

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XVI.—NO. 4.

MARCH, MDCCCLXVI.

ARTICLE I.

PURITANISM AND PRESBYTERIANISM.

Puritanism is one of those great historical facts about which men have differed ever since its rise, and will doubtless continue to differ for a long time to come. Some denounce it as the embodiment of all that is narrow, bigoted, and intolerant, whilst others exalt it as the source and champion of all true civil and religious liberty. These denunciations have acquired a fresh bitterness and frequency from the great events that are going on around us. Regarding, as many do, that form of Puritanism which is found in New England as the grand agency that has produced the terrible conflict through which we have just passed, there is no form of condemnation too severe to be applied by them to Puritanism in general, and to every thing that is supposed to have any affiliation with it. Hence the Puritan, without regard to past or present, is denounced, ridiculed, and condemned by orators, editors, preachers, and talkers, without stint and without discrimination, and in many cases without knowledge or reason. Nor is this all. Every thing that is

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by blind and indiscriminate abuse, such as that to which we have adverted.

There are many points that we have omitted, or touched but lightly in this investigation, which a fuller discussion of either system considered apart, would have brought out more fully. Our object has been mainly to show the falsehood of much of the current cant, and some of the sectarian tricks of the present time, and to furnish hints for a fuller investigation. There is a wide and deeply interesting field of examination in regard to the effect of forms of Church polity, especially when closely connected with civil and political institutions, on the development of theology, philosophy, social and individual character, that is almost unexplored, and which yet awaits a master pen for its complete elucidation. If any hints we have given shall turn those who are capable of such investigations to this field, it will unfold the true philosophy of history concerning many facts with which we have to do at this time, as no other line of exploration will be able to do, and will add a contribution of inestimable value to our general literature. We hope that some able hand, having the requisite leisure, may do it for these two great phenomena in modern history, the Puritanism of old and New England, and the Presbyterianism of France, Switzerland, Hungary, Holland, Scotland, and America.

ARTICLE II.

SAINT PAUL'S VISION OF VICTORY.

In such times as those in which we live, greater supports than ordinary are required by the children of God. And those greater than ordinary supports are provided for them in the treasures of the divine word. They enjoy those supports in proportion as those treasures of the rarer and richer and more

recondite descriptions, are unlocked to them by a providence, a prayer, an experience, a beam of the illumining power of the Spirit of the Lord, however or whenever imparted.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. It is not asserted that all things, in all their workings, especially in their separate workings, promote the good of the elect. For then there would be nothing with which to wage a conflict, nothing over which to be conquerors. But it is asserted that all things, considered as in co-operation and concert, promote the good of God's chosen people. Each of the individual things which are enumerated—tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword—is an evil thing in and of itself. But as these things are embraced in the great scheme of redemption, as they take place in a world which is not an orphan and atheist world, but is governed by the sovereign power of God; and as they have all been touched by that controlling power of God which is exerted because there is a scheme of redemption, and whose purpose and object is that all things shall bend to that scheme of redemption, therefore, contrary to their original and direct nature, these things work together for good to the lovers of God.

There is another list of things, not in their nature friendly: death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, and every other creature. This latter list includes the former, and much more besides. The former was a muster-roll of enemies upon the arena of time, and of things seen and temporal. The latter is intended to bring together into the sublime vision, all things which may affect the destinies of an immortal soul. The former things—tribulation, persecution, peril—may be regarded as specifications under the head of one or two of the latter—life, death. And the grandeur of the victory will begin to appear, if it be true that the second list is a list of heads, each containing many particular things, over which God's people shall triumph by God's blessing. The former, or particular list, is a list of positive foes. The latter is a far deeper and grander list of things in which the sirens of

temptation dwell. In the first place, the apostle exhibits the march of the power of God through all human destinies: 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. Here is a chain which runs from before the foundation of this world, till after the termination of this world: from foreknowledge, before the process of human salvation began, to glory eternal, after the process of human salvation shall be consummated in heaven. It bears a light along all the paths of salvation, in company with those whom God foreknew, going with them through the intermediate stages of appointment to conformity with Christ, of effectual calling, of justification, and thence to that final victory and glory, which it is the main object of the context to foreshow. And it substantially affirms that they are the same persons who go through all these successive gates, one after the other, on the way to heaven. Every succeeding process is affirmed concerning those who were the objects of the immediately preceding process. It attends all who enter, all the way; and affirms them, at every step, to be the same persons whom we just before saw at the earlier stage. It is a great misfortune to any soul to be trained to feel prejudice against these teachings of God's word. Some think the true reading is, "predestinate conformed to the image of his Son." They say that the verb "to be" is in italics in the English Bible; and that that shows it is not in the original. And it is true that the words "to be" are not in the original. But it is a mere grammatical ellipsis, which the English translators have supplied with entire propriety. It is hardly to be supposed that any mind which undertakes faithfully to interpret Holy Scripture, could be satisfied with saying that men are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ, after they have already been so conformed. That is a post-destination; and a contradiction in terms. If it be further alleged that men are predestinated to salvation after they are conformed to the image of the Son of God, it is replied, *first*, that the power

which conforms them to Christ, is expressly placed after predestination: "Whom he did predestinate, *them* he called and justified." It is replied, *second*, that a predestination after conformity, begins *in the middle*, where it ought not to begin; and not *at the beginning*, where it ought to begin, and the true does begin. And it is replied, *thirdly*, that it is impossible to show how the elect became conformed to the image of Christ, before they were justified. Such a thing is not in Saint Paul's statement of the processes of salvation. It is a mere evasive expedient, and does not require further attention. It is a part of some other strange gospel.

Now, all these processes in the work of man's salvation are distinctly attributed to God himself. He foreknew them. He predestinated them. He called them. He justified them. He glorified them. The chain is as distinctly "bound around the throne of the Eternal" as language can bind it. That is not all. The eternal God is represented not only as having hold of the chain at that end which runs back into the gray abyss of the past, but as taking hold of it anew at every step. He is present to give the call, the justification, and the glorification. He attends as a present God all along the line of the career of his people. This is indeed a very pure ecclesiasticism. We do not have to search for divine authority, by supposing the validity of doubtful acts, through dark and distant ages; or to reach the ratifying hand of the Lord by relying on the most complete of earthly uncertainties; or to trust in traditions, ordinations, and successions, for eighteen hundred years, in a chain very often dipped in the deepest moral depravity of Christendom. But the Spirit of God is the living and present executor of affairs in his own Church. He is a present and not an absent God. The grace displayed in calling, justifying, and sanctifying sinners, is immediately from God at every step, and is invested with direct and immediate divine authority. He calls. He justifies. He glorifies. The theory of derivation by succession is a mummy which men assert to have been a living being in the days of the apostles. The Church system of the Scriptures is a life, a soul, a spirit, the breath of the Spirit of God, at the present time.

Now the plain reason why all things work together for good to them that love God, is, that all things have been, by heavenly hands and heavenly power, wrought into the scheme of salvation, from the early aurora of foreknowledge, to the full meridian of ultimate glory. Many things are in their nature inimical to the lovers of God. In the Old Testament, and in the New, it is written, and the children of God have often had to take up the lament, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. As fearful a thing as it is, and as luridly as the light of heaven, and the eyes of the Lord Jesus Christ, will one day flash upon it, yet it is a thing sometimes done upon that earth upon which Christ died that man might live, that those who love him are killed for his sake. And it is because the course of this world is, in and of itself, opposed to the Lord Jesus. Else, without an enemy, there could not be that VICTORY of which he afterwards speaks. But that power of God which conducts the work of salvation, and upholds the frame of nature till redemption be completed, is laid upon all things. Christ is head over them all to the Church. The Spirit of God lays his power upon them every one, and safely leads every one of his children through them all. The power which the divine Spirit throws over them, is as all-embracing as the great magnetic currents of the earth, or as the currents of gravitation through the universe. It is a universal providence, causing all things to work together for good to them that love God. It is also a particular providence attending the fall of a sparrow, the decoration of the lilies of the field, and the winter repasts of the birds of the air. In its vastness, it measures and maps out the dizzy tract of Oriental history, sketching and figuring, under emblems of the different parts of a man's body, or different wild beasts rising from the sea, the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman ages. It sings the "burdens" of Babylon, of Damascus, of Egypt, and of Tyre; the "dooms" of Dumah, and Ariel, and the crown of pride, and the land shadowing with wings. In its minuteness, it touches the shaking of a viper from his arm by the apostle Paul, and the leaving of a cloak and some parchments at Troy, and

his vision of a shadowy and beckoning man of Macedonia, inviting him to Europe. In its vastness, it comprehends the series of seals, and trumpets, and vials of the Apocalypse "dark with brightness all along," disclosing the destinies of modern nations, till the new Jerusalem descends from God out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband.

The scheme of redemption commenced at the very beginning—"before the foundation of the world." The power of God has therefore from the beginning been laid upon all things, even those most hostile to grace and to God, in a most wise and powerful bounding, ordering, and governing them, in a manifold dispensation, depriving them, or any of them, of any power, when they touch the scheme of redemption, to alter or abolish, to destroy or to harm it in any wise whatever.

All gloom, all despondency, all unbelief are in their nature atheistic. The spell and charm from God compelling things which would otherwise be adverse, to work together for good to them that love him, must embrace all things, if it embrace any thing, because it is from God himself. He announces himself every where in nature, by wonderful fitnesses, and adjustments, and adaptations of moral and material things, which seem to say he was here but now, and is just gone away. Rhythmic numbers, and measured proportions, and laws which almost speak his name aloud, announce him every where. The traces of his hand in nature are forever fresh and recent. He wrought yesterday, he will-work to-night in silence. The intelligent eye to-morrow will

Through worlds and races and terms and times,
See musical order, and pairing rhymes.

This universal presence and power of God is on behalf of his people wherever it appears. And if God be for us, who can be against us? If, then, this is no atheistic world, howling fatherless through its annual orbit, and if the power of God is both general and special, vast and minute, and if the traces of the presence of God are as clear and legible in men's spiritual histories, and experiences, and inner life, as they are in the

material world, who and what is the other power, of which we are to be afraid, finding it to be against us?

Three things appear as possible evils. First, the failure of the gifts of God to the souls of his chosen people—such gifts as may be needed, and on the occasions on which they are needed. But all probability that gifts will be withheld, is forever removed by the fact that the greatest of all gifts has already been bestowed: He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? A second possible evil is the falling of the elect into new condemnations as they go through the deep waters of this life. This is met by the fact that, in the plan of justification brought to light in the gospel, the justifying act is an act of God: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? And the third possible evil is that at some critical period of our existence, and of our trials, and of our soul's need, it may come to pass that there shall be found to be in heaven no one to intercede with the Disposer of events on our behalf. But the Intercessor is immediately exhibited, and the path which he trod through the grave and the resurrection, to reach his place above: 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.

If God has given his own Son to die for us, if God has provided the means of justifying sinners by the precious blood of Jesus, if he has raised Jesus triumphantly from the tomb, if he has exalted him to the place of power at his own right hand in the heavenly places, to be the perpetual and divine High-priest interceding for his people, how can it be for a moment supposed that with Christ, he will not also freely give us all things? He has given us the great propitiatory sacrifice,—his own Son,—to justify us; will he withhold from us grace to continue in a justified state? He raised Christ from the dead by his mighty power; will he withhold from us the same mighty power to raise us to newness of life in Christ Jesus? He has exalted our divine Redeemer to be also our perpetual Intercessor; will he let that Intercessor plead in vain, when asking for that very grace

to be faithful, which is the thing we chiefly need? How can it be for a moment supposed, that having delivered up his own Son, having made that Son a victim of the law, and for a time the subject of even ghastly death itself, and then having recognised that Son as lawful Intercessor above, he will withhold from those who are chosen in the Son, awakening grace, grace to believe in Christ, self-denying grace, persevering grace, grace sufficient for them through life, and grace for the final victory over all enemies?

What has already been done in pursuance of the wonderful plan, clearly shows how certain to be done is that part of it which as yet we see not, which is hidden by the veil of mortality that dims our sight, and which yet remains to be done. But we are not to be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease; not to be translated to heaven from the castle of indolence; not to make our way to unspeakable glories, without great struggles; not to go from a flower-garden, but from a battle-field; nor from the piping times of peace, but from fierce spiritual wars, hardly-fought fields, and divinely-bestowed victories. The lovers of God have always met with opposition in the world: "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." The quotation comes from a psalm which throws into light from the golden days of the fathers of old the memorable fact that they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them, but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them. It is not to be pretended that it is a good thing in itself, to be accounted as sheep for the slaughter, or to be killed all the day long; or that tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword, are in themselves things either good or friendly to the children of God. Nor is it to be pretended that death and life, and angels and principalities and powers, and things present and things to come, and height and depth, have no tendency in themselves to separate us from the love of God; or that victory is easy, and can be won by any unaided arm that ever lived. But the precise thing that is said, is that a secret

omnipotence proceeds from God, and flows over all things, and among all things, and through all things, depriving each of them severally, or all of them together, of all power whatever, to separate a single soul from the love of God; and confirming our souls into a thorough and complete certainty on this great point by a consideration of all the grand facts already recited, and already having occurred, by the extreme preciousness of the gifts already bestowed, and the manifest purpose of the divine mind to give the plan of salvation a thorough and complete execution. In all things we are to obtain the VICTORY. We are indeed to be MORE THAN CONQUERORS; not indeed through our own strength, but through Him that loved us, and through that secret exercise of omnipotence, every where, over all things, depriving them of the power to separate us from Christ, or, in their combined result, to produce any thing else but our good.

DEATH separates us forever from the prizes and treasures of this world; separates us from the love of living men, even those who have been dearest to us in this life; separates, for a time, our very souls from our bodies. At first view, it looks as if it separated us from every thing; as if it entirely terminated our being; as if it cut us sheer off from all work, device, knowledge, or wisdom; as if it sent us irrevocably into the hideous kingdom of nothingness. Sometimes he is a fearful dragon, having a sting; sometimes he is a warrior-knight, riding on a horse of paleness; sometimes the king of all ghastly terrors, which stride in gloom and darkness around the gate of departing human life. But the dragon with the sting, the pale warrior-knight, the king of terrors, is restrained by the power of God from separating a single soul of one of God's chosen people from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Such is the uttered word of God; and the facts sustain it fully. The love of God in the soul, is stronger than death or the grave. We are told that if we believe not that Jesus is the great Anointed One, we shall die in our sins. Death, then, will not separate between our souls and their sins. Death will no more separate the saints from the love of God. Death never does separate the soul from its own moral character. When we come to look a second time,

and more attentively, at death, the first appearance, as if it separated us from every thing, has changed. Sometimes people meet death in deep, submissive tranquility. Sometimes they are overawed by their approach to the pure and holy majesty of God. Sometimes they are quite absorbed with the splendor and glory of visions which they seem to behold somewhere near to them. Sometimes they look forward, and cry, "Glory!"* Sometimes they say, "O how beautiful!" The love of God is *in the soul*. Its seat is in the immortal part of the nature of man. And it is not the soul which is dying. It is only the dissolution of the bond which binds the soul to flesh and blood which is taking place. The soul is "secure in her existence." She turns away from earthly things, springs across the fearful abyss, clears the congregation of the dark and shadowy terrors on the shore, attains the shore of the better land, and has borne with her the love of God as a part of herself. There is nothing like separation. That love is the moving principle which leads her bravely, cheerfully, hopefully, joyfully on. The visions of the high, eternal shore, of the pure, perfect, and immortal forms of things, and of the holy and eternal lights that sleep on things in that world, make the love of God doubly precious, pure, and strong. Dragon with the fiery, envenomed sting! most terrible of things which are feared among men! in every such scene thou art vanquished! The children of God are more than conquerors over thee, through that Son of God who is also Son of man. Thou goest forth, no doubt, conquering and to conquer those who obey not the gospel of Christ. But among the chosen of God, thou goest not forth any longer thus. Thy sting, O fiery dragon, has been extracted. Thy crown, king of terrors, is faded. Thy form is dim; thine own countenance pale. Among those who are the called according to God's holy purpose, thou canst do no mighty works. Thou mayst dissolve, for a while, the mystical union between soul and body, for that is a union in material nature; but thou canst not separate a single soul from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. For that is another mystical union of a higher, purer nature; of which one party is divine, and of which the other party, though in

themselves mortal and perishing, are no victims of death, because they are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." And there, around the bed of the dying saint, where the eyes of carnal men see nothing but thee, Pale Rider, there indeed, art thou conquered, and more than conquered, by the overleaping love which binds the redeemed soul to its Redeemer.

Nor shall LIFE be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Of course, life embraces tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, and peril. And these things include hours of very sore temptation. But life also fairly embraces temptations of the opposite description, times of temptation from prosperity, as well as from adversity. Life embraces times of smooth sailing, happy auspices, abundance of the good things of this world, good name, and high and unassailable immunity from peril. And these things are often found to be even less friendly to the love of God than tribulation, and distress, and peril. It is on this side probably that life includes the keenest temptations. But on this side, life will not be able to separate us from the love of God. For, if we consider God's plan from of old to save his chosen people; if we look at what has already been done; if we consider what a gift it was when God freely delivered his Son up for us all; what a power it was which he exercised when he raised up Christ from the dead, and what a grant it was to the cause of his redeemed people when he set up Christ on the right hand of the majesty on high, ever to live as our Friend, our Advocate, our Intercessor, we must come to the conclusion from consistent reasoning, to which we are here brought by this authority of the inspired word, that even life, on its fair side, will not prevail to undo us. It must be plain to every understanding how unsound it is, and how frivolous, to tell us here that life and death cannot separate us from the love of God, but that we can separate ourselves; that these things cannot separate us, *if we remain faithful*; but that these things will separate, if we are not ourselves faithful. But that is the very question in hand, whether we ourselves shall be faithful. That is the only matter of any importance on the subject. To make the apostle leave that point, of our own

fidelity, out of view, is to accuse him of empty and tantalizing nonsense. Every one sees at once that that is the very point aimed at all through the chapter—that point that the carnal mind is enmity to God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be; and so could not remain in subjection and persevere in that state, if it were even once in it. But that the spiritual mind is a different thing; has the Spirit of God dwelling in it; has within a source of life; is led by the Spirit of God; is an heir of God; has the Spirit to bear witness within it; and to intercede for it with unutterable groanings. The very leading and grand idea of the whole passage is, that the true child of God is so much under divine influence in every way, that he does not desire to separate himself from the love of God, and that nothing can separate him, against his own will, and against God's will. What can be said on the other side? Does that powerful arrangement to save souls, planned before the foundation of the world as a remedy for the fall of man, fail after all to embrace the main thing, that is, the grace to keep man's heart and will true and faithful to God? Is the very point of danger—our own fidelity—mockingly and derisively left unguarded? Has God, in the treasures of his gifts, no grace to “make and keep us pure *within*?” Can Christ's intercession bring down no help for the inner man, that we may persevere? Can not God himself lead us freely along the whole of the narrow way? Is the certainty of his perpetual and eternal holiness any cause to call in question the freedom of the will of the Son of God?

To every one of these questions the answer is entirely clear. The powerful arrangement to save souls, planned before the foundation of the world as a remedy for the fall of man, does *not* fail, after all, to embrace the main thing, which the mutability of Adam and Eve in Paradise shewed to be the main thing, namely, grace to keep man's heart and will true and faithful to his God. The very point of danger, the fidelity of the renewed heart, is *not* mockingly and derisively left unguarded and unprovided for. The treasures of the divine grace embrace this grace chiefly and specially, the grace to make us pure within,

that is, regeneration,—and the grace to keep us pure within, that is, sanctification and perseverance. Christ's intercession for us, has for its object this point chiefly, as it is personal love, and not a mere abstract love. Clearly, God can and does lead us freely along the whole journey of the narrow way, our preservation from falling being in a rational course, and by the use of means. And clearly, no beings in the universe can be more perfectly free of will than the adorable Son of God, and the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, though they are absolutely under the full and undisputed dominion of holiness, and purity, and love, and are absolutely and forever secure from falling into sin.

Many-sided Form, who lookest every way, and goest every where, basking in every mild sunbeam, cooling thyself in every fragrant west wind, sitting round every fireside, trampling with thick-falling step every crowded city, sailing in every sea-going vessel, holding consultation in every council chamber, shouting upon every battle-field, mistress of a thousand curious arts, possessor of all terrestrial secrets, traveller in all human pathways, LIFE! where goest thou, or where goest thou not, to work? Thou spreadest temptations for the children of God on earth, at sea, in air, in the stars, in the realms of nature, in those of thought, and in those of imagination. Thou temptest men from early dawn to the late hours of night, by the light of the sun, and by that of the moon and stars, in the outward and in the inward world, by the appetites, the passions, and the reason. Thou streamest in all thy carnal power down the currents of this world. Thou hast a charm for souls whose depth outmeasures all earthly things. But work where and as thou wilt, Life, thou wilt be able to separate not a single one of the chosen children of God from the love that is in Christ Jesus.

Having taken the measure of our earthly existence in one of its dimensions—life and death—the apostle next looks through the separating veil which interposes between us and the spirits in the immutable and eternal state. Nor angels nor principalities nor powers shall be able to separate us. Neither shall the angels of common rank and dignity; nor those whose more exalted nature

and gifts have invested them with positions as conspicuous as principalities among men; nor those who "excel in strength" by the possession of divinely given powers. Holy angels do not desire to accomplish such a fearful purpose, for it is they in whose presence in heaven there is joy over one sinner that repenteth. Neither shall the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, and who now roam this world seeking to devour souls, be able to separate the children of God from the love of God. Some of these fallen spirits must still be very powerful. No doubt they lost, by their sin and fall, much of that pure immortal vigor which moral rectitude had given them. They have lost much of the force of nerve and power of wing with which a sound conscience endowed them; much of that high and dauntless moral courage which the light of God's countenance bestowed. But the word of God represents them to be still foes, not to be despised for skill, ingenuity, and daring. One of them is called the god of this world. Another, or the same, is spoken of as the prince of the power of the air. Others still, as principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickednesses in high places. They deceived and ruined Adam and Eve, and with them their posterity. They pushed and inflamed the world before the flood to such a pitch of wickedness as to bring down that awful perdition of the flood upon them. They drove guilty Sodom on to its fiery doom. They disputed with Michael the archangel about the body of Moses, probably with the design of corrupting many generations of the Hebrew people with the idolatry which would proceed from haunting the shrine where the ashes of the great lawgiver were interred. They stood at the right hand of high-priest and prince, in the days of old, to resist him when he interceded for the people. They sorely pierced David's soul with sin. They dragged down Solomon's glory into grievous darkness. With ever-ready foot and willing wing, they rioted in the chambers of the souls of such priests as Hophni and Phinehas, such kings as Jeroboam and Ahab. They hurled the chosen people into captivity. They filled the air, in those dull ages which rolled away between the two

Testaments, with the clash of swords and the clank of fetters. Seven of them beclouded and poisoned the soul of one woman of Magdala. A legion poured themselves into the afflicted spirit of a man of Gadara. Abroad over the earth they revelled in the spiritual ruin of the soul of man. The demon of lust inflamed souls in the high places of idol religion, and on the thrones of kings. The demon of murder danced in the abundance of assassinations, conspiracies, and proscriptions. The demon of ambition bade the drum beat and the trumpet sound to arms over the civilised world. When Christ came, they assaulted him with deep and fiery temptations, in all probability much more real and sharp than a cursory reading of the narrative supposes. One of the apostles falls temporarily under Satan's sifting power. Another of them tells us that we need the whole armor of God to encounter these spiritual wickednesses. He enumerates the girdle of truth, and the breast-plate of righteousness, the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and then all prayer and supplication in the Spirit. And this great array of spiritual weapons, and the midnight anxieties, and the noonday doubts, and the protracted conflicts of many a soul, show the combat to be a fearful reality. It is a great wonder that these mighty and malicious beings are not able to separate the children of God from his love, by some ingenious device, some cunning plot, some artful contrivance stretching from age to age, some transformation of fiends into angels of light, some inflaming of the carnal nature of man into open hatred of all holy things, some deep moral intoxication of a whole race, some fearful blinding of the eyes of a whole generation to truth, duty, right, holiness, justice, humanity. But they are not able to do so. The children of God who may be found to exist among all doomed races, at the pouring out of all vials of doom, will find all the applicable promises fulfilled to them in every time of trial. The reason is, that a scheme was laid before the foundation of the world for their salvation. An omnipotence which touches all things, every where, executes that scheme. When wrapped in the folds of that omnipotence, all

things work together for their good. And if it be denied that such a holy, wise, and powerful bounding and governing of all things, in all their workings, so as to keep them within limits, to deprive them of power to hurt the security of his people, and to cause them to work together in their final result, for the good of the chosen, is a legitimate part of omnipotence; it may be replied that, without such power, he would neither be supreme as Prophet, as Priest, or as King; nor supreme in the natural, or in the moral, or the spiritual universe.

Next we have another measure of our whole being, by another of its dimensions: Nor shall things present, nor things to come be able to separate us. In the category of time, all things for us are comprehended in the past, the present, and the future. The past did not separate us from the love of God. It brought us into it. In the past, God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all. In the past, Christ died and rose again. In the past, Christ ascended up to his place of intercession on high. In the past, we were appointed to salvation, called, and justified. In the past, the apostle had had, and we have had, many sharp tribulations which did not separate us from the love of God. In the past, life, and angels, and principalities, and powers, and all of every category that had any foothold in the past, did not separate us. The past, then, contains only auguries of good. It has witnessed the extinction of the hopes of many a mere professor of religion. But it has never witnessed the separation of the soul of one single true child of God from the love of God. It has witnessed their being foreknown, their election, their justification, their conformity to Christ. There is the same reason for hoping and believing that we shall persevere in the future, as there was for such a hope when the past was future. Nothing but the grace of God has kept us faithful to our God and to ourselves heretofore. There is that same power promised and pledged to us, for that same thing hereafter. If it has been adequate heretofore, where is the ground on which it can be expected to prove inadequate hereafter? The opinion of one great and influential leader of opinion, on this chapter of the Romans, is this: "The whole of

the preceding discourse will show that every thing here is *conditional*, as far as it relates to the ultimate salvation of any person professing the gospel of Christ; for the promises are made to *character*, and not to persons, as some have most injudiciously affirmed."* If it be true that every thing here is conditional, as far as it relates to the ultimate salvation of any person professing the gospel of Christ, if there be no promise to Christians personally, that they shall have grace to be faithful to the end, then it is probable that the eye which does not see such a promise here, does not see such a promise any where. Then, according to that view, there is no such promise of our persevering in the love of God, any where to be found in Scripture. If, then, these promises are conditional, the condition on which they depend is to be performed by the human will, unaided by a promise, or by grace conferred according to a promise. Then "the ultimate salvation of any person professing the gospel" depends on a capricious, or accidental, exercise of the human will, which no promise can reach, no gift of grace can touch, no divine omnipotence can secure. And if this conditional scheme were true, this very passage of Scripture, of all others, is rendered senseless and nugatory; for the great object of this passage is the security of believers. What a great parade the apostle is making on the subject of the security of believers here, according to this scheme of interpretation, when, after all, their security depends on things not here alluded to! In fact, the whole goes to show that every thing here is *unconditional*, as far as it relates to the ultimate salvation of every true child of God. The promises are *not* made to *character*, but directly to persons. If they were made to character, they would be of no avail to any Christian to assure him that God's grace would help him to be faithful. But that is obviously the chief aim of the passage. The evidences that these promises are personal, and not to *character*, appear all along the current of the discourse. The persons intended in it, are those who truly profess Christ, and not those who make an empty profession. They are called

* Dr. Adam Clarke.

“them that love God, who are called according to his purpose;” “those whom he foreknew;” “those whom he predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son;” “those whom he justified;” “those whom he glorified;” “God’s elect;” “us” who are inseparable from the love of God. A mere unconverted “professor of the gospel of Christ,” has no promise at all, in this or any other connexion that we know of, in the Scriptures. A true child of God has in this place the most positive, personal, and unconditional promises of victory over all enemies. And a species of divine grace which is unable to keep the children of God faithful to the end, is not that grace which is the subject of this passage. It is not the grace of any of the promises. It is not the grace which we need in the conflict of life. It is not the grace promised in the inspired word of God. It is not the grace whose promise is cheering to the tried believer. It is not the grace which Christian hearts universally seem taught of God to expect at the throne of grace, and for which they all ask at that throne.

So we may stand within the door of the present, and look out upon the whole fearfully seething and boiling springs, and fountains, and currents of things to come, and retain our full persuasion that things to come will not be able to separate us from the love of God. And the reason is, not that things to come are any more friendly to the children of God, in their intrinsic nature, than the things past were; but that the secret omnipotence of God, in pursuance of a very ancient, and very deliberately formed, and very sublime plan in reference to the elect, has touched the things to come, as it has all other created things, and taken away their power to turn away the hearts of the children of God from the love of God. And that their election is long before *character*; that *character* proceeds from election, in fact; as well as for other ideas advanced here by the apostle, we have at least one very conclusive testimony from the lips of our blessed Lord himself: “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither

shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."* None but a prophet's vision can see things to come, in all the various and unexpected forms and shapes which they may wear, when they shall arrive at their existence and due place within the bounds of time and space. And it was a problem to be solved by the Divine mind itself alone, what should be the effects of things to come upon the perseverance of the children of God in his love. But it is by the sovereign omnipotence of God over all things, that power is taken from them to overcome the children of God. And it is by the unsearchable omniscience of God, exercising itself in the most immense, yet the most minute, the most wide and general, yet the most special and particular of all the deeds of the providence of God ever foretold on the pages of prophecy, that that future restraining omnipotence of God over all future things is here announced. Not one single child of God is ever to be beguiled away from his love, either at murderous Jerusalem, or at beautiful Damascus, or at shrine-worshipping Ephesus, or suicidal Phillippi, or at learned Athens, or at elegant Corinth. Unknown strange things to come, shall not prevail with a single soul, brought to Christ by me, Paul; or one brought to him by any other of the apostles of the Lord; or one brought to him by his ministers of any other age; over none brought to him in these eastern climes, and realms, and places; and over none brought to him in any other climes, realms, or places.

After that view of our nature which lies in the category of existence, as death and life; that view comprised in the category of the influence of superior orders, as angels, principalities, and powers; and that view expressed in the category of time, as things present and things to come; there is, to be perfectly exhaustive, another still, the category of position, of elevation or depression, of high or low: Neither height nor depth shall be able to separate us from the love of God.

It may be that the language is primarily strictly physical and

* John 10: 26-29.

material. But it is natural to think of man's spiritual prosperity, his wearing of the robes of the imputed righteousness of Christ, his procession through deliverances, and triumphs, and divinely bestowed glories, as above the earth, as pictured and resplendent in the height above, as things with which the realms of light are yet to be figured and adorned. And if any of the triumphal processions, and gorgeous visions of the Bride of the Lamb, arrayed in white, should be permitted, even then, just before the day of judgment, to draw us away from the love of God, vain would be all the past scenes which that love had given us eyes to behold.

It is natural to think of final doom as in the depths below. There would be fearful visions to be seen in the abyss, day by day, had we eyes which were not fettered by the laws of the material world. The tumblings of guilty souls into ruin, the wailings of the spirits in prison, the lurid atmosphere, and the hideous forms of that world,—of which this world may be something of a type, in those years and months when battle, and malice, and rapine, and desolation reign in it—might peradventure separate us from reason, and sanity, and the love of God at once, if they were not now hidden from our view. And if the chariot which shall bear our spirits up to God, shall, in its final exode from this world, go in sight of those fearful scenes of the abyss, it is not in vain that a promise from God should span that abyss also: That depth shall not separate us from the love of God.

If height be such a power in the government of God, as that which once caught the apostle to the Gentiles up to the third heavens, to hear unutterable things, and to be puffed with spiritual pride; or if depth be such a power as plunges men's spirits down, from day to day, to converse with gloomy forebodings, and to walk with the damned in imagination, or to try in vain the power of a mortal mind to endure "the eternal blazon" of that dark world: neither shall be able to separate one single one of the children of God from his love. And no other creature shall be able to effect that separation, because he that appointed them to salvation, and who called them here

below, and spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for them all, and who justifieth them, and has in many ways expressed his purpose to glorify them, is the eternal God, out of whose hands nothing can pluck them.

There is a custom much in vogue on some occasions, of throwing off the whole authority of these things as being in the revealed word of God, by saying that they are contradictory to other Scriptures. The Scriptures to which they are said to be contrary are such as this: Whosoever will, let him come, and take the water of life freely. The plain inference is that the objector thinks the divine Spirit *did very wrong* in revealing both predestination and free will. And had he been such a spirit as that of the objector, he would not probably have revealed both these two things as he has done. Now, either the divine Spirit has inspired men to write contradictory things, one of which is necessarily false, or else they are not contradictory. But the only thing the objector has a right to say, is that these things do not appear to him to be reconcilable. Of course what *appears to him* to be reconcilable, and *what is* reconcilable, are not always the same thing. The plain truth of the matter is that the decrees or purposes of God embrace the acts of man's free will. Those acts are parts of God's decrees. That is the way in which the Scriptures treat them. That is the clear and proper philosophy of the subject. They are the links in the chain of appointed events in human life and human history. There is no other kind of a chain of events in religious life but one connected by free causes. When a man says that free causes cannot produce infallible results, he speaks simply as a materialist, and is forgetful of the action of spirit upon spirit. Nothing is clearer in Scripture than that the acts of man's will are both entirely free and appointed of God. The acts of Joseph's brethren in selling him into Egypt; the acts of Judas and Pilate in betraying the Lord Jesus, and delivering him to be crucified; the acts of as many as were ordained to eternal life, in Antioch in Pisidia, in the days of Saint Paul, in believing the gospel; and the acts of those in the days of Saint Peter, who stumbled at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they

were appointed, were all evidently free, and as manifestly appointed of God. So also are all the acts of all men, both free and appointed of God. Every answer to prayer is a case of God's putting his own appointed will into execution by means of free agents. So is every act of providence. So is every fulfilment of prophecy. Indeed the whole staple of the representations of human destinies by human genius, is found in the divine appointment of events on the one hand, and the free human fulfilments of destiny on the other. They all go upon the two wheels of divine destiny and human freedom. Such are believed to be the dramas of the three illustrious Greek tragedians. Such are all the deeper of the dramas of Shakspeare. Such must every true picture of life be, in order to be felt to be true and exhaustive. The tendency of the objection is utterly to subvert the government of God over men. And it is armed with no more forcible weapon than the weak assumption that all divine things must be level to every prejudiced mind.

But it is often affirmed that such exhibitions of the safety of God's chosen people have a tendency to lead them to loose neglect, or to bold presumption. We firmly believe that the proper way to deal with this objection, is a simple denial, and an appeal to the facts. The difference in the effect of cordials on the regenerate, and on the unregenerate mind, is the point involved. Grant that these powerful cordials do highly intoxicate the unregenerate mind, which has been betrayed into a vain and empty profession of faith in Christ. We concede nothing whatever to that consideration, as a reason for withholding the cordials which they need, from the true children of God. That vain and empty profession ought, if possible, to have been avoided. The distinction between the regenerate and the unregenerate condition ought to have been carefully unfolded, and faithfully maintained. There would then have been little need for that *fearful tenet*, the final apostasy of God's true children. God's people are extremely sensitive to danger, easy to be warned, generally in a state of trial, and often terrified by the fiery darts of the adversary. For Christ's sake they are accounted as sheep for the slaughter, and are killed all the day

long. They therefore manifestly need the strong cordial of these great and precious promises, to keep them from sinking into despair, as from time to time, they obtain fresh flashes of the peril of the great pilgrimage. Those cordials, it has pleased God, the Holy Spirit, to decide that they ought to have; and they have them accordingly; as they certainly need them all. These precious assurances belong not to any who do not see in their lives, and their spirits, the evidence that they are children of God. If others apply them to their own intoxication, it is an abuse for which, as far as we can see, the word of God and the true use of it, are in no wise responsible.

A precious vessel floated in air before the entranced eyes of the knights of the Round Table, in the middle ages, which was said to contain the real blood of the Lord Jesus, caught in a hollow jewel, and thus borne through the ages and the climes. But it was another vision which the entranced eyes of the holy apostles saw, to cheer them in their arduous labors, in that adulterous and sinful generation. It was the vision of a precious book, a mighty volume, inscribed thickly with the names of the saints. It was "the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." In it were written the names of persons, souls, ransomed sinners, blood-washed saints; and not merely the names of characters. Saint Paul saw, by inspiration, the names of "Clement and other his fellow-laborers," inscribed therein. Around it clustered thick and ample rays of power and glory to prevent the erasure of any name from its awful pages. To be therein inscribed was the prize for which they strove. And around that book, they saw all the storms of death and life, and angels and principalities and powers, and things present and things to come, and height and depth, and every other creature, rage in vain, to erase a solitary name, even that of the lowliest child of God, from its record.