

CŒUR ET COURAGE FONT L'OUVRAGE.

# BALCH GENEALOGICA

BY

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PHILADELPHIA  
ALLEN, LANE AND SCOTT  
1211-13 CLOVER STREET  
1907

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THE REV. DR. STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH.  
FROM AN ENGRAVING BY JOHN SARTAIN.

the armies of Israel: to them he was a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He is now the same Almighty protector of all who trust in his divine help, and he will yet rescue us out of the house of bondage. Soon our armies will regain their good fortune. The dark prospect now before us will be succeeded by the smile of inspiring hope—the misfortune of defeat and disaster will yield to the shout and joy of victory—the scourge of war will cease, and peace will soon gladden every heart and we shall become a great and prosperous people.”

In 1780 he was called by the Presbyterians of Georgetown on the Potomac to establish a church among them. Accepting, he arrived there March 16th, 1780, and remained in charge of the church he founded until his death fifty-three years afterwards. In the Synod that met at Philadelphia, May 21st, 1783, he was one of the representatives of the Presbytery of Donegal. In succeeding years he again and again represented at the meetings of the Synods, first the Presbytery of Donegal, then the Presbytery of Baltimore and afterwards the Presbytery of the District of Columbia.<sup>133</sup> In the order of the Synod of Philadelphia, October, 1823, creating the Presbytery of the District of Columbia, the name of the Rev. Dr. Stephen Bloomer Balch heads the list of the ministers chosen to form the new Presbytery.

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*Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, 1789-1800*, pages 17, 101, 140, 170, 192, 214, 243.

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Towards the close of the eighteenth century Dr. Balch opened a school at Georgetown and published the following announcement:—

TO THE PARENTS OF YOUTH AND THE  
FRIENDS OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE.

“CONFORMABLY to advertisement, the subscribers began Academic exercises on the 1st inst. under favorable auspices, since which period a prospect of rendering the institution respectable has considerably brightened. That the public may know the principles of our establishment, the following PROSPECTUS is presented to their view. Exercises in the English, Latin and Greek languages, writing, arithmetic, practical geometry, astronomy and geography will be strictly attended to, every day in the year, Sundays and the usual holidays excepted.

“From the 20th of September to the 20th of March, the pupils will assemble at eight o'clock in the morning, and be released at twelve. In the evening they will meet at two o'clock and be dismissed at five.

“During the remaining half of the year, the hours of attendance shall be so regulated as shall best comport with convenience, due notice being seasonably given.

“The price of tuition, for an English scholar, will be Five dollars by the quarter, which will extend to writing and arithmetic as far as through the rule of proportion. For Latin or Greek scholars, or for those who shall have advanced beyond the rule of proportion in arithmetic, or for instruction in any other science taught in this Academy, the quarterly price of tuition will be six dollars and sixty five cents.

“Each member of the Academy shall either procure

one half cord of good fuel for its use during the inclemency of winter, or pay two dollars to procure it.

“Each student of sufficient age and capacity to attend to a regular course of instruction in the English language shall provide for himself Harrison’s English Grammar, Perry’s Royal Standard English Dictionary and the American Preceptor by Caleb Bingham. If in Arithmetic ‘Gough’ will be preferred in geography, and the necessary introduction thereto in astronomy, the last edition of Morse’s Universal Geography will be the most acceptable. No spelling books will be admitted except Perry’s only sure guide of these; care shall be taken to procure a reasonable supply. Students in the Latin and Greek languages will procure the Philadelphia Latin Grammar, Young’s or Ainsworth’s Dictionary, Æsop’s Fables, Eutropius, Cæsar’s commentaries, Ovid, Virgil, Mair’s introduction to making Latin, Cicero in usam Delphini-Wettenhall’s Greek Grammar, the Greek testament, Lucian’s Dialogues, Homer and Xenophon. Let those who wish to demonstrate the problems of Euclid, procure Stone’s edition of that author. Each scholar at entrance must pay one quarter in advance.

“We hereby pledge ourselves to the public that no attention shall be wanting on our part towards the youth entrusted to our care, either in point of morality or science, and hope to discharge our official duties with all good fidelity.

“STEPHEN B. BALCH

“LEMUEL HEDGE.

“GEORGETOWN, Oct. 11, 1798.”

There are two copies known of two sermons by Dr. Balch *On the Certain and Final Perseverance*

*of the Saints*, that were published at Georgetown at the beginning of February, 1791, and which are believed to be the first publication printed within the District of Columbia. Of these two copies one was presented to the Library of Princeton University by A. A. E. Taylor of the class of 1854 of Princeton. The other copy belongs to the Messrs. W. H. Lowdermilk and Company, of Washington, D. C. Through the courtesy of John T. Loomis, Esq., managing partner of that firm, the title page of this publication is reproduced full size, and the sermons are reprinted.

TWO SERMONS  
ON THE  
CERTAIN AND FINAL  
PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

BY  
STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH, A. M.

Pastor  
of the  
Presbyterian Congregation,  
George-Town.

PSALM XCII. 12.

The Righteous shall flourish like a  
Palm-tree; He shall grow like  
a cedar in Lebanon.

George-Town: Printed, for the Author, by  
M. Day and W. Hancock.  
M, DCC, XCI.



*W. A. RICHARD*

TWO SERMONS,  
ON THE  
CERTAIN AND FINAL  
*Perseverance of the Saints.*

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B Y

STEPHEN BLOOMER BALCH, A. M.

P A S T O R

O F T H E

PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION,

GEORGE-TOWN.

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PSALM XCII. 12.

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GEORGE-TOWN: PRINTED, FOR THE AUTHOR, BY  
M. DAY AND W. HANCOCK  
M.DCC,XCI.

To the  
Inhabitants of George-town,  
But especially  
To the  
Author's Hearers,  
The following  
SERMONS  
are  
As a public testimony of respect,  
Inscribed ;  
By their servant,  
In the Gospel,

STEPHEN B. BALCH.

GEORGE-TOWN, Feb. 1, 1791.

## PREFACE.

The following Sermons were, at first, delivered by the author to the Presbyterian Congregation, in George-Town. They are now, with a few alterations, published, by particular request.—Many, probably, will charge him with ostentation, merely, because his name is prefixed to them. It was once intended they should have been anonymous; but, reflecting, that it is hardly possible for the author of such a publication to remain long concealed; that there is often as much, sometimes more vanity discoverable, in withholding, than in prefixing the true signature; for these reasons, the Sermons tell the name of their author.

They are now sent out into a carping, sensorious world, attended with his ardent wishes and prayers, that they may be blessed for the comfort, edification and establishment of the churches of Christ. He has only to add, that, although what he endeavors to prove may be denied by many pious persons, yet he earnestly intreats even those to read these discourses with attention, and without prejudice.

## SERMON I.

THE CERTAIN AND FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE  
SAINTS ASSERTED AND PROVED.

*JOB XVII. 9.*

*The Righteous also shall hold on his way; And he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.*

MY FRIENDS,

An attachment to the doctrines and modes of practice, peculiar to each religious sect, has ever been discoverable in the conduct of their respective members. What appears strange is, this attachment has manifested itself by an open opposition to those who differed from them, and is deeply rooted and interwoven in the hearts of the wicked as well as the godly. We frequently see men notorious for wickedness, to appearance, as zealous, sometimes more so, for the special tenets and practices of their own sect, than the truly pious are for those which characterize the respective denominations to which they belong. Saint Paul was a Pharisee, and, as he himself declared, in the presence of King Agrippa, he was one of the most straitest of that sect. Of all others, he was the most violent opposer and persecutor of Christ, in his mystical members. For this he had no reason more solid, than that the scheme of Christianity was directly opposed to that system of religion which he had adopted as his own. The Sadducees also, were avowed enemies to the doctrines and practices of the disciples of Christ; merely, because they believed and taught the resurrection of the dead, and a state of future rewards and punishments, after death; all which they strenuously and boldly denied.

This attachment to and partiality for every punctilio, in what they supposed to be related either to the doctrines, or to the modes of practice introduced by Jesus Christ, were carried to an extravagant height by the apostles themselves, at least in some instances.

The disciples were sent out to preach—to heal the sick—to raise the dead—and, to cast out devils: In their travels they met with one employed in expelling the evil spirits from those that were possessed. They straightway forbid him, because he did not do and say exactly as they did. But in this they erred; for our Saviour, in answer to their declaration, said, Forbid him not. Such was their zeal for their own party, that they would willingly, have destroyed those who acted contrary to their wishes. A village in Samaria would not receive their master: Lord, say they, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them? This was a manifestation of party-zeal, which was not according to knowledge; for our Saviour immediately turned and rebuked them, saying to them, Ye know not what spirit ye are of.

Human nature is the same in every age of the world; and, therefore, whatever was the conduct and temper of religious sects, long ago, with respect to themselves and to others who thought differently from them, this same conduct and temper are discoverable, in a greater or lesser degree, in the respective members of the several religious societies into which Christendom is, at present, divided.—They have a zeal, not well regulated, and they are too closely wedded to everything that may be called peculiar to themselves.

From this enthusiastic misplaced zeal, and from this narrow, partial temper, have originated, in a great

measure, all the furious persecutions which have brought millions to the stake; drenched the world in human blood, disgraced rationality itself, and filled the pages, both of profane and sacred history, with the execrable deeds of men.

I am, pointedly, against persecuting, or speaking evil, or bitter things about any religious sect whatsoever. Let them only demean themselves, as good, peaceable members of the civil communities to which they respectively belong, and, I am fully persuaded, they ought to be privileged with the belief of their own peculiar doctrines; with the exercise of their own particular modes of worship, and with the full and free use of the unalienable rights of their own consciences. Every individual, and every religious sect, of a persecuting spirit, should read the speech, and copy the example of Gamaliel, a doctor of the law among the Jews. The Sadducees had laid hands upon, and put the Apostles into the common prison, for teaching things contrary to their faith and practice. An angel of the Lord had unbolted the doors of the prison, and commanded them to depart to the temple, and to speak to the people all the words of this life. When immediately engaged in fulfilling this mandate, a captain, with his officers, came, and as it appears, persuaded them to appear before the Jewish council for trial. They came. The high priest put many questions to them, which gave Peter an opportunity of addressing his judges in a warm and pointed manner. He did so. They were filled with resentment and indignation against the apostles. At this crisis, says the sacred historian, there stood up in the council a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to

put the apostles forth a little space; and he said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before those days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves; who was slain, and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered and brought to nought.

After this man rose up Judas of Gallilee, in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him; he also perished, and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now, I say unto you, refrain from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel, or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest happily ye be found even to fight against God. There is so much good sense in this address, and there was, in my judgment, so much propriety in repeating it in this place, that I could not well avoid it. And I ardently wish the sentiments it contains were deeply engraven upon the hearts of all who call themselves Christians; and that the example set by Gamaliel, may ever be copied by mankind in general. In this case, more unanimity and love would every where abound among different denominations of Christians.

But notwithstanding what has now been said, and although persecution for the sake of religion ought to be held in detestation; yet, certainly, there can no good reasons be given which should hinder those, who think differently about matters of faith and practice, from talking, or writing, in a calm, dispassionate manner, about their respective opinions, that he, who is in an error, may meet with full conviction. The rule to be observed in this case, is to make use of soft

words and hard arguments. This was our Saviour's practice. When he saw men in an error, if that was very dangerous, he took the most effectual methods to show them where their mistake lay; and he generally treated such with tenderness and compassion; exhibiting meekness of temper, for which he was eminently remarkable. The apostles themselves reasoned, both in private and in public, with those who had been misinformed, and by this means directed them into the right way. Sometimes those popular teachers disputed with men, who they knew had imbibed erroneous opinions; and the happy consequences commonly were, that they were convinced and brought to the knowledge of the truth.

What I have now said seems to justify the design, as well as the general strain of these discourses. The intention of them is to correct an error in doctrine, and the manner of doing this, is reasoning meekly and calmly. Had I found fault with some particular mode in practice, I should not have taken so much pains to correct it; but the fundamental doctrines of the Christian religion should, I apprehend, be well supported and defended.

It is really distressing, to men of piety and sensibility, to see the children of the same father, the members of the same family, the followers of the same Jesus, and the expectants of the same future happiness, mutually encouraging variances and dissensions, one with another, about doctrines which, in fact, support the Christian system.

In no age, perhaps, have those variances and dissensions arisen to a greater height, than in the present. Tenets, which by many have been received as orthodox,



are now, by great multitudes, entirely exploded, and others, directly opposite, are embraced, countenanced, and taught, both in public and in private.

The certain and final perseverance of the Saints, is a doctrine which was certainly believed and published by the writers of the Old and the New Testament. It has been embraced and firmly credited, by many of the faithful, ever since God has had a church in the world. Long ago it was contradicted by Arminius, a Low Country divine; and, ever since his time, his followers and adherents have been its violent opposers.

The state of the dispute, or question, seems to be this: Those who advocate the final perseverance of the Saints, affirm, That a man, who is once made a child of God, by regeneration, justification, adoption, and sanctification, though he may, and frequently does fall into sin, yet he will persevere in his religious course of life, and will finally be made happy in the enjoyment of God forever.—Those who deny the final perseverance of the Saints, assert, That a man of the above description, even when he has obtained the greatest degree of sanctification of which he is capable in this life, may, and frequently does fall away, from that advanced state of grace, totally and finally, insomuch, that after death he is made everlastingly miserable.

This, if I mistake not, is a just and fair state of the different opinions entertained by those who contend about the final perseverance of the Saints. I fully agree, in judgment, with all who advocate this doctrine; not because it was taught me in my childhood, but because I find it clearly asserted and strongly supported by the Word of God; and, because it appears to me to be the opinion, of the two, which is most consistent

with reason, and the sentiments and experience of those who have had the best opportunity of acquiring an enlightened information.

Indeed, those who contend for, and teach the total and final apostacy of the believer, inculcate a doctrine, as I suppose, in its tendency, subversive of the Word of Truth; derogatory from the honor of God, and uncomfortable to the children of the heavenly King. And nothing but such a view of it could have induced me to appear in print, in vindication of that which stands directly opposed to it.

If we apprehend the meaning which the Spirit of God intended to convey by the text, the words of it contain and establish the whole truth for which we contend, and something more: For they assert, That a true believer shall persevere in his religious course of life; and, also, that he shall increase and grow in grace. He shall hold on his way: he shall be stronger and stronger. That is, he shall not only retain those graces, which were implanted in his soul when he was made a new creature, but those graces themselves shall, also, be increased, or strengthened, in his progress towards Heaven.

In my further enlargement upon this subject, I propose, through the assistance of Divine Grace,

I. To support and prove the doctrine contained in the text:—That a true believer will persevere in his religious course of life; and that he will grow in grace; or, in the words of the text, will hold on his way, and be stronger and stronger.

II. To state and answer some of the plainest and most weighty objections which are usually laid in against the Saints Perseverance and Growth in Grace.

III. To conclude with a practical application of what may be said.

I. I am to support and prove the doctrine contained in the text: That a true believer will persevere in his religious course of life; and that he will grow in grace; or, in the words of the text, will hold on his way, and be stronger and stronger. This proposition is complex in its nature, and divides itself into two parts, each of which must be distinctly illustrated. If we can demonstrate the truth of this proposition, in both its parts, the opinion directly opposed to it, namely, That a true believer may, and frequently does, fall from grace, totally and finally, will, of necessity, be superseded or set aside. There is so wide a difference between moving onward in the paths of holiness, having these graces strengthened and confirmed more and more: which graces, at first, constituted him holy, or righteous; and that of falling for ever from grace, that to support and prove the former will, without doubt, destroy the latter. If the one is a truth, the other cannot but be false.

I confess, however, it puts me a little to a stand to fix upon a proper method of proceeding in this demonstration. There are some who will believe nothing which is not pointedly proved by Holy Scripture; many there are who wrest its meaning to their own destruction; and even when it is opened up to them, in a plain and rational way, they with great reluctance admit the light; and rather than confess their error, and ask further assistance, they often put such a construction upon it, as they suppose will best establish what they have adopted as an article of their faith. A third class depend much upon close reasoning, and the opinions and experience of men of genius and im-

proved talents, for the confirmation and establishment of their belief about Christian Doctrines.

It will be best as I suppose, that the multitude at large may be satisfied; first to prove the doctrine by Scripture, and, in doing so, to avoid, as much as possible, making use of any passages, except such as are plain, that every one may see and be convinced of their proper application; and if at any time some proofs, a little dark and intricate, should be brought forward, these must be explained in a clear and satisfactory manner. When we have established the truth proposed, in the way now mentioned, we will give it all the support we can, by reason, and by the sentiments and experience of those who have had the best opportunities of knowing.

And oh! that the Spirit of God may enlighten my understanding and guide my pen, while employed in vindicating His own truth.

1. Then, let us endeavor to support and prove the doctrine of the Saints Perseverance by the Word of God. This was given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine; for reproof; for correction; and, for instruction in righteousness. It is a sure word of prophesy, whereunto we do well that we take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. And let Deists and Infidels say what they will, it contains all those things about religion which should be believed and practised, by such as are seeking future happiness according to the will of their Creator.

I begin with the words of the wise and inspired Solomon. *Proverbs, XXIV. 16. A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again.* This is full to our purpose, and beautifully illustrates and supports that for which

we contend. We grant, as I have already hinted, that a good man may, and frequently does fall into sin; but, at the same time, we strenuously assert, that he will be deeply penitent for his transgressions, and will still hold on his way. These ideas are clearly contained in the text just now mentioned. A just man falleth seven times;—that is, he falleth frequently; but still he riseth up again. Our antagonists cannot turn this argument against us, by saying, the Christian cannot be progressive in his religious course of life, when he falls: For they might as well assert, that a man, who sets out on a journey, and by chance stumbles and falls now and then, tho' he rises and pursues his journey, is not progressive in his motion, as to say, that a Christian, who falls now and then into sin, though he repents of it, does not hold on in his religious course of life.

As a further testimony of the truth of this important and comfortable doctrine, let us attend to the words of God himself, published to the Israelites by his prophet Hosea. *Hosea, II. 19, 20. And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.* In these passages, the great God is the speaker, though he makes use of the prophet as an instrument, to confirm the believing Israelites in the faith of their perseverance. He makes the bargain, not for a day, a month, or a year—but for ever; and, in the tenor of the covenant he puts a gracious promise, which his justice, mercies, and faithfulness are bound to have fulfilled: I will betroth thee unto me, says he, for ever, and that in righteousness, and in mercies, and in faithfulness.

To establish the truth yet more strongly and fully, and thereby to convince gainsayers, we have the express words of him who was greater than a prophet, even Jesus the Mediator. *John, X. 28, 29. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand: My Father which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.* He is here speaking of true believers, to whom, he says, he gives eternal life; by which is plainly intended, that he communicates the principles of spiritual life in this world, which will issue in eternal life in that world which lies beyond the grave:— He adds, *And they shall never perish; neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.* Comfortable doctrine, indeed, to every child of God! They have made an happy escape from that imminent danger of eternal death, to which they were every moment exposed, while in a state of nature! Their faces are turned towards the city of the living God; and though they are in an enemies land, yet the Captain of their Salvation has taken fast hold of them: None, however subtle; none, however envious, shall be able to pluck them out of his hand. He goes on to confirm believers more and more in the Faith of their Perseverance: For this purpose, he brings to their view the power of God—My Father is greater than all: He is above all—superior to all the believer's enemies, both temporal and spiritual; and, surely, as if he had said, he will never permit created weakness to overcome infinite, uncreated power. He will not stop here; but from the greatness and superiority of his Father, concludes, for the consolation of his followers, that no man is able to pluck them out of his Father's hand. He represents believers as held fast by the hand

of God, so that none can, by strength, power, or strata-  
gem, arrest them from him. My Father, says he, is  
Almighty; he has an arm of power; his hand is invincibly  
strong; worlds unnumbered are supported and upheld  
by it; and, surely, since he has taken hold of believers  
with this powerful hand, they need not be afraid that  
he will suffer them utterly to fall away from grace.

Nothing can be more full to our purpose, than the  
words of the apostle Peter: *I Peter, I. 5. Who are kept  
by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation.* That we  
may see the scope, and feel the full force of this passage  
of God's word, when applied as a proof, for establishing  
the Final Perseverance of the Saints, we must observe,  
the apostle in the preceding verses had been excited  
to ascriptions of praise and thanksgiving to God the  
Father, and to his Son Jesus Christ; because, by the  
resurrection of the latter, believers had been begotten  
again unto a lively hope; and to an inheritance incorrupt-  
ible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away—which in-  
heritance, he assures the saints, was reserved in heaven  
for them; who, says he, are kept by the power of God,  
through faith, unto salvation. Here we are presented  
with a view of two things employed in the believer's  
preservation and perseverance; these are, the Power  
of God, and Faith. The power of the Omnipotent God  
is engaged to bring him to glory: That almighty power,  
which nothing can resist—that almighty power, which  
upholds the vast fabric of creation—that almighty power,  
before which the strongest created beings feel their ab-  
solute weakness—that almighty power, for fear of which  
all the infernal hosts shrink into the burning pit, and  
would gladly hide themselves from its irresistible opera-  
tions. This power, on the one hand, exerts itself in

promoting every believer's perseverance. On the other hand, faith, saving faith, and if saving, it will bring the believer to salvation, is employed as an instrument in the preservation and perseverance of the saints. Faith realizes the invisible things of the other world; presents them to the view of the servants of God; gives them ravishing conceptions of that exceeding and eternal weight of glory, for the enjoyment of which they have long sighed; teaches them a contempt of the vanities of the world; fortifies them against temptations of every kind, and puts songs of victory and triumph in their mouths. When, by faith, believers get a sight of the promised Land, and the glories and pleasures to be enjoyed there, their enemies may combine, and plan their ruin, but they cannot effect it. Death, in her most frightful shape, will have no influence in producing a revolt; but, frequently, the stronger the temptations, and the more fierce the torments employed to make them cease from their perseverance, so much the more are they determined to overcome; and so much the more are their views of future happiness rendered clear and attracting, and their anxieties, for the enjoyment of it, strengthened and increased. This was the case with Stephen, the first Christian Martyr. His persecutors were full of rage, and gnashed on him with their teeth, and in his presence prepared instruments for his death. But, we are told, his face was like the face of an angel—and now his faith became so strong that it evidently disclosed to him the glories of the other world; for he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.

I am so much pleased with this subject, and find such a fulness in Holy Writ for its support, that I hardly



know when or where to stop. Unprejudiced Christians will be glad to read the many proofs I am bringing forward to establish the Saints progressive motion towards Heaven; and, for their comfort and encouragement, I shall still proceed:—See, to this purpose, *John IV. 14, I. Peter I. 23. But 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 unto everlasting life. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever.* In the one of these passages, grace, in the believer's heart, is compared to a fountain which is never dried up or exhausted, but continually sends forth streams of water: In the other, it is compared to a seed that never dies; to a seed that is not subject to corruption. The comparisons, in both cases, are, no doubt, very just; and, if so, they prove, that grace once communicated, can never be lost.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the seraphic Saint *Paul*, when speaking upon, and in support of, the saints progress in the paths of holiness. In the eighth chapter of his epistle to the Romans, he issues an absolute challenge to all created beings, and defies them, by their might, cruelty or policy, to effect a separation between Christ and his followers. *Who, says he, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or persecution? or famine? or nakedness? or peril? or sword? For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* I ask those, who deny the believer's perseverance, what does

the apostle mean by those strong expressions? Does he intend by them that the saints are in imminent danger of turning devils incarnate, and of going down to the sides of the pit? Surely you will not, you can not, you dare not take this sense from them. Read them with attention; consider their purport, and you must say, that Saint Paul, in these verses, declares, that neither things in hell, nor things upon earth, nor yet things in heaven, acting separately or conjunctly, can, by any means, produce a separation between Christ and a believing soul; and, if this cannot be effected, every one of his genuine followers will persevere in his christian course of life.

Having established the truth contained in the first part of the proposition, by the testimony of scripture, I must now apply myself to prove the other part of it, in the same way, namely, That the graces of a true believer will be stronger and stronger as he advances onward toward heaven. Both the Old and the New Testament contain passages clearly indicative of this truth. For the sake of instruction and conviction let us read and examine the sense of the text: The righteous shall be stronger and stronger. It is not said, he may gather strength; but there is an absolute promise included in the words; He shall be stronger and stronger. We must also observe, that God is the one who makes the promise, by his servant Job; and, surely, he is able to perform; neither is he a man that he should lie, or the son of man, that he should repent. From this, let us turn our eyes to a passage still more plain and convincing, *Prov. IV. 18. But the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.* Grace, when first implanted in the heart,

is like the morning light, both weak and dim. The light grows stronger as the sun advances; in like manner, as the Christian moves on towards heaven, his graces grow stronger and shine brighter. Let us read, to the same purpose, *Psalm XCII. 12, 13, 14, and Malachi IV. 2. The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing. But unto you that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.*

We have, also, evidences of this truth in the New Testament: *James IV. 16. But he giveth more grace. John XV. 2. And every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Philippians I. 6. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* How exceedingly plain and strong are these texts, to prove the point under consideration; and how very hard it is to construe them in any other way, or to understand them as being applicable for the support of any other doctrine. He, that is, God, gives more grace; that is, greater degrees of it. God the Father purges by afflictions, trials and temptations, those who are real, though they may be weak believers, and by those means he renders them more fruitful—that is, their graces are made stronger; they shine brighter; have a greater similitude to God himself, and, in their lives and conversations, copy more exactly Jesus their great Forerunner and Redeemer. In the heart of every pious person, God has really begun a good work; and the

opinion of Saint Paul was, that it would be carried on, not for a day, or a year, but until the day of Jesus Christ. He was convinced, that every true believer would be ripened for glory, and would come to his grave like a shock of corn in his proper season.

In pursuance of the method laid down, we must, secondly, prove the Saint's Perseverance and Growth in Grace by reasoning on it. We adduce, as arguments in support of their perseverance, God's tenderness and compassion for his children, and the high value he sets upon them. Every true believer is a child of God; a member in his numerous family. For every such child he has bowels of compassion. Will he then suffer him to revolt entirely, and have his name blotted out of his book for ever? We shudder at the conclusion—we cannot believe it; for he tells us, by David, Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. Will a tender father suffer the children of his youth and riper years to forsake his family forever? He will not;—Neither will God suffer those who are once made his, and enrolled with his children, entirely to revolt from him. On the contrary, he will make use of means by which he will attach them more and more to himself—He will enlarge their hearts, that they may run in the way of his commandments. He will draw them, that they may run after him. Besides, God sets a high value on believers. He calls them his own; considers them as his jewels; and declares they shall be his in that day when he makes up his jewels. Will a man suffer his jewels to be lost? No; he prizes them at a high rate. Neither will God allow his sons, who are jewels in his eyes, to be lost; consequently they must, having once set out upon their journey heaven-

ward, continue in it until they arrive at the place of their destination.

The perseverance of the saints may be argued from the greatness of the price paid for them; from the continued intercession of the Redeemer, in their behalf; and from the great and precious promises made to them by God, in Christ. The price paid was infinite; for the human and divine natures were united in Jesus, which enhanced the value of his obedience and death. He was, also, the substitute and surety of believers; and when they are brought out of a state of nature, into a state of grace, his obedience and sufferings are considered by God, the Judge, as their own. But if they do not persevere, these are lost, with respect to them—Shocking idea! Shall we thus make a trifle of an all-perfect righteousness, and set at nought the superlatively great and stupendous sufferings of the Son of the eternal God? Christ also intercedes for the perseverance of believers: For we are told, by John, that if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And he declared, himself, that his Father heard him always. He prayed for Peter that his faith should not fail. His advocacy, or intercession, must be effectual, since his Father is ever ready to grant his requests. Believe it then, my friends, that the Saviour of men, though he was once transfixed to a cross, has been for many ages upon a throne, supporting the character of a Powerful Advocate for all believers. Shall the Christian's enemies then overcome one, who bought him at so great a price, and who constantly presents his obedience and sufferings to his Father, as arguments in favor of his progressive motion towards heaven? Certainly no. Besides, there are great and precious promises made,

by God, to believers, in Christ; and we ought to believe that these promises will be fulfilled; and if so, every follower of the Lamb must, and will, persevere. I, says God to his people, will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from me. To which, let me add the words of David. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down; for the Lord upholdeth them with his hand.

The point under consideration may be proved from the union which takes place between Christ and his people: This union is of the most intimate nature—it is like that of the head and the members; or, like that of the vine and the branches. Now he that is joined unto the Lord, is one Spirit, and he is made a partaker of the Divine Nature; how then is it possible, that the believer can apostatize from God, totally and finally? He is made a member of Christ, spiritually; he is cut off from the old stock, in which he was growing, in a state of nature, and he is really engrafted into Jesus Christ—the same spirit operates in both; surely then he must go forward towards the perfection of his nature.

Reason, also, tells us, that such an one will grow stronger and stronger; for, it is the nature of grace to aspire to its native place, to rise to its giver. As the Spirit of God carries on a work of sanctification in the man, it is his business to kill the evil qualities of the heart; the person's love for the world is destroyed; his corruptions of every kind are gradually weakened, and, by consequence, grace takes a deeper and a faster hold of his heart. The more he dies to sin, the more and the stronger does he grow in grace. He bears the fruits

of the spirit, love, joy, peace, faith, meekness, humility and patience; and these, by degrees, gathering strength, render him ripe for glory, and make him a suitable companion for saints and angels.

For the sake of argumentation, we will, for a moment, grant all that our antagonists contend for; and we will say, a believer may, and frequently does fall from grace, totally, and finally, and, consequently, does not grow in grace: Then let us notice the absurdities that will unavoidably take place. A true believer, has true faith. That faith is the effect of God's having made a choice of him—and that choice is the unchangeable purpose of God. Now, if he loses his faith, the eternal purpose of God must also be lost, or, at least, rendered ineffectual: This is an absurdity, however, too gross to be admitted. Again, if the believer does not persevere, he loses his faith; but faith is the condition of the Covenant of Grace, and therefore the Covenant itself may also be abrogated, with respect to those who cease to believe; but, the covenant also is immutable; for God says, expressly, *I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me, Jeremiah XXXII. 40.* Again, if the believer falls away from grace, totally and finally, or does not persevere, it may sometimes happen, that he that believes has not eternal life, even when he does believe; for he loses that life, and, consequently, it could not be an eternal life: But Christ says, expressly, That every believer, without exception, has eternal life abiding in him. The believer, say our antagonists, does not increase or grow stronger in grace—Then he grows weaker. But this would be to say, That a man may be a Child of God,

and yet not have the work of sanctification carried on in his heart at all—Very absurd would such a conclusion be! For the Spirit of God is given as a spirit of holiness to all and every Christian, and he kills sin, and strengthens grace. I have been thus particular to put this matter out of dispute, and to vindicate a great and comfortable Gospel Truth from illiberal abuse.

We come now to the third and last source of argumentation, by which we mean to support, or, at least, to strengthen the Doctrine of the Saints final Perseverance and Growth in Grace: viz. By the opinions and experience of those who have had the best opportunities of acquiring an enlightened information.

I do not mean, that the opinions and experience of men shall be taken as absolute, incontestible evidence, in favor of the proposition we are endeavoring to establish. For it ever was and ever will be a truth, that good and wise men are liable to mistakes. But granting this, they ought to have some weight in determining our belief about doctrines. Upon the saints final perseverance and growth in grace, the fathers, who succeeded the apostles in the work of the ministry, spoke very clearly. Tertullian, eminently pious and learned, has this remarkable expression:—"How glorious a thing it is, that Christians are carried on by little and little, until they arrive to perfect happiness in the new Jerusalem." Saint Gregory says, "That the righteous man travels on, from one degree of grace and strength, until another, until he meets the light of Heaven." These venerable fathers seem, in those sentences, to have given the opinions of those who lived in their respective ages.

I need not tell my readers, that Zuinglius, Calvin, and



Luther, contended for the doctrine we advocate; for they must, generally, be acquainted with their sentiments concerning it. In support of the saints progressive motion in the paths of holiness, and of their growth in grace, let me call, as witnesses, the determinations of the different Synods and General Councils which have long adorned the Presbyterian Churches in several parts of the world. The Low Country divines, of this denomination, have long since established them both in deliberate assemblies. The Synods and councils of England, Scotland, and America, have done the same. Hear their sense of the matter, in the seventeenth article of that church: "They whom God hath accepted in "his beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by his "spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from "a state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein "unto the end, and be eternally saved." And this article has been accepted as a part of the creed of the Presbyterian Church in America. In another place they speak of believer's spiritual nourishment and growth in grace, which certainly is inseparably connected with perseverance.

Next I must bring into my assistance the sentiments of the pious framers of the articles and liturgy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, who, certainly, advocated that for which we contend. Hear their conclusion in their seventeenth article. They have been speaking of those whom God hath chosen for happiness out of mankind—Such, they assert, are bro't, by Christ, to everlasting salvation. They go on, and say, "Wherefore "they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of "God, be called according to God's purpose, his spirit "working in due season: They, through grace, obey the

“calling: They he justified freely: They he made sons of God by adoption: They he made like the image of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ: They walk religiously in good works; and, at length, by God’s mercies, they attain everlasting felicity.” Can anything be stronger or more full to our purpose, than what we have now repeated? Certainly not.

I am unhappy, that my not being acquainted with the articles of the Baptist, and some other churches of note, prevents me from bringing in their sentiments, as supports of the proposition endeavored to be proved in this discourse. That the members of the Baptist Church think as we do about it, I know to be a fact; but the words they make use of, I cannot here put down.

What shall I say more? Let experience, or that knowledge which Christians have acquired by trial and practice, here speak in behalf of the saints perseverance and growth in grace. She will, I am persuaded, give in her verdict in our favor:—She will force every believer to say, that, in the midst of temptations, and sins, and afflictions, he has found a strong inclination to go forward; that he has often felt a heavy stroke given to the body of death within him, and, by consequence, he has felt his graces taking a deeper root in his soul, and becoming stronger and more fruitful. Could we, my brethren, pass from this to the other world, and appeal to the experience of all the righteous, who have arrived safe in those realms of perfect peace and love, I am fully persuaded we should have a new illustration of both parts of the proposition. They would tell us, that since their admission into those regions of felicity, they have often been exhilarated and lost in wonder, when they took a view of the instru-

ments employed by their divine Master, in conducting them to, and preparing them for Heaven. They would, there is no doubt, extol, in songs of joy, the wisdom, power, and faithfulness of their Almighty Benefactor. Their tongues would loudly recommend that faith by which they walked while on earth, and which, with respect to them, is now turned into sight. Above all, hallelujahs would burst from every mouth to their Advocate, Jesus Christ. They would all, with one consent, acknowledge, that back to perdition they could not have gone; that before them the path was open, along which they were compelled to travel; and, that all things wrought together to establish and strengthen their graces. This would be the language of the Patriarchs: It would be re-echoed by the united voices of all the Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs. In a single word, the meanest Saints, in the upper Temple, would tell us, experimentally, that perseverance and growth in grace are inseparably connected with true religion; and that, from the moment of their conversion until their dissolution, they made progress heaven-ward, and became stronger and stronger.

I have now, my friends, proved the first doctrinal proposition: In doing this, a variety of arguments have been employed. These have been drawn from scripture, reason, opinions and experience. This was done in order to satisfy every class of men, and to put the matter in dispute, as much as possible, beyond controversy.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> I am conscious that the attentive reader will perceive some small disorder in the management of the different arguments made use of: This was occasioned by the complex nature of the proposition laid down for discussion. It consisted of two parts, or branches, inseparably connected, and yet capable of distinct illustration.—It

Leaving the objections usually laid in against what has been said, together, with an improvement of the whole, for the ground of another discourse, I conclude this in the words of the Apostle *Jude*:—*Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you, faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

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## SERMON II.

OBJECTIONS, TO THE FINAL PERSEVERANCE AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH OF THE SAINTS, STATED AND ANSWERED.

*JOB XVII. 9.*

*The righteous also shall hold on his way; and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.*

MY FRIENDS,

In the preceding discourse, upon this subject, after a suitable introduction, it was proposed,

I. To support and prove the doctrine contained in the text:—That a true believer will persevere in his religious course of life; and that he will grow in grace; or, in the words of the text, will hold on his way, and be stronger and stronger.

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was, therefore, necessary to have an eye to both through the whole of the sermon, and to establish them in the order in which they were at first mentioned. They go hand in hand, and the one or the other being proved, the other is inferable from it; for there must be growth in grace where there is perseverance, and, certainly, there can be no growth in grace if perseverance is wanting.

II. To state and answer some of the plainest and most weighty objections which are usually laid in against the Saints Perseverance and Growth in Grace.

III. To conclude with a practical application of what might be said.

The truth of the first of these propositions, in both its parts, I have already proved, by a variety of strong arguments—and, had not the present age been productive of great multitudes, who are disposed to lay in objections against what has been advanced, the subject might have been closed, with a warm and interesting improvement of what had been said. However, as matters are circumstanced, I am under the necessity of meeting our opponents upon their own ground, and must endeavor, in this discourse, to state and answer their several objections to the truth of what we have asserted and proved, in the preceding sermon: When I have done this, a door will be opened for a practical application of the whole subject. Here I cannot do less than to call down the assistance of the Holy Ghost, both upon myself and you:—May he enable me to speak, and you to hear, as become the oracles of God to be spoken and heard. Two plans are concerted, in order to set aside and overthrow the truth, and even the probability of our opinion. 1st. The objectors suppose, certain bad consequences will unavoidably follow from the admission of that for which we have contended, and making these bad consequences the foundation, they erect upon it a superstructure, as they fondly suppose, high enough to overtop, and weighty enough to overthrow, all we have advanced. This is chiefly done in the way of reasoning. But as there are many who are not wholly satisfied with this

process, there is a 2d. plan adopted for destroying the truth of our doctrinal proposition, that is, they form a proposition directly opposed to it, namely, That a true believer may, and frequently does, fall away from a state of grace, and, consequently, from growing in grace, totally and finally; insomuch, that after death he is made everlastingly miserable. The truth of this position they attempt to establish by the Word of God; and, I will say, I have not a single doubt but that they believe they prove it, in a manner, plain and full. These two schemes it must now be my work to exhibit, one after the other, and, in the same order, to point out their insufficiency for accomplishing the end at which they aim.

1st. Then, granting the truth and certainty of the believer's final perseverance, growth in grace, and the impossibility of his falling from grace totally and finally, have a direct tendency, say our opponents, to encourage an inattention to christian duties. Upon this matter they reason thus:—If we are true believers, we shall certainly persevere; we shall grow stronger; it is impossible for us to fall from grace totally and finally, according to your plan; we will not, therefore, bestir ourselves, in the smallest degree, about those matters; we will attend to the exercise of no duties whatsoever. The bare repetition of such sentiments does, in my judgment, justify us in drawing the conclusion, that those who make use of them either have no true religion at all, or, that they are very ignorant of, and have, as yet, felt very few of those effects which unavoidably follow, upon being brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light. Have we not seen that Saint Paul gave full credence to what we have advocated? Cer-

tainly we have. Had it then such an influence on his conduct? Was he inattentive to, and negligent of, the duties which belonged to, and were obligatory on Christians? No; he was far otherwise—He laboured more abundantly than all the apostles—He was frequent in the exercise of prayer and praise—His love to God was strong and very fervent. For the promotion of his master's honour, and his own soul's peace, he denied himself, took up his cross, and followed him. He declared, in this he exercised himself, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man. In a single word, he performed, punctiliously, every duty which he was convinced he owed either to himself, his fellow-men, or to his Creator. And did he perform all these things knowing, at the same time, that he was bending his course heaven-ward; that he was, consequently, growing stronger in grace; and that it was impossible for him to fall away from grace? Surely he did. He knew these were some of the means appointed by God for the promotion of these important things just now mentioned, and therefore he could not, he would not neglect them. He knew he should reach the mark—And, he knew as well, that he must run with all his might towards it. Hence he tells us: *Phil. III., 12, 13, 14. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* Are these the words of the very same apostle who, in his epistle to the Romans,

boldly declares, that nothing can effect a separation between Christ and his followers? Yes; they are the words of the very same Paul. It is, then, sufficiently plain, that the belief of what we have proved, had no such pernicious influence upon his conduct, as the objectors to the doctrine calculate upon. On the contrary, his ardor in the Christian warfare was increased, and his graces shown brighter, which, I am fully persuaded, are the unavoidable fruits or consequences of a firm belief of what we have advocated. I draw this conclusion, not altogether from the example of Paul, and other holy men of whom we read in the Word of God; but, also, from some observations I have made myself. It was my lot long ago to live, for many years, among a people, who all believed in the certainty of every true Christian's final perseverance and spiritual growth, and in the consequent impossibility of their falling, for ever, from grace. These people were, in general, exemplary in their lives; seemed to be devoted to God, and to live to his glory. Vices, of every kind, they appeared both to hate and to shun: And upon a fair comparison, they were better magistrates, better subjects, better neighbors, better masters and mistresses, better husbands and wives, better parents and children, than I have, generally, known those to be who deny our doctrine, and infer such dreadful consequences from it. Why, then, should our opponents be alarmed, and cry out against the evil-tendency of that for which we plead? If such mischievous effects were concealed in our sentiments, would they not come forth uniformly and at all times? I apprehend it would, in common, be the case. From this objection, then, our opinion has received no harm:—It stands, as yet, unmoved.



Secondly, Our opponents state, That, allowing what we have contended for to be true, a door is opened for loose living, and all the exhortations, promises and threatenings, which are interspersed throughout the Word of God, are thereby, rendered entirely useless. These, say they, are the unavoidable evils which flow from such opinions, and, therefore, we cannot be persuaded of the truth and validity of what you have said in the former discourse. We pointedly deny that these conclusions can be drawn, with any degree of propriety, from the premises. With respect to the first of these objections, the Apostle *Paul* has given a short, but unsatisfactory answer to it, in Rom. VI., 1, 2. *What shall we say then, Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?* In the close of the preceding chapter he had been shewing, that where sin abounded grace did much more abound; to which doctrine he foresaw some licentious persons might object, and say, If the riches of grace be thus manifested in the pardon of sin, may we not take more liberty and multiply our offences? This conclusion he rejects, with the greatest abhorrence, and shews it cannot be the case: How, says he, shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? We may, with great propriety, apply what the apostle here advances to those who object against our sentiments as favorable to licentiousness. Can you see any good reason at all for living and wallowing in iniquity, because you are Christians and traveling towards Heaven, and growing into a ripeness for perfect blessedness? Because you cannot, possibly, fall from grace, will you, therefore, prove, by your conduct, that you have no true grace? If you are God's children you are dead to sin: that is,

you have no relish for it, no desire after it. Had you your choice, you would not indulge a single thought, speak a single word, nor yet do a single action, which would be offensive to that God who has done so much for you: Much less would you be willing to give up to your irregular appetites and inclinations, and, having removed every impediment out of the way, yield yourselves up as servants to all kinds of wickedness. These reflections compel me to draw the conclusion, that those who oppose our sentiments, as being friendly to loose living, either do not understand the matter, or, which I fear is the case with many of them, they have never as yet had the love of God shed abroad in their hearts.

Our opponents add, that, in our plan, this other evil consequence is comprehended and naturally flows from it; namely, that the exhortations, promises, and threatenings, which are interspersed throughout the Word of God, are thereby rendered entirely useless and ineffectual to promote the end at which they aim. Would the All-wise Being, say they, tell believers to watch and pray, to grow in grace; and, that in him, who draws back, his soul shall have no pleasure, if their final perseverance and growth in grace were certainly fixed, insomuch, that there is no possibility of their falling away from these totally and finally? Surely all these may have a place in God's Word, and, nevertheless, what we have said remain, unalterably, true. God promises those blessings to believers; but, he promises them in and through means to be used by them. He communicates grace and strength to them, and makes them instruments in his own hand to promote his glory and their own real happiness. I would not be understood here as asserting, that the Christian's perseverance

and spiritual growth depend on his own exertions; far be that from me: But I say, God uses him as an instrument in his own hand, for promoting those important subjects. The All-wise knows his people's imperfections; knows that sin is not entirely vanquished; knows that every wrong step they take dishonors him and wounds their own souls; and, therefore, though he has established them in the ways of holiness, and will finally bring them to the participation of endless joys; yet, with great propriety, does he exhort them to go forward; promise rewards to the conqueror; and threaten to punish such as fall to his dishonour, though they be not utterly cast off. There are some circumstances, in the story of Paul's shipwreck, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, which, if repeated, will throw light upon this matter, though they bear relation to earthly things. We will repeat them:—The ship was taken in a storm, and all the passengers, momentarily, expected to sink as lead in the mighty waters. At this crisis, an Angel of the Lord delivered Paul from his fears:—He promised him that he and all those who sailed with him, should get safe to land. The winds, however, became more boisterous; the waves ran high; the ship was tossed to and fro by them; fear seized upon the ship-men, and they determined to abandon her and the rest of the crew to the mercy of the triumphant billows. Paul immediately stepped forward and interposed his advice; saying, Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved. On the one hand, we have here the promise of God to the Apostle, that all the passengers should get safe to land; and, on the other hand, we have this same Apostle asserting, that if the ship-men left the ship, they could not be saved. The

promise then, of their salvation, and the means by which, under Providence, it was to be effected, were inseparably connected. Some how, after the same manner, it is with respect to that eternal life after which we look. True believers are exhorted to go forward towards it; they have promises made to them, that they shall certainly persevere and be prepared for it; they are told, that if they neglect the use of means, it will fair [*sic*] the worse with them; for, that they are to look for these blessings in the way of holiness and in the use of means, which are as certainly appointed as the end at which they aim.

These objections, then, against our sentiments, which state, that they open a door for licentiousness, and render the exhortations, promises and threatenings, in the Word of God, entirely useless, must also fall to the ground, and leave us in the quiet possession of what we have asserted and proved. Having expended the force of reason, in attacks of this kind, upon our sentiments, and willing to satisfy all parties, they, secondly, form a proposition directly opposed to that for which we have contended. They say, That true believers may, and frequently do, fall from a state of grace, totally and finally; and, consequently, that they do not grow stronger in grace. The truth of this, they attempt to support by the Word of God. I am now to mention these several proofs, drawn from Holy Scripture, and shew their insufficiency for promoting the end at which they aim. They have recourse to the words of the Prophet for the establishment of their doctrine: *Ezekiel III. 20. XVIII. 24.* We will repeat the words in both places, and then endeavor to give them a consistent explanation. *Again, when a righteous man doth turn*

*from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die; because they have not given him warning; he shall die, in his sin, and his righteousness, which he hath done, shall not be remembered; but his blood will I require at thine hand. 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.* These passages are nearly the same in signification—at least those parts of them which are brought forward to establish the truth of the aforementioned doctrine; both of them assert, That, when a righteous man turns from his righteousness which he hath done, and commits iniquity, all his righteousness, which he hath done, shall not save him from ruin everlasting. I am sorry to know, that there are multitudes in the world ignorant enough to advance these passages, for the support of a doctrine, which, surely, can derive no assistance from them. Let us examine their meaning, and make a fair trial. What are we to understand by this righteous man, and by his turning from his righteousness? By the righteous man we must understand, one who is righteous in his own, and perhaps, in the estimation of others: The Scripture speaks of such.—*Luke XVIII. 9. And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Matt. XXIII. 28. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.* The righteousness here spoken of, is a righteousness of the man himself; it is *his*: It is what he has done:

It is a web of his own weaving; a righteousness of works altogether—This we grant he may lose entirely: From this he may turn. His impure heart can no longer contain its wickedness; the external restraints are broken asunder, and the man is shewn in his proper colors. He boldly apostatizes from his hypocritical profession. That this is a fair explanation of those texts, I can venture to call, as witnesses, many of those who, nevertheless, contend for the possibility and frequency of a total and final fall from grace. I hope *none* of them suppose that a man is to be saved by his own works; but by the merits and righteousness of the Saviour of men. Yet, in the passages we have been considering, it is the man's righteousness that he hath done from which he turns himself away. Nothing, then, can be concluded for our opponent's scheme—nor yet against us, from this effort.

We proceed to the citation and explanation of some other sentiments, which, at first sight, seem to favor their proposition, and, consequently, to bear hard against what we have been at considerable pains to establish: Read John XV. 2, 6. *Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.* These are the words of Christ himself. They are figurative. He had called himself the vine, believers the branches, and his Father the husbandman, or dresser of the branches. The passages give ground for the following question: What are we to understand by men's being in Christ? The answer to this question, will, sufficiently, explain those texts, and, at the same time, shew that those who found upon them their opinion of the possibility and frequency, of the believer's total and final

apostasy from grace, do really mistake their meaning. Men may be in Christ two ways: 1st. Some are really united to him by faith, and by his spirit dwelling in them—Such are all true believers. 2nd. Some are said to be in Christ by a sacramental implantation; having been baptized in his name, they were thereby made members of his visible Church, and such make a visible profession of adhering to him: But as they are not really and spiritually united to him, they derive no nourishment from him, and, consequently, they cannot bring forth any good fruit. God may dig about and manure them: He may give them a solemn call; may allow them privileges in abundance—still they are barren. Then he cuts them off, and they wither forthwith. They are like the unfruitful fig-tree, with which he had taken so much pains, and, after all, it was cut down as a cumberer of his ground. As yet, then, we remain in possession of that truth for which we have been contending, and our adversaries perceiving some of those sacred pillars, upon which they have erected their arguments for proving the total and final apostasy, already to give way, they proceed and bring forth others, which, they fondly suppose, will not be so easily set aside and overthrown. We follow them, and will, in the whole of our process keep the investigation of truth in our eye, as the principal object to be sought after.

They bring in support of their opinion, *Heb.* VI. 4, 5, 6. *ibid* X. 26, 27, as also, 2 *Peter*, II., 21, 22. We will repeat these passages at full length, and examine how far any are justifiable in making use of them to establish the total and final apostacy of true believers. *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: seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For if we sin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour 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. But it has 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.*

I readily allow, to those who contend for the apostacy of the saints, that, if there is anything in the Word of God which favours and supports it, these verses just recited seem to do so:—But we will not depend upon the bare repetition of them: We will examine them, thoroughly, and weigh their import with all the impartiality imaginable; having done this, we shall be able to conclude, with some degree of exactness, whether they are properly or improperly applied, when advanced as proofs of the possibility and frequency of believers total and final revolt from God.

Four things are observable in the one and the other of the two passages just now cited from the Epistle to the Hebrews:—1. Great attainments, in what appears to be religion, are spoken of, and men are evidently repre-



sented as being the subjects of those, seemingly, religious advancements. Those attainments, in the first passage, are pointed out by the phrases—Enlightened, tasting the heavenly gift, partaking of the Holy Ghost, tasting the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come. In the other passage, they are comprized in the single phrase—Receiving the knowledge of the truth. 2. It is suggested that such may fall away from this apparent progress in religion. This idea is, in the first quotation, conveyed by the phrase—If they shall fall away; in the other, by the words—For if we sin wilfully. 3. We are taught to believe, that it is a matter very difficult indeed to bring those, who thus backslide from such advancements in what appears to be religion, to a hearty and willing profession of it afterwards. This is communicated to us, in the first passage, by the words—For it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; the same sentiment is conveyed in the second recited place, by the phrase—There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin. 4. Reasons, for the seeming impossibility of such apostates being restored, or induced to engage in the exercises of true religion, are given in both passages: In the first, because they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame; in the second, because a certain fearful looking for of judgment has already taken possession of them, and a fiery indignation is prepared to devour them, being adversaries of the Almighty.

We see by these remarks, that those different scripture-texts, are parallel one with the other. This parallelism will greatly assist us in an explanation of them. The first contains a great variety of words to express the utmost length to which men may go in what appears

to be religion, and yet be destitute of the life and power of it in their heart. The second does this by a single phrase—Receiving the knowledge of the truth; which certainly teaches us, that to have our minds enlightened in the knowledge of Jesus and his gospel, is all that can be meant by that variety of phraseology made use of in the first cited passage, and with this opinion exactly agree many of our most learned commentators, both ancient and modern—I name only *Calvin* and *Bullinher* of the former class, and *Burkit* and *Fox* of the latter. They say, “To be enlightened, to taste the heavenly gift, to be made a partaker of the Holy Ghost, to taste the good Word of God, and the powers of the world to come, are phrases, figuratively used, to express and represent the same thing; namely, the knowledge and acknowledgement of the gospel.”—

“It is called illumination,’ (say they) ‘because men being blind before, are hereby enlightened: It is called a tasting of the heavenly gift, because this knowledge comes from Heaven, and because it is partially relished by those to whom it is communicated: They are said to be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, because this knowledge is given them by the Spirit of God: They are said to taste of the Word of God, because they discover a certain sweetness in it, and especially in its promises; though they, as yet, have no proper claim to them: They taste the powers of the world to come, because they, falsely, suppose, that, having a right to the promises which make the joys of paradise good to believers, they will not be denied to them, and, therefore, as happiness is desirable, they endeavor to satisfy themselves with some fore-taste of it.”

Now, surely, a man may receive the knowledge of

the truth, and nevertheless, be in an unconverted state: Even the devils believe the truths of the gospel. The stony ground hearers received the word and it sprang up. Herod heard John gladly. Felix trembled at the truth of Paul's sermon. Agrippa felt the force of his sentiments, and was almost persuaded to be a Christian. From those attainments, then, in what appears like religion, we acknowledge men may fall away totally and finally; and when they do so, it is a difficult matter to engage them in religious exercises any more. I say, difficult—for the original word, *adunaton*, should be understood in this qualified sense: By thus revolting from a religious profession, they have called Christ an impostor; done what they could to crucify him again; and have cast a contempt upon the plan of salvation through him. Besides, by their backsliding they have procured a horror of conscience; future judgment is ever before their eyes; have exasperated the Almighty, who considers them as his adversaries, and has, therefore, clad himself with vengeance as with a cloak; his fiery indignation is blown up, and is prepared for the destruction of such adversaries; and, since they have thus treated Christ, the only sacrifice for sin, they are to expect no other atonement, whatsoever, for their offences. If such are the consequences of apostatizing, after men have been instructed in the plan of salvation, and after they have made a visible profession of religion, it is no wonder if it be a hard matter to bring such forward, even as far as they had advanced before they departed from their external profession of piety. We have critically examined two passages, upon which our opponents laid great stress, for establishing the total and final apos-

tasy of true believers; and, consequently, for overthrowing what we have proved, at considerable length, in the former discourse. We have seen they can derive no assistance from them; surely, they will be equally unsuccessful in attempting to draw a proof, for the support of their tenet, from the verses we recited from the writings of the apostle Peter—for the same characters are there drawn: They are such as, by the knowledge and visible profession of religion, having, for a time, ceased to wallow in sin, have turned back, with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. We may observe they are still dogs and swine—unclean animals. Of such, the apostle declares, it had been better for them not to have known the way of salvation, through Christ, than, after they had known it, to turn from the holy precepts and directions which were given to them, in order to direct them towards happiness: By which he means, that, in consequence of the pains which had been taken with them, and of the light and knowledge which had been communicated to them, since they had abused them, their repentance would be rendered more difficult; and, in case that did not take place, their future torments would be rendered more dreadful and insupportable. We have then, as yet, found nothing in all our researches, that can speak in favor of the total and final apostasy of believers, and, therefore, we still remain in possession of that for which we have contended. But they tell us *Paul* himself was afraid of apostatizing totally, and finally, as appears by *1 Cor. IX. 27. But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means when I have preached*

*to others, I myself should be a cast-away.* In the first part of the verse, he tells the Corinthians how much pains he took in subduing his own lusts and corruptions, and, in the latter part, he assigns the reason for his conduct, in that matter, lest, by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. This last part of the verse is not well translated. It would be more consistent with the original, and with the meaning of the Word of God, in general, to render it thus: *Lest somehow or other, having preached to others, I myself might be disapproved:* That is, If *Paul* did not, by his own example, teach the necessity and propriety of mortifying his lusts and corruptions, having publicly enjoined these things upon others, he himself would be disapproved by them, and, indeed, by God his judge; for he would have then acted the same part as the Scribes and Pharisees did, who bound heavy burdens upon men's shoulders, and would not so much as touch them with one of their fingers, for which they stand reprov'd by our Saviour. Nothing, then, can be concluded from this assertion of Saint *Paul* in their favor. He, too, frequently tells us in his writings, of his full assurance of future happiness, to allow us to conclude, that he had the most distant fears of falling, totally and finally, from grace.

But, say our antagonists, we can prove our point by examples taken from Holy Scriptures. *David*, *Solomon* and *Peter*, fell totally from grace; *Hymeneus*, *Alexander* and *Judas*, fell totally and finally from it. *David's* sin was very great indeed; but I deny that it was a total fall from grace. For, when he was artfully reprov'd by *Nathan*, the Prophet, he immediately confessed his crime, and made application

for more grace: Therefore, he earnestly prays to his heavenly Father, *Psalm LI. 11.* in these words, *Take not thy holy spirit from me;* which proves, that the spirit had still a place of habitation in his heart, though he had sinned to the dishonor of God, and to the wounding of his own soul. With respect to *Solomon*, though he multiplied his iniquities very much, yet he did not fall totally from grace; as we learn from a gracious promise, made by God to his father *David*, in his behalf, *2 Sam. VII. 14, 15.* *I will be his father, and he shall be my son: If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him.* Neither did *Peter* fall totally; which may be proved by the prayer of Christ for him. He prayed that his faith should not fail: As also; because he did not deny his Master out of malice, but through fear; and, because he wept bitterly on account of his sin.

*Hymeneus*, *Alexander* and *Judas* are brought by our opponents as examples, to prove the possibility of believers totally and finally falling from grace. In *1 Tim. I. 19, 20*, these men, and the crime with which they are charged, are both mentioned by Saint *Paul*. This Apostle had been employed to deliver a charge to *Timothy*, when he was ordained for the work of the ministry, and he tells him to war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom (says he) is *Hymeneus* and *Alexander*; whom I have delivered unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme. By faith here we are to understand the doctrine of the gospel, and particularly, the resurrection of the dead; which doctrine, many suppose

those men pointedly denied. By a good conscience, we are to understand such a conscience as teaches us to avoid, as much as possible, offending both God and men.

*Hymeneus* and *Alexander*, say our adversaries, by their bad conduct, and by pointedly denying a principal doctrine of the gospel, fell from grace totally and finally. How came they by this knowledge? Can they prove that they were good men before? They cannot. If by what is said about them, they could draw the conclusion that they fell totally from grace, yet there is not the least ground to say, that they fell finally; for the Apostle says, he had delivered them to satan that they might learn not to blaspheme; that is, that they might correct what was amiss in themselves, which evidently proves that he did not consider their case as desperate. But the truth is, there is no good reason to say either that these men fell totally or finally from grace. The presumption is, that, like many now a days, they had for a time made a splendid profession of religion, and their hearts being as yet unchanged, they revolted from that external profession, and embraced errors diametrically opposite to those things which they had pretended to believe. The advocates for apostasy, total and final, can receive little assistance then from the examples of those men who are noted by *Paul* in his charge to *Timothy*. I am ready to believe they now begin to despair of carrying their point, and had *Judas* never lived, they would now terminate the dispute and say, they were mistaken: But, say they, he was one of the twelve chosen for publishing the gospel: He was a follower and a disciple of the Redeemer of men. These things we grant. But, my friends, let me pose you with one

question—Does there not appear to be something suspicious in the whole of his character? Certainly there does. We hear very little of him as a good, a successful preacher. Very few traits of his zeal for religion are left upon record in Scripture. He appears to have had an uncommon attachment to wealth: He kept the bag and what was put in it. We must then, conclude, he early appeared religious for the sake of worldly gain; and the best reasons we have for thinking so; for, before he betrayed his Master, our Saviour drew his character in a few words—‘One of you is a devil,’ meaning *Judas*. How then could he be a good man and a devil at the same time? My brethren, I close this part of the subject, by asserting, that if there is a possibility of a believer’s falling from grace, totally and finally, it cannot, in my judgment, be proved either by Scripture or Reason.

I come now to the third thing proposed, which is, to make a practical application of what has been said.

1. From what has been said, let us embrace the opportunity of examining ourselves. Are we progressive in our Christian course? Do we grow stronger and stronger in grace? Some of you, my christian friends, I doubt not, can answer these questions in the affirmative, while others of you will be ready to say, we cannot even tell what is meant by them. To both these classes of my hearers, I would address a few things.

First. To you who are bending your course heavenward, and gathering strength as you go forward, I say, be very thankful to God for your present safety, and for the certainty you possess of your future happiness. It is true you live in a world full of enemies, of enemies, too, which meditate your destruction; but you are en-



tirely safe: The Word of God; the attributes of God; your faith; and Jesus your Redeemer, who bought you with his own blood, are all engaged for your present safety. The Lord Christ, O believers! appears in that high court above, as your powerful advocate and intercessor: He sees, and narrowly watches all your determined foes; knows the temptations with which you are tried, and knows your own strength. Remember, he has long since been trampling upon the necks of your adversaries; that he was once tempted as you are, yet without sin, and, that knowing your feeble frames and what you are able to bear, if he permits you to be tried, he will proportion the trial to your strength, insomuch, that you will come off more than conquerors through him that loved you, and will be enabled to sing, Rejoice not against us, O our enemies, for when we fall we shall arise: We can do all things, through Christ that strengtheneth us. If any of you were pursued by a common enemy; if you were hard pressed by him, and were just ready to conclude that you must submit without a further effort to make your escape, and if, as in a moment, all the rocks and mountains in the whole world, were suddenly thrown around you for a munition, would you not think yourself entirely safe; completely defended against the formidable attacks of your pursuer? I know you would. But let me tell you, your safety in that case would be more doubtful, than this is of which we speak. You are held, my friends, in the right hand of God, and none is able to take you from him. Be thankful, then, for this blessing: And be thankful for the certainty you have of your future happiness. You are engaged in a spiritual warfare; you are conquering the nations which beset you, by little and little, and you

certainly will go on and persevere unto the end. Hear then the gracious promise made to you by him who is your life: *Rev. III. 21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my father in his throne.*

2. I have a few things to say to you, who are ignorant about matters relative to the spiritual life. Consider, my friends, that you are rational creatures and accountable for your actions. Do you think you were born solely for the gratification of your sensual appetites? Do you content yourselves with the bare form of godliness, while you deny the life and power of it in your hearts? Believe it, my friends, true religion is no chimera; your hearts must be changed by the power of God, if ever you enter into the kingdom of heaven. Consider how liable you are every day to fall away, totally and finally, from the hypocritical profession you make of love to God and his laws. Consider, also, the advantages you will gain, by becoming the genuine followers and disciples of Jesus. Your happiness will then be eternally fixed. Troubles may come; temptations may be thrown in your way; you may sometimes fall to the dishonor of God; but, believe it, you will at last triumph and be crowned with laurels of victory. I cannot but accuse many of you for your neglect of the things which belong to your soul's peace. It is not uncommon to see many of your pews almost empty upon Sabbath days, if the weather is, even in a small degree, inclement. Do you not think you will have to give an account to God for such negligences? Do you not run all risques of contracting disorders, nay, diseases and death itself, and that very frequently, rather than be absent from a ball or an assembly? Surely

you do: And I earnestly pray to God, that you may take shame and confusion to yourselves on account of that preference which you give to the works of darkness. May your consciences, and the word and spirit of God reprove you sharply, even in your private chambers. May you have neither sleep nor slumber till you have yielded up yourselves to be the servants and soldiers of King Jesus. I have been endeavoring to instruct you for many years, and, with respect to some of you, I may say, with God's servant of old—*I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.*

In conclusion—From what has been said, we have good reason to say, that those are in an error who teach the possibility of true believers total and final fall from grace. Let such consider, whoever they are, that they speak in direct opposition to the general tenor of the Word of God, as we have already proved.—Let them, in future, examine their Bibles more accurately: Let them, also, examine their hearts, and if they are of the happy number who have passed from death to life, they will find their mistake, and, as Christians ought to do, acknowledge it. I hope yet to see and hear of many of them being thus changed in sentiment. I conclude in the words of the text,—*The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.*

Another publication of Dr. Balch, a copy of which is in the library of Princeton University, is entitled: