiety, as to call in question the justice of God in the dispensations of his grace. I would rather repeat the answer of the apostle: "What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!" This is enough to cover the objector with shame. "Who art thou, O man! that *repliest against God!*"

Obj. 7. If the doctrine of election be true, why can I not as well live in carelessness and sin, as in a punctual attendance upon the means of grace, and the duties of religion? I cannot alter God's eternal decree. To this I

Ans. You *can* live in carelessness and sin; you can cast off fear and restrain prayer; you can grieve the Holy Spirit and reject the Savior; and you can perish! If you choose to leave your eternal salvation to the decree of God, without personal religion on your part, and without any efforts to

obtain it, you will, beyond all question, die in sin, and sink down to hell. If God has chosen you to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*, does it follow that you will be saved, if you always *reject the truth*, and *never become holy*? Because God determined to save Noah by means of the ark, does this prove that the ark was not necessary, or that Noah would have been saved without it? Or might he have sat down with the scoffing world, and resolved not to be at the trouble of building the ark, because God had determined to save him and his family from the flood? God never determined the end without determining the means necessary to obtain it. If the objector expects that there is any decree of election that will save him without his own personal holiness, he will find his expectations sadly defeated at last.

Obj. 8. If the non-elect, left to themselves, will never accept of salvation, and if God has not determined to make them willing to accept it, why are they exhorted to repent and believe?

Ans. Because they are sinners, and it is

reasonable they should repent, whether elect or non-elect. Because there is a Savior provided for them, and it is reasonable they should believe on him. Because they are able to do both. The doctrine of election does not take away a single power, does not infringe upon a single privilege, does not diminish the force of a single obligation. But more than this, though they never will yield the controversy with God, and though God has not determined to make them yield; yet all the exhortations to duty with which they are favored, answer a most important purpose. They illustrate the obduracy of their hearts, and prepare them to see, and acknowledge, and feel the justice of God, in their final condemnation. When they see themselves sinking into the pit, they will remember that they were once urged to believe and live; and they and an assembled universe will forever feel, that the justice of God shines *brighter* by all the calls of his mercy.

Obj. 9. But the doctrine is calculated to drive men to despair.

Ans. It might be calculated to drive men to despair, if there were any other way by

which sinners are reconciled to God. But so long as it is true, that unless God bow the stubborn heart of man, by the efficacious and almighty energy of his own grace, and unless he always meant to do this, every living man must perish; we cannot see how the fact that there is a part of mankind for whom he does this, and for whom he eternally designed to do it, should drive sinners to despair. No, the doctrine of election takes away all false hopes, and no others. It strips the sinner of all his self-righteousness; it disrobes him of all his vain pretences; it drags him out from all his hiding-places, and throws him into the hands of a sovereign God; but it takes away no solid foundation of hope. But *whom* does the doctrine of election drive to despair? The people of God? Pious parents? Faithful ministers? They would all be in despair without it. When cut off from every other hope, they can look up to God's unchangeable purpose to save, and there hang with comfort and delight. I ask again, *whom* does it drive to despair? Convinced and distressed sinners? It is upon this truth the desponding

sinner throws himself in the last resort. He sees that if discriminating mercy does not raise him from the pit, he forever sinks. He feels that he must put his life in his hand, and cast himself at the footstool of sovereignty, pouring out this sum of all his hopes: "Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou *canst* make me clean!" No, the doctrine of election drives none to despair, throws none into discouragement, but the incorrigible enemies of God.

Still, some may object, after all, that the doctrine of election is full of perplexity, needless, and unprofitable, and ought not to be preached.

To this I answer, it is one of the plainest doctrines in all the Bible. It is simply *God's determining to save whom he will, and making his own choice from among this lost world, according to his sovereign pleasure.* Surely there is no perplexity in this. But if it *were* a perplexing truth, this would be a reason for preaching, rather than not preaching it. Sometimes the minds of sinners, and young converts, and older saints, are embarrassed by difficulties of their own creating, when contemplating this doctrine. And one reason

why they are so is, because the doctrine is not frequently enough brought into view. When this truth is plainly and fully exhibited, it delights and nourishes the people of God. It is the sincere milk of the word; and both young and older Christians always feel uneasy, and restless, and unstable, till they are informed and established in this important doctrine of the gospel.

If the objector still thinks that this is a very *unprofitable* doctrine, we have to make one inquiry. Is it contained in the Bible? If it is, we beg the permission to refer the objector to that unequivocal declaration of the Holy Spirit: "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, and for instruction in righteousness.*" Observe, it is not "all Scripture" *except the doctrine of election*; but "*all Scripture*" — is "*profitable.*" The same reasons exist for preaching this doctrine, and for viewing it profitable, that there were for revealing it.

But it is more tedious than difficult, to follow the objector through all his windings, and expose his ever-varying expedients to

shake off the obligation to yield an implicit assent to this great and blessed truth. Some of the more common objections we have attempted to obviate. After all, there is a class of objections that will remain unobviated. They are the objections, not of the head, but of the heart. It is easy to prove that God is a sovereign, but we cannot make wicked men submit to his sovereignty. It is easy to demonstrate the doctrine of election, but it is not in man to make the wicked love it. It is important, therefore, that we make a suitable application of the whole subject. And,—

1. From the view we have taken of our subject, we cannot fail to discover some of the reasons why the doctrine of election is so much and so violently opposed. With multitudes, the very reason why they are hostile to it is, *because they understand it*. They see how it affects their interests for time and eternity. They see how it throws them into the hands of that God who “hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” It is because they see it in a light that disturbs their sins

and their hopes, that they hate it, and oppose it when it is preached. This was the case when it was preached by our Savior. On one occasion, when he preached it with great clearness and power, very many of those who had for a considerable time followed him, "went back and walked no more with him." On another occasion, when he preached it in the synagogue at Nazareth, his hearers were so exasperated, that they made a bold and desperate attempt upon his life. This is the secret spring of disaffection to the doctrine; *wicked men do not love the sovereignty of God*; they murmur, and repine, and contend, because they are in his hands, as the clay in the hands of the potter, and because it depends on his mere good pleasure, whether they shall choose life or death; whether they shall go to heaven or to hell. They cannot bear to submit to a sovereignty that is so absolute. They are not willing that the destinies of eternity should be in the hands of God. They wish to be above God. They wish him to alter his purposes respecting the salvation of men; and they are dissatisfied because they cannot

dethrone him, because they cannot hinder his working all things after the counsel of his own will, and because they know his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. It is not, therefore, because the doctrine of election is not true, that wicked men oppose it, but because it gives them no peace till they are reconciled to God. It is because it arrays the holy God against them, and gives a death-blow to all their selfish desires and selfish hopes. The same disposition that hates the law and the gospel, that hates God and rejects his Son, that loves sin and hates holiness, opposes the doctrine of election.

2. We are taught by our subject, that the opposition which is made to the doctrine of election is exceedingly sinful. It is always sinful to oppose the truth as it is in Jesus. And the sinfulness of that opposition rises in proportion to the malignity of the opposition, and the importance of the truth against which it is directed. But there is no truth that is opposed with greater bitterness by the carnal mind, than the truth we have now set before you. Sometimes the wicked feel when they hear it, as the mur-

derers of Stephen felt, when they gnashed upon him with their teeth. What is this but the *very spirit of the damned*? Against what is all this hostility directed? Against a truth that gives the fullest and clearest view of the divine glory. Against that eternal purpose, to which must be traced the gift of a Savior, the descent of the Holy Ghost, the offer of mercy, the existence of the church, and the happiness of heaven. No, not a drop of mercy would have ever fallen upon our desolate world, but for electing love. It is owing to this blessed and eternal purpose that you are now out of hell. That you enjoy a day of grace, and the means of salvation, is owing to God's eternal purpose to rescue from perdition a part of our fallen race. Not a soul would have been spared from the desolations of the fall; not a sinner would have been converted and saved; not a ransomed rebel brought home to glory; not a note of the everlasting song have vibrated on the ear, but for the eternal purpose of God to save his people. And yet it is against this fundamental, this glorious truth, that all the emity of the selfish mind

is set in array. It is against this glorious truth — that gives ministers all their encouragement to preach, Christians all their encouragement to pray, and sinners all their encouragement to repent and believe the gospel, that the seed of the serpent spit out all their venom. O, what would become of our world, if those who hate the doctrine of election could gain the object of their wishes, and blot this daystar of hope from the sacred page! Well might we “cry to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon us, and cover us from the wrath of Him that sitteth on the throne.” Who is prepared to bear the guilt of thus tearing away the last hope of a ruined world? O sinner, it is the hidden opposition of that rebellious heart to this precious truth, that thus levels the fatal blow! It is not for the want of an inclination to strike the doctrine of election out of being, that you *have not done it*, and thus defeated the purposes of redeeming mercy, and bathed heaven in tears. *Are you this side eternity?* We may add, —

3. The doctrine of election ought to be loved. God loves it. He takes infinite de-

light in contemplating the designs of eternal mercy. Christ loves it. There was an hour when his soul broke out in high expressions of joy, while contemplating this truth in the days of his incarnation: "At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." The Holy Ghost loves it. With ineffable delight does he enter our world, as the great agent to carry on the designs of electing grace. All holy beings love it; and *all* beings, whether sinful or holy, *ought* to love it. They have no reason for hating it, but every possible reason for loving it.

If they are bound to love God, they are bound to love the doctrine of election. This doctrine, more than any other in the gospel method of salvation, brings God into view. He formed the purpose of saving the elect, because this was the method in which he could manifest all his perfections in the clearest, fullest manner, and in a manner calculated to awaken the attention of the

universe, and fix it upon his great and amiable character. That character is perfect. Every thing that can render a being lovely and adorable, worthy of commendation and confidence, belongs to God, without the shadow of imperfection in kind or degree. There are some faint resemblances of excellence in creatures; but they are the mere rays scattered from the fulness of his glory. When from this atom world I look up, and look around me, and look every where, and every where behold the living Deity, I see perfection combined with perfection, perfection illustrating and beautifying perfection, and cannot but feel that it is infinitely desirable that this matchless excellence should be made to appear. Every truth that illustrates it, claims my highest regard. Not to delight in the truth that illustrates it, is not to delight in God. Not to feel my obligation to love the truth that illustrates it, is not to feel my obligation to love him.

If all are bound to love what is best, they are bound to love the doctrine of election. God is infinitely wise and good, and both knows and will do what is on the whole

wisest and best. As his wisdom enables him clearly to see what number and what persons it is best to save, so his goodness disposes him to desire and elect the very number and the very persons. In the designs of a perfectly wise and benevolent being, there can be nothing that is unlovely, but every thing that is lovely. God does not call upon his creatures to approve his purposes, merely because they are *his*; but because they are best. He has formed no purpose merely because he *will* form it; but because it is best. He does nothing merely because he *can* do it, but because it is best. In the holy sovereignty of the King of kings, there is no tyranny, no oppression, no injustice, no wanton exercise of power, no impulse of passion, but every design and every event is the result of one eternal impulse to what is best. The great plan of the divine operations is as good as it can be. It is because the eye and heart of God are fixed on the best possible results, that he is a God of electing love. This is the key to all that is inscrutable in the mystery of election. This is the thought that binds every creature in

the universe to "be still and know that he is God."

Yes, beloved reader, the doctrine of election ought to be loved. You must not only believe, but *love* it. If you see its discriminating influence in these effusions of the Holy Spirit, you must see and adore. God is in all. "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another to dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction? And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared to glory!" The rights of the Creator are merely nominal, unless uncontrolled. If God may not "do what he will with his own," no matter how soon he abandons the supremacy of the universe. Impenitent men! you must bow to this holy dominion. What do you hope to gain by your opposition to discriminating grace? Unfriendly as these

unhumbled hearts may be to its searching influence, this hostility must cease. This doctrine *must be loved*. To hate it, is to take the side of the wicked against the righteous. To hate it, is to take the side of the adversary against God. To hate it, is to take the side of hell against heaven. To hate it, is to be forever miserable.

Do you say, "*I would love it, if I were one of the elect?*" Has it, then, come to this? What if you are not one of the elect? Have you a right to hate it? Have you a right to hate God for not arresting you in your own *chosen* way? Have you a right to hate God, because, in the final recompense, he treats you as you deserve? Have you a right to hate God for saving *others*, merely because he does not save *you*? "Is thine eye evil because he is good?" Do you cherish affections so selfish and malignant, that you can rejoice in no felicity incompatible with your own? Because *you* are not saved, would you have a world of sinners perish? Because you will "wail and gnash your teeth," will you murmur that you cannot hear the myriads of the redeemed mingling

their sighs and moans with yours ? Because you will sink to hell, will you complain that you cannot behold the throne of God sinking by the side of you ? O sinner ! Where are you ? What spirit is this ? And what is this spirit fit for but fuel for the unquenchable flame ?

THE DOCTRINE
OF THE
PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. — *Phil. i. 6.*

IN all true believers a good work has been begun. A new heart has been 'given them, and a right spirit has been put within them. They are not, however, perfectly sanctified; but a sanctifying process has commenced, which will be carried on, till they arrive at the fulness of the stature of perfect men in Christ. Of this fact, the apostle expresses his confident assurance in the text above cited.

This text, it is believed, teaches clearly the doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance. As

this doctrine is often called in question, and supposed by some to be of dangerous tendency, I propose in this discussion, —

I. To examine some of the most plausible objections which have been urged against it.

II. To adduce some of the evidence by which it is supported.

It may be proper, however, before I proceed to a discussion of the subject, to state definitely the question at issue.

The question is not, whether true believers ever fall into sin. It is admitted that they do. *A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.* (Prov. xxiv. 16.)

The question is not, whether persons who profess religion, and appear to possess it, may fall away and perish. That this is sometimes the case, is evinced by observation and the word of God.

The question is not, whether true believers, considered in themselves merely, are *in danger* of final apostasy. It is admitted that if God has not promised to keep them, there is no certainty of their perseverance.

The question is not, whether a true saint

who falls into sin, will be saved *if* he should die impenitent. It is undeniable, that no person, whether a saint or a sinner, can be pardoned without repentance. The point at issue, is, whether a true saint will be suffered to fall and die impenitent.

The question is not, whether a true believer will be saved, whether he endure to the end or not. It is certain that those only will be saved, who shall endure to the end. The point which I maintain is, that all true believers will endure to the end.

The question is not, whether saints will persevere without their own exertions. This is evidently impossible; as much so as it would be to run without moving. To persevere without their own exertions, would be to persevere without perseverance.

But the question is this: whether any who have been born of the Spirit, justified by grace, and adopted as God's children, will be left to utter and final apostasy? Or whether God has not promised, that all such shall persevere in faith and holiness to the end of life and be saved?

Before I proceed to state and answer ob-

jections, I will just mention what it is incumbent on the objector to prove. He must prove that some real saints have utterly and finally apostatized; or that some will thus apostatize.

It is nothing to his purpose to show, that Christians are commanded to persevere. The question is, whether they do or do not obey the command. Surely it is not sound reasoning to infer from a command, that those to whom it is given will disobey it. All the saints and angels in heaven are commanded to persevere; and are we hence to conclude, that more or less of them will yet apostatize?

Nor is it to the objector's purpose to show, that if real saints should fall away and die impenitent, they would be lost. That this would be the consequence, is certain. And it is equally certain that if Gabriel should apostatize, he would be cast down to hell; and are we hence to infer that Gabriel will apostatize?

Nor is it to the objector's purpose to show, that saints are cautioned against apostasy. 't becomes him to prove, that these cautions

will not be made effectual to prevent their apostasy.

Nor is it to his purpose to show, that the promises of salvation are conditional. He must show that some true believers will fail of complying with the conditions.

Nor is it to his purpose to show, that real saints have sometimes fallen into great sins. It is incumbent on him to prove that their apostasy was total and final.

Nor is it to his purpose to show, that persons who once professed religion, and who appeared to possess it, have fallen away and perished. It becomes him to prove that they were true saints.

Let these remarks be kept in view, while we proceed to examine the objections against the doctrine under consideration.

1. One of the most plausible objections, which has ever been urged against this doctrine, is derived from the following passage of Scripture: "But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he

hath done shall not be mentioned; in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die." (Ezek. xviii. 24.)

It may admit of a question, whether the term *righteous* in this passage was intended to denote a real saint. Persons are often spoken of in the Scriptures according to their apparent or visible character. By the *righteous* here may be meant, one who is only *reputed* to be such; and the sentiment of the passage may be, that whatever evidence a man may give of genuine piety, yet if he shall apostatize, all his former appearance of religion shall be regarded as worthless, and he shall be treated according to his real character.

But supposing a true saint to be denoted by the term *righteous* in this passage; it is not asserted that a *righteous* man will turn away from his *righteousness*; but only that *should* he thus turn away, he would die. A supposition is expressed, and a consequence stated. It is admitted, that the consequence would follow, if the thing supposed should take place. But the question is, whether

the thing supposed ever will take place. That it will, can by no means be inferred with certainty from the supposition; because there are many hypothetical cases stated in the Bible, when it is certain that the thing supposed never will take place. Take the following: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments; which *if* a man do, he shall live in them." (Lev. xviii. 5.) The meaning of this passage is, as appears from Rom. x. 5, and Gal. iii. 12, that if a man should obey perfectly the law of God, he would be justified by his own works. And are we hence to infer, that any mere man ever did, or ever will obey perfectly the whole law? especially when it is declared, "By the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified." (Rom. iii. 20.) Again, Paul said, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed." (Gal. i. 8.) And may we hence infer that an angel from heaven ever will preach another gospel? If I were to say, when an Ethiopian shall change his skin, or a leopard his spots, then may ye also do good that are accustomed

to do evil; should I be understood to affirm, that an Ethiopian ever did, or ever will, change his skin, or a leopard his spots? Or if I were to say, when a camel shall go through the eye of a needle, then a rich man may enter into the kingdom of heaven; should I be understood to assert, that a camel ever did, or ever will, go through the eye of a needle?

Supposing the term "righteous" to denote a true saint, the text under consideration may be regarded as the statement of a strong case, to illustrate more clearly and forcibly the subject under consideration. God is vindicating his character against the aspersions of his enemies. They alleged that his ways were not equal; that he punished children for the sins of their parents. He repels this allegation, and assures them, that every individual is treated according to his own personal character. He affirms that all who repent and reform shall live; and that all who persist in their sins shall die; and to show clearly the equality of his dealings, he makes the supposition, that if even a righteous man should turn from his righteousness,

and do according to the abominations that the wicked man doeth, he should die. But this is not deciding the question, whether a truly righteous man ever will thus apostatize. This question is left to be settled by other parts of the Scriptures.

I will now refer you to one or two passages, which expressly assert that a truly righteous man never will thus apostatize. "The righteous shall hold on his way." (Job xvii. 9.) "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." (Ps. xxxvii. 23, 24.) Here we have direct assertions against the utter apostasy of the truly righteous. And are such plain assertions to be set aside by inferences drawn from hypothetical declarations?

2. We are referred to a parable of our Savior, recorded Matt. xviii. 23-35.* This parable has been supposed to teach the doctrine, that after sinners have been pardoned, they may so sin as finally to perish.

* I do not quote the parable, on account of its length.

To obviate this objection, permit me to make a remark, in regard to the interpretation of parables. A parable is a story related at length, for the purpose of illustrating some important truth. But it is not to be supposed, that every incident related in a parable can be literally applied; because in comparing spiritual things with natural, the comparison will not always hold in every particular. Take, for example, the parable of the treasure hid in a field. (Matt. xiii. 44.) If every incident in this parable is literally applied, we shall prove, that when a man hath obtained religion, it is his duty to conceal it. By a similar mode of interpretation, we may prove from the parable of the unjust steward, (Luke xvi.,) that we ought to practise fraud and dishonesty to obtain friends in heaven. It is always dangerous to raise a doctrine from an incident related in a parable. Every parable is designed to illustrate some important truth, and that truth may always be ascertained by attending to its general scope. So in the parable before us, the obvious sentiment is, that we must exercise a spirit of forgiveness, in order to expect be forgiven of God.

But let us for a moment take the ground of the objector, and see to what consequences it will lead us. When sinners are pardoned, God says, *their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*. But those who perish will be punished for all their sins. They shall have judgment without mercy, and receive for all the deeds done here in the body. Suppose, then, a person should fall away and perish after he has been pardoned. In that case, he will be punished for sins which God has forgiven, and which he has promised to remember no more.

3. We are referred to the parable of the ten virgins. (Matt. xxv.) The foolish virgins, it has been supposed, represent apostates from true religion. But it is very obvious, that this parable was designed to show the danger of self-deception, not of falling from grace. The foolish virgins represent false professors, who never were truly converted. But with an air of triumph it has been asked, if their lamps were never lighted, how could they go out? By whom is it said, that their lamps went out? Not by our Savior, but by the foolish virgins them-

selves. *They said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.* But if their lamps were lighted, as they undoubtedly supposed they were, with what were they lighted? Not with oil, surely, which is the emblem of grace; for it is said expressly that they took their lamps, and took no oil with them. And besides, they were foolish virgins when they took their lamps. It is not said that they were all wise, and that five became foolish, but that *five of them were wise, and five were foolish.* Nothing can be more evident, than that the foolish virgins denote false professors, who never were true believers.

4. We are referred to John xv. 2. "Every branch in me, that beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." In this passage, it has been supposed, there is an intimation, that true believers may become so unfruitful, as to be finally separated from Christ. But perhaps, upon close examination, it will be found to contain a very different sentiment. Wherever true grace exists in the heart, it will pro-

duce some fruit. Every true believer, therefore, is a branch which does bring forth some fruit; "and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit." All true believers, therefore, will be made fruitful, and will persevere. By the branch that beareth not fruit, we are evidently to understand, one who is not a true believer; one who, though he may be in the visible church, which is Christ's mystical body, and consequently a visible member of Christ, has never been united to him by a living faith.

5. We are referred to Rom. xi. 17. "And if some of the branches are broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree were grafted in among them," &c. By the olive tree is meant the visible church. The branches which were broken off were the Jews, who in the days of our Savior rejected the gospel. And were these Jews believers? and did they fall from grace? Let every one read and judge.

6. We are referred to Gal. v. 4. "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." The objection raised

from this passage, is merely a play upon words. The apostle is showing that none are justified by the works of the law; and the obvious meaning of this passage is, that those who hold to justification by works, did thereby renounce the idea of salvation by grace. It does not mean that they had fallen from a state of justification, but that they had fallen off, and turned away from the doctrine of grace. They had renounced the gospel plan of salvation, and substituted a self-righteous scheme in its stead. Now, who had done this? Were they those who had once been real believers? Nothing like this is intimated.

7. We are referred to that noted passage, Heb. vi. 4-6. "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 unto repentance.*"

* If this text proves that real Christians ever fall from grace, it as decisively proves, that they cannot be again renewed. It is said, however, that it relates to high at-

Whether the true meaning of this passage can be ascertained or not, it is easy to show that it does not militate against the doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance. Before it can be made to militate against this doctrine, two things need to be proved. 1. That what is here stated, cannot be truly affirmed of any but real Christians. And, 2. That it is here affirmed, that the persons spoken of may fall away. It is very questionable, whether either of these points can be satisfactorily established.

Let us inquire, (1.) Whether all which is here stated may not be affirmed of some who have enjoyed great privileges, and had powerful awakenings, but who have never been truly and savingly converted to God. *To be enlightened*, it will be admitted, is no certain

tainments in grace. But is not all which is here affirmed true of every real Christian? Has not every true Christian been enlightened and been made partaker of the Holy Ghost? Has not every Christian tasted of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come? If so, then no real Christian can fall from grace, and be again restored. It is certain, therefore, that Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, and Peter never fell from grace.

evidence of a justified state. *To taste of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come*, may possibly denote no more than what was experienced by the stony ground hearers. They received the word with joy, but having no root in themselves, endured only for a time. As to the expression, *and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost*, it is admitted that many enjoy the strivings of the Spirit, whose hearts are never renewed. It is evident, moreover, that in the days of the apostles, some were endued with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, who were never savingly converted. In this delineation of character, there is no mention of holiness, of love to God, or of faith in Christ; and is it not possible that the apostle had in his eye persons who had never passed from death unto life?

This interpretation is corroborated by what is said in the succeeding verses, particularly in verse 9. "But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, though we thus speak." If the apostle had been describing the experience of a true believer, and not only so,

but the highest attainments in Christian experience, as has been supposed; what were those *better things* which he was persuaded his Hebrew brethren possessed? And if he did not believe in the certain perseverance of the saints, how could he be so confident that those better things would *accompany salvation*? These considerations render it, at least, very questionable, whether this passage was intended to be descriptive of Christian experience.

But, (2.) Admitting that what is here said can be affirmed of none but real saints, still, it is not asserted that any such ever will fall away, any more than it was asserted by Paul, that an angel from heaven will preach another gospel. All that is affirmed, is, that *if* they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance. But this does not decide the point whether any will thus apostatize.

8. We are referred to Heb. x. 29. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was

sanctified, an unholy thing?" The objection raised from this passage, is founded on the expression *sanctified* by the blood of the covenant. But this evidently refers to the Son of God, and not to the person who had trodden him under foot. Observe the construction of the sentence, "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith HE (i. e. the Son of God) was sanctified," &c. Agreeable to John x. 36. "Say ye of him whom the Father hath *sanctified*," &c. And Heb. xiii. 20. "The great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." This passage, therefore, is altogether irrelevant.

9. We are referred to 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. "If, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them."

This passage, it will be remarked, is entirely hypothetical; but I do not insist on this, because it is evident that the persons here described were not true believers. There are multitudes, upon whose minds the great truths of the gospel make such an impression for a time, as to influence them to reform their lives: and that nothing more than an external reformation is alluded to in this passage, is evident from the next verse. "But 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." These comparisons clearly show, that no change of character had been wrought in these apostates. The dog that casts up what was offensive to his stomach, still loves it, and again greedily devours it; and the swine that was washed, is a swine still, and loves the mire. Their natures are not changed. So these specious formalists, not being renewed in the temper of their minds, returned again to their beloved iniquities, and became worse than before.

10. We are referred to Rev. xxii. 19. "If

any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

To understand this passage, it is necessary to bear in mind a remark which has already been made, that persons are frequently spoken of in the Scriptures, according to their apparent or visible character. They are consequently represented as possessing what they seem to possess, and as losing it when it becomes manifest that they do not possess it. In support of this idea, observe these words of our Savior: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even *that he hath*." (Matt. xiii. 12.) This is explained in a parallel text. "Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he *seemeth* to have." (Luke viii. 18.) When it is said, therefore, in the text under consideration, that "God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city," the meaning evidently is, God shall

make it manifest that he has no part or lot in these things. He shall take from him that which he seemeth to have.

11. An objection against the doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance, is raised from the cautions given to Christians against apostasy.

In reply to this objection, it may be observed, that God treats his people as free agents, and governs them by the influence of motives. He gives them commands, and cautions, and warnings; and it is by the effectual application of these means, that their perseverance is secured. The fact that God has promised to keep saints from falling, is no reason why these cautions and warnings should not be addressed to them; for these are means by which he accomplishes his promise. When Paul was shipwrecked in his voyage to Rome, God appeared to him and promised that the lives of all who were with him should be saved. But this promise did not render their own exertions needless. Accordingly, when the sailors, who only knew how to manage the vessel, were about to make their escape, Paul said

to the centurion and to the soldiers, *Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved.* God had determined to fulfil his promise by the instrumentality of these means ; and the continuance of the sailors in the ship was rendered as certain, by the promise, as the event of their final deliverance. Take another example. God promised to Hezekiah, that fifteen years should be added to his life. But the common means of preserving life were not thereby rendered needless. Accordingly, he was directed to use means for the restoration of his health ; and it was just as necessary that he should eat and drink as it ever had been ; and it would have been perfectly proper to say to him, *Except you eat and drink, you cannot live.* The promise of God made it as certain that he would eat and drink, as that his life would be prolonged. So it is perfectly proper to say to believers, *Except you endure to the end, you cannot be saved ;* and if you utterly apostatize you will certainly be lost, although God has promised that all true believers shall endure to the end.

12. It is objected that the doctrine vindi-

cated in this tract is contradicted by facts. We are told that there are instances recorded in the Scriptures of the total apostasy of real saints; some of whom were again restored, and others finally lost. As examples, we are referred to Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, Peter, Saul, Judas, Hymeneus, Philetus, Alexander, and Demas.

This objection, so far as it relates to those who are supposed to have fallen away, and been brought to repentance, is refuted by the passage in Hebrews, in which it is said, *If they shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance.* The passage in Ezekiel, which we have already considered, is equally decisive. So, also, is the following: "If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries."

In regard to those who once appeared to be Christians, and who have totally and finally apostatized, the apostle John has given us ample information. "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 ii. 19.) This text settles the question as to the previous character of all apostates. If they had been true believers, they would no doubt have continued so. You may produce ever so many instances of total apostasy, and this text teaches in what light to regard them. They never were believers. There is another text which decides this point: "Many will say unto 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*," (i. e. as my disciples.) (Matt. vii. 22, 23.) But if any of these had been Christians, Christ did once *know* them; for he says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I *know* them." Again, "The foundation of God standeth sure; the Lord *knoweth* them that are his." But he will say to them all, "*I never knew you*; depart from me, ye that work iniqui-

ty." There is a third text, equally decisive: "Whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him." (1 John iii. 6.)

Persons may go to great lengths in the externals of religion, while their hearts are unrenewed. We read of those who have a form of godliness without the power; and of stony ground hearers, who receive the word with joy, but having no root in themselves, endure only for a time. We read of tares among the wheat, and of foolish virgins among the wise, who have no oil in their lamps. These representations sufficiently account for all those apostasies of which we read, and which we witness.

13. It is objected that this is a very dangerous doctrine; that it leads to licentiousness; that it tends to render Christians careless, and to preach it is the direct way to destroy souls.

In reply to this, it may be said, if it is taught in the Bible, we may know that it has no such tendency, for every doctrine of the Bible is according to godliness. That it may be perverted by hypocrites and wicked men, is not denied; and what doctrine of

the Bible has not been perverted? That it tends to render real Christians careless, I cannot believe. Show me the man who takes encouragement from this doctrine to sin, and I will show you the man who has never tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

In this objection two things are taken for granted, which are far from being true. One is, that persons may know that they have been converted, while they choose to live in sin. The other is, that a fear of punishment is the only motive by which Christians are influenced. But neither of these things is true. No man has any good evidence that he has been converted, unless he finds himself disposed to persevere in holiness. One characteristic of true religion is, it is a religion that endures. And if a person finds that his religion does not endure, he has reason to conclude that it was not genuine religion. This doctrine presents no opiate to quiet him in his sins. It is as full of terror to the backslider, as the doctrine of falling from grace.

But further. Suppose that the real Christian knew that he had been converted; this

would have no tendency to render him careless, for he is not prompted to duty by mercenary motives. He serves God because he loves to serve him. And when a person feels that if he were sure of heaven, he should indulge freely in sin, it is a certain evidence that his heart is not right with God. The doctrine of perseverance, therefore, has no such tendency as has been represented.

14. It is said that Adam fell, and angels fell; and why may not saints fall?

I reply, — There is nothing in the nature of holiness to secure saints from falling; and if God has not secured them, by promise, there is no security. But Adam was placed under the covenant of works. In that covenant there was no promise to secure him from falling. Believers are placed under the covenant of grace, a covenant *established upon better promises*. Of these, one is, that they shall be *kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*. If it were not for this fact, I see no reason to hope that any will persevere. Adam fell when he was perfectly holy. Believers are but partially sanctified; and assailed as they are by foes without,

and foes within, what hope is there that they will stand, if God has not promised to keep them ?

Besides, if the covenant of grace does not secure the perseverance of believers, I see not but they may apostatize in heaven, if any should be so happy as to arrive there. Angels fell, and saints in heaven will not be more holy than angels. How do we know, then, that all who have been saved, and all who will be saved, will not hereafter apostatize and perish ? And is it so ? Is the eternal salvation of God's people left in such uncertainty ? No, my brethren. God will put out the sun and moon, and all the stars ; he will burn up this world ; but he will first gather together his elect.

Having considered the most common objections against the doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance, I proceed, as was proposed, —

II. To adduce some of the evidence by which it is established.

That all true saints will infallibly persevere is evident, —

1. From the nature of the covenant of redemption. By the covenant of redemption

is meant the covenant between the Father and the Son, in which God promised to Christ that he should have a seed, and see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied. (See Isa. liii. 10, 11.) Of this promised *seed* Christ speaks, when he says, "*All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.*" Now, will any of these be lost? If so, where is Christ's security that he shall have a seed? And what evidence is there, that the whole plan of redemption will not be frustrated? There is no more security that one saint will persevere, than that another will; and if we admit that one may utterly apostatize, we must admit that it is totally uncertain whether one will be saved. The whole scheme of redemption is consequently left at uncertainties. And is it so? Did Christ come down from heaven and die for sinners, when there was no certainty that his death would not be in vain? And can we suppose that in all those things which relate to the plan of salvation, God may finally be disappointed? But our Savior has set this subject beyond all reasonable doubt. He has said, "*All that the Father giveth me,*

shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, *I will in no wise cast out.*" (John vi. 37.) "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them *eternal life*; and they *shall never perish*, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John x. 27-29.) "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give *eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.*" (John xvii. 2.) "And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, *I should lose nothing*, but should raise it up at the last day." (John vi. 39.)

2. I argue the certain perseverance of the saints from the nature of the covenant of grace. By the covenant of grace is meant the covenant which exists between God and the believer. In this covenant, God promises to believers that he *will be* their God, and that they *shall be* his people.

It has been said, however, that the promises are all conditional, and that if believers

fail to perform the conditions, they cut themselves off from the promised blessings.

Now, I admit, that salvation is offered conditionally, but I maintain, that in the covenant of grace, God not only promises salvation on certain conditions, but that he actually promises to his people the conditions themselves, i. e. that they shall perform the conditions. If this can be shown, the doctrine of the perseverance will be established upon an immovable basis.

I will now refer you to some promises of this description: "The righteous shall hold on his way." (Job xvii. 9.) "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand." (Ps. xxxvii. 23, 24.) "Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." (1 Pet. i. 5.) "For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints: they are *preserved forever*." (Ps. xxxvii. 28.) "The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you and keep you from evil. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do, and will do, the things which we

command you." (2 Thes. iii. 3, 4.) "Who shall also confirm you unto the end." (1 Cor. i. 8.) "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith the Lord;) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will *remember their sin no more.*" (Jer. xxxi. 31-34.) "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, and will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their heart, that *they shall not depart from me.*" (Jer. xxxii. 38-40.)

You will notice the terms, in which the promises of this covenant are expressed. God not only promises to believers, that he will be their God, *if they will be* his people, but he promises that they *shall be* his people. He promises to write his law upon their hearts, and to put his fear in their hearts, that they *shall not depart from him*. These promises are absolute. They are suspended on no condition whatever; for they include the conditions on which salvation is promised. God not only engages to give eternal life to believers, if they endure to the end; but in the promises which have been cited, he actually engages that they shall endure to the end.

3. I argue the certain perseverance of all true believers, from the fact, that there is such a thing as assurance of salvation. Many of the ancient saints expressed the fullest assurance of arriving at heaven. This was the case with Job, David, Paul, and others. But if saints may fall from grace, there can be no such thing as assurance of salvation. Suppose a person to know that he is a Christian to-day, how does he know

that he shall not fall before to-morrow, or, at any rate, before he dies? If David, and Peter, and Judas fell from grace, what saint can be sure that he shall stand? How then could Job say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that in my flesh I shall see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another"? How dare the Psalmist say, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness"? How dare Paul say, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day"? And how dare John say, "We know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is"? Such confident assurance must certainly be presumption, if God has not promised to preserve his people from utter and final apostasy.

4. I argue the perseverance of the saints from the immutability of God. If true religion were obtained by human efforts merely, it would be rational to suppose that it might be lost. But if it is God who begins

the good work in the hearts of believers, and if he is an unchangeable being, we cannot suppose that he will leave his work incomplete. Why should God renew the heart of a sinner, unless it is his design to bring that sinner to heaven? And will he suffer his design to be frustrated? What motive can he have to abandon the work? Will it be said, that he leaves them to fall and perish, on account of their sins? But were they not sinners, and utterly unworthy of his favor, when he undertook the work of their salvation? And if, when they were *dead in sin*, he had mercy on them, and raised them to spiritual life, can we suppose that he will be provoked utterly to forsake them? The apostle thus reasons: "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. v. 10.)

5. That all true believers will persevere, is evident from their union to Christ. By faith they become one with Christ, and their life and interests are identified with his. Accordingly, he says, "Because I live, ye shall

live also." (John xiv. 19.) And the apostle says, "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. iii. 3, 4.) These texts represent the salvation of believers as certain as the eternal felicity of Christ.

6. I argue the certain perseverance of the saints, from those texts which represent the salvation of all the *elect*, as certain. I will not here insist on the meaning of election, as I understand it;* but I will take it in the sense usually understood by those who deny the doctrine of perseverance. They will allow, that persons are elected when they believe; in other words, that real Christians are styled in Scripture the *elect*. If, then, it can be made to appear, that all the *elect* will be saved, the idea of falling from grace must be given up. In reference to this point, see Matt. xxiv. 24. "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; inso-much that *if it were possible*, they shall de-

* See preceding Essay, by Dr. Spring.

ceive the very elect." It is obviously implied in this passage, that it is *impossible* for any of the elect to be so deceived as to be finally lost. "And he shall send his angels, and *they shall gather together his elect*, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Verse 31.) We are here taught, that God will at last gather all his elect into his kingdom. See, also, Rom. viii. 33. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth." And chap. ix. 7. "The election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." Now, these texts prove conclusively, that all the elect will be saved; and it makes no difference, as it respects the subject under present discussion, whether we suppose them elected from eternity, or when they believed. If all the elect will be saved, the perseverance of the saints is secured. In connection with the above, take another text. "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." (Acts xiii. 48.) Here we are taught, that those who believe are ordained to eternal life. All true believers, then, will persevere.

7. I argue the certain perseverance of all

believers, from the intercession of Christ. "If any man sin," saith the apostle John, "we have an advocate with the Father, even Christ the righteous." (1 John ii. 1.) "Who is he that condemneth?" saith Paul; "it is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Rom. viii. 34.) And again: "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.)

We may learn something of the nature of Christ's intercession, by attending to the prayer which he offered up for his disciples, just before he suffered. This is a specimen of the intercession, which he continually maketh for the saints. In this prayer, we find the following petitions: "I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me. Holy Father, keep through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world; but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. Sanctify

them through thy truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, should be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me." (John xvii. 9, 11, 15, 17, 20, 21, 24.)

You will remark, that Christ prays for all whom the Father hath given him ; not only those who were his disciples in the days of his flesh, but for all who should believe on him to the end of the world. And what does he pray for ? He prays that God would keep them through his own name ; that he would keep them from evil ; that he would sanctify them through his truth ; and that they may all hereafter be with him and behold his glory. He does not barely pray that God would save them, if they do not apostatize. He goes farther. He prays that God would keep them from apostatizing.

The question is now reduced to a single point. Is Christ's intercession prevalent or

not? Does God always hear and answer his requests, or does he not? On this point you shall have the testimony of Christ himself. "Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me, and I knew that *thou hearest me always.*" (John xi. 41, 42.) Since, then, Christ prays for his people that God would keep them, and since God always hears his prayers, their perseverance is infallibly secured.

In addition to the foregoing arguments, I will now adduce a number of texts which have not yet been quoted, and which either expressly assert, or clearly imply, the doctrine in question. "They go from strength to strength, *every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.*" (Ps. lxxxiv. 7.) "The way of the Lord is strength to the upright; *the righteous shall never be removed.*" (Prov. x. 29, 30.) "The path of the just is as a shining light, *that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.*" (Prov. iv. 18.) "I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, *and will not remember thy sins.*" (Isa. xliii. 25.) "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?

Yea, they may forget, *but I will not forget thee.*" (Chap. xlix. 15.) "For a small moment have I forsaken thee; *but with great mercies will I gather thee.* In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, *but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee,* saith the Lord, thy Redeemer. For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters should no more go over the earth, *so have I sworn, that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee;* for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, *but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,* saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." (Chap. liv. 7-10.) "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart, also, will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, *and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.*" (Ezek, xxxvi. 25-27.)

Such, and much more abundant, is the testimony of the Old Testament. Let us now turn to the New Testament. And first, let us attend to some of the words of our Savior which have not yet been quoted. He has taught us, that if our house be founded on a rock it will stand; and if it fall, it will be because it is built upon the sand. He says, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, *and shall not come into condemnation.*" (John v. 24.) "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me, *shall never die.*" (Chap. xi. 26.) "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, *shall never thirst*; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water *springing up into everlasting life.*" (Chap. iv. 14.) "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, *he shall live forever.*" (Chap. vi. 51.) "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, *hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.*" (Verse 54.) "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven *that one of these little ones should perish.*" (Matt. xviii. 14.) "Mary hath

chosen that good part, that shall not be taken away from her." (Luke x. 42.)

The time would fail me to quote all the texts which might be collected from the epistles of the apostles. Out of the many which might be adduced, take the following: "*Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*" (Rom. vi. 14.) "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, *them he also glorified.*" (Chap. viii. 29, 30.) Observe, all who are justified will be glorified. "In whom, also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, *which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.*"* (Eph. i. 13, 14.) "Wherein God, willing more abun-

* "An earnest is something paid beforehand, to confirm a bargain, of the same kind with the full sum, and as a pledge and security for the payment of the whole. And if in this matter the Spirit is both a seal and an earnest, the bargain cannot be disannulled; but upon

dantly to show unto the *heirs of salvation 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 strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us; which hope we have *as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast.*" (Heb. vi. 17-19.)

It would be easy to swell this list of texts, if it was necessary; but what has been adduced is deemed amply sufficient to satisfy every candid and unprejudiced mind.

Let the subject of this Tract be applied,—

1. By way of self-examination. Let all who hope they are Christians, examine themselves, whether they have this evidence of their good estate, that they persevere in holiness. We learn from this subject, that all true Christians will persevere. The righteous shall hold on his way. The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more

whomsoever God bestows the first fruits, he gives them as an earnest of the complete enjoyment of the heavenly inheritance." — *Taggart on Perseverance.*

and more unto the perfect day. They go from strength to strength. Grace in the heart is like a little leaven hid in three measures of meal, which gradually leavens the whole lump. Every real Christian grows in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is not, however, to be supposed, that the true Christian is always making actual progress in the divine life. There is such a thing as a good man's falling into sin, without being utterly cast down; yet he is, on the whole, making progress in holiness. Even his falls are made a means of his growth in grace. This was unquestionably the case with David and Peter. They were more humble, more watchful, and more diligent, after their falls, than they ever were before. And this, no doubt, is the case with every Christian. No man, therefore, has a right to conclude that he has been converted, unless he does, on the whole, make progress in religion. Unless he finds that God is carrying on a good work in his heart, he will look in vain for any substantial evidence that such a work has been begun.

How then is it with you, dear reader?

This subject presents to you no motive to carelessness and negligence. If you are wandering from God, it sounds an awful alarm in your ears. It teaches you to tremble, lest you should prove at last to be but a foolish virgin, who took your lamp and took no oil with it. If any person thinks he has been converted, and takes encouragement from this doctrine to live in sin, it is a certain sign that he is deceiving his own soul. Examine yourself, then, whether *you* be in the faith. Do you grow in grace? Are you, on the whole, making progress in holiness? Do you, on the whole, grow more humble, more watchful, more heavenly-minded, and more weaned from the world? This will be the case, if your house is founded on a rock. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed, lest he fall. Not that there is danger of falling from grace; but there is danger of deceiving yourself with a hypocrite's hope, and making it manifest at last that your house was built upon sand.

2. This subject should fill our minds with adoring thoughts of the grace of God. It is not by any inherent strength of their own,

that the saints hold on their way. They are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. Were they left to themselves, they would undoubtedly fall. It is God who begins the good work in their hearts, and it is he who carries it on to perfection. And this he does, not because they deserve his favor, but all of free, rich, and sovereign grace. From first to last, the salvation of believers is effected by divine grace. It was of grace that they were given to Christ. It is of grace, that they are brought to repentance. It is of grace that they are pardoned. It is of grace, that they are sanctified and kept from falling. And it will be of grace, that they will be finally acquitted and welcomed to heaven.

“ Grace all the work shall crown,
Through everlasting days ;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.”

Think! O, think! dear reader, on the wonders of that grace, which does so much for rebels that deserve eternal banishment from God. 'Tis a thought sufficient, one

would imagine, to melt a heart of adamant. O, 'tis a thought which will swell the notes of the redeemed forever.

3. This subject speaks consolation to the humble Christian. The true believer has his house built upon the Rock of Ages. It is a sure foundation, and though the rains descend, and the winds blow, and the floods come, and beat upon his house, it shall not fall. It shall survive "the wreck of matter and the crush of worlds." The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but God's kindness shall not depart from his people, nor shall the covenant of his peace be removed.

Rejoice, then, believer in the Lord. The everlasting God is your father and your friend. He has sworn by himself that in blessing, he will bless you; that he will be your God, and that you shall be of his people. He snatched you from the jaws of death. He has adopted you as his child. He has set a mark upon your forehead. He has stamped his image on your heart; and he will suffer no one to pluck you out of his hands. He will keep you as in the hollow

of his hand, and as the apple of his eye. Though for a small moment he may forsake you, yet with great mercies he will gather you; though, in a little wrath, he may hide his face from you for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness he will have mercy on you. Let not your heart be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Christ. In his father's house there are many mansions. He has gone to prepare a place for you, and he will come again and receive you to himself. Because he lives, you shall live also. Your life is hid with Christ in God; and when he who is your life shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory. In this world, you must expect tribulation; but be of good cheer, Christ has overcome the world. Fear not your enemies. Tremble not at the dangers which surround your path. Faint not under your trials. Hope in God, for you shall yet praise him, who is the health of your countenance, and your God.