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||| A PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL DEVOTED TO STATING, DEFENDING
 AND FURTHERING THE GOSPEL IN THE MODERN WORLD |||

SAMUEL G. CRAIG, Editor

H. McALLISTER GRIFFITHS, Managing Editor

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The Securities of the Faith

"O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee, turning away from profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith."

IN PAUL'S exhortation to TIMOTHY, just cited, the phrase "that which is committed unto thee" is a translation of two Greek words that taken literally mean "the deposit." Hence PAUL here speaks of the Gospel as a body of divine truth that had been committed to TIMOTHY as a trust and which as such he was under obligation to preserve inviolate and pass on undiminished. MOFFAT translates, "O TIMOTHEUS, keep the securities of the faith intact,"—a translation that has received added point and relevancy in these recent days as men have seen the earthly securities on which they depended lose their value, not infrequently because of the unfaithfulness of those to whom they had committed them.

While it is only in PAUL'S latest epistles—commonly called the Pastoral epistles, because addressed to TIMOTHY and TITUS as shepherds of the flock—that the Gospel is spoken of under the figure of a deposit that has been entrusted to men (especially to officers of the Church) yet the thought itself is fundamental to the whole New Testament representation. This appears when it is seen that it is because the Gospel is a "deposit" that the primary function of the Church is to "witness." "Ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the

uttermost part of the earth." The significance of the word "deposit," as used in this connection, has found almost classic expression in the oft-quoted words of a fifth century expositor, VINCENT of LERINS. "What is a deposit?" he asks; and answers: "It is something that is accredited to thee, not invented by thee; something thou hast received, not that thou hast thought out; a result not of genius but of instruction; not of personal ownership, but of public tradition; a matter brought to thee, not produced by thee, with respect to which thou art bound to be not an author, but a custodian, not an originator, but a bearer, not a leader but a follower."

Perhaps there has never been a time

since PAUL penned his epistles to TIMOTHY when there was greater need of reminding Christians, particularly ministers, that it is both their duty and their wisdom to preserve "safe and undiminished" the deposit committed to their trust. An outstanding characteristic of Modernism (so-called) is its pronounced tendency to sit loosely to the thought of the Gospel as a deposit, as a faith once for all delivered, to be preserved inviolate at all cost. Modernists as a class deny that Christianity has a definite content of its own, given it once and for all by CHRIST and His apostles, that remains essentially the same through every change and chance of time. The following statement is typical: "We know of nothing that has remained or can remain unchanged from the inception of the Christian faith down to the present. The Christianity of yesterday was creative of the Christianity of today, but at the same time the Christianity of today is more and somewhat other than the Christianity of yesterday." The Modernist not only boasts that he does not believe as the fathers believed (including the Apostolic fathers) but he does not expect his children to believe as he believes. Though he calls himself a Christian that does not necessarily mean that the thing he calls Christianity has any close resemblance to the thing PAUL charged TIMOTHY to faithfully preserve and to conscientiously hand on to others.

It is hardly necessary to say that PAUL'S passionate exhortation to TIMOTHY was rooted in his conviction that

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Francis Turretin

(And His Teaching Concerning Predestination)

By Charles E. Edwards
Pittsburgh, Pa.

A FAMOUS successor of Calvin in Geneva was Francis Turretin, whose Latin volumes of theology were used for generations by students in Great Britain and America. Long ago Professor Giger of Princeton College translated these volumes into English; but the manuscript still remains in the Princeton Seminary Library, awaiting an editor and a publisher. These valuable works are practically inaccessible, obtainable only at secondhand, for the last edition at Edinburgh, is dated 1847. Current textbooks quote Turretin, but he would be more appreciated if his pages were in the hands of pastors who value the Word of God. Turretin devotes over a hundred pages to the topic of the Decrees of God, particularly, Predestination, which in English might make seventy thousand words. This topic is developed in eighteen questions, three of which, abbreviated in a free use of Professor Giger's translation may convey some idea of his reasoning.

I

Turretin's sixth Question is, "Should Predestination be publicly taught and preached?" This is an ancient question, asked by brethren in Gaul, since Augustine wrote much about predestination when he refuted Pelagius. In later times some have thought it objectionable, leading to desperation or to carnal security; yet it can be of great profit, when taught seriously, out of the Word of God. Two dangerous rocks are to be avoided, an affectation of ignorance, also an unwarrantable curiosity. Here are reasons:—(1) Christ in the Gospels, Paul, Peter, James and John taught it. Then, are we not to learn? And are we to be more prudent than God, or prescribe rules to Him? (2) It is a doctrine of first importance, and it would be an injury to the Church to ignore it,

for it is the source of our gratitude to God, the root of humility, the strong anchor of confidence in temptations, one of sweet consolation, and a powerful spur to piety and holiness. (3) The enemies of the truth force us by their misrepresentations to refute their errors.

Add these explanations:—Wicked men often abuse this doctrine; but so do they scoff at other doctrines, the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection. In dealing with false apostles, Paul was not silent; and we may learn from him when to speak and to be silent. The abuses that lead to license of despair are not due to the doctrine, but the perversity of those who wrest doctrines to their own destruction. The mystery of Predestination is too sublime for us to comprehend *why* it is, but we can firmly hold to the *fact* of it, as taught in Scripture. Two things must be distinguished, "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever," Deut. 29:29. It is ingratitude, to neglect things revealed; it is pride, to search into things concealed. As Augustine says, "We must not therefore deny what is plain, because we cannot comprehend what is hidden."

And Turretin concludes with sensible suggestions. There is great need of *sobriety* and *prudence*, to keep in the bounds of Scripture, not to be wise above what is written, having regard for persons, places and times, to set forth propositions, not all at once, but gradually, and not to emphasize every part of the doctrine equally, but with a sense of proportion. Again, not to descend from causes to effects, but to ascend from effects to causes; not to unroll the book of life with a curiosity that is forbidden, but to consult the book of conscience, to find whether the seal of God is stamped upon our hearts, and whether

fruits of election, faith and repentance may be found in us, which is the safest way of proceeding to the saving knowledge of that doctrine, with the object of increasing our faith, and to labor for edification.

II

Grace Alone

In his "Question XI" concerning the Decrees of God, Turretin asks, "Was Election made from the foresight of faith, or of works? Or, on the contrary, from the mere grace of God?" He acknowledges that the merit of Christ, faith and works, are necessary conditions of salvation, but not the cause of God's decree; He has reasons for that, not revealed to us.

This is the principal hinge of the ancient controversy between Augustine and Pelagius. The same division occurred in the Council of Trent, afterwards between Dominicans and Franciscans, and between Jansenists and Jesuits. But some even among the Jesuits, for instance the celebrated Cardinal Bellarmine, have agreed with Augustine, that God's Election is gratuitous. He said, "No reason on our part of the divine predestination can be assigned,"—in order to exclude merit. Luther defended Augustine's doctrine of gratuitous Election, but some Lutheran authorities drifted away from it. While Arminians, according to Turretin, "who call Popery and Pelagianism in by the back door, have struck against the same rock." But the Reformed, "by the unanimous consent of the Church, they maintain Election to be purely gratuitous."

Note his arguments:—(1) Faith and obedience are the fruit and effect of Election. Eph. 1:4, He hath chosen us that we should be holy, therefore not

because we were; and verse 5, having predestinated us unto adoption, therefore unto faith, by which that adoption is secured unto us. Acts 13:48, as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. It is the faith of the elect, Tit. 1:1, because given to the elect alone. Hence Augustine says, "We understand vocation, by which they become the elect, not who are elected because they believed, but are elected that they might believe. For if on that account they were elected, since they believed, they assuredly had elected him first, by believing in him, so that they deserved to be elected." (2) Election was made from good pleasure alone, and not from any works. Rom. 9:11, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth,—and verse 16, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Also, in 11:5, it is called the election of grace. Thus, Mt. 11:25, Christ speaking of the revelation of the mysteries of salvation, depending on Election, attributes it to good pleasure alone, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." So also Paul, 2 Tim. 1:9, "God hath saved us, and called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began." And Rom. 4:16 That "it is of faith that it might be by grace," because faith alone can consist with grace in the matter of Justification. He who speaks of grace alone, excludes all other causes out of God. And Rom. 9:11, 12, cannot be reconciled with the foresight of faith or of works, because it treats of twins, Esau and Jacob, who had done nothing good or bad by which they might be distinguished from each other; and in verses 15, 16, Election is wholly ascribed to the mercy of God alone.

Again, (3) if this foreseen faith is an act of nature, we elected ourselves, contrary to Paul, 1 Cor. 4:7, ("what hast thou that thou didst not receive?") and Pelagius wins his contest. (4) If Election is from foreseen faith, God would not have elected man, but rather man would have elected God, contrary to what Christ says, John 15:16, which Augustine often quotes, "which Election

the Lord signifies, saying, Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you, nor does faith itself precede. For he did not elect us because we believed, but that we might believe, that we might not be said to have first chosen him." (5) If Election is from foreseen faith, no place will be found for the objections against it which Paul answers. Add another remark by Turretin:—the physician intends the healing of the sick man before he thinks of the remedies, but in the execution he applies the remedies before he heals. "Although therefore, God in executing gives faith before salvation, yet it cannot thence be inferred that God in electing considered faith before salvation."

III

Blessed Assurance

In discussing the Decrees, Turretin's "Question XIII" is, "Can the believer be certain of his Election, with a certainty, not only conjectural and moral, but infallible, and of faith?"

Here he opposes the Council of Trent (especially the Jesuits) which denies that any one can know with the certainty of faith, not admitting anything false, that he has obtained the grace of God. Also the Arminians deny that there is given any sense of Election in this life except a conditional one, always uncertain until death. Turretin states a practical syllogism:—whoever truly believes and repents is elected; now I believe, and therefore I am elected. This is not by a revelation, nor is it free from fluctuations, nor without the use of appointed means.

So the elect can be certain of their salvation:—(1) Because believers know that they are the sons of God, as the spirit witnesses, Rom. 8:15, 16. "We believe and are sure," said the apostles, John 6:69, and I John 2:3 "We do know that we know Him." Said Paul, "I know whom I have believed" 2 Tim. 1:12. Augustine said, "Whoever has it, may see his own faith in his heart, and hold it with the most certain knowledge and the conviction of conscience." As one knows that he lives, from the vital actions which he clearly perceives in himself; so, he who

lives by the spiritual life of the sons of God can know that he lives by the Spirit which works in him. (2) God inscribes the names of the elect in the book of life; inscribes promises in Scripture; and inscribes His grace and law on the book of conscience, "in fleshy tables of the heart" 2 Cor. 3:3, like the white stone with the new name, Rev. 2:17. (3) This is confirmed by the testimony of the Holy Spirit who seals us, Eph. 4:30; and I John 3:24, Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which He hath given us. This light, joy, consolation is not fallacious or uncertain. (4) The example of the saints who were certain of their Election and salvation, for instance, Abraham, Rom. 4:18, 19, 21; David, Ps. 16:8 and 23:6; also Paul, Rom. 8:38-9. (5) The effects of faith demand it, such as confidence, Eph. 3:12, full assurance, Heb. 10:22, boasting, Rom. 5:2, unspeakable joy, I Pet. 1:8.

In further explanation, Turretin says that although the certainty of God's grace cannot be gathered from prosperous or adverse or external circumstances, faith can have it from the Word of God and the Spirit's testimony. We are uncertain on our part, but certain on the part of God. Fear and trembling, anxiety as to the means, may leave one tranquil as to the end, based on God's decree. And God restores the joy of salvation, and makes broken bones rejoice, Ps. 51:8, 12. It is not the testimony of human reason, but that of the Word and Spirit on which we depend. The believer from his present state of grace may see the link between the past and future, Election and future glory. Moreover, there is no greater incentive to true piety than a vivid sense of the love of God and his benefits. The state of the believer is two fold, wrestling or victory; in conflict he fears, in triumph he rejoices. David complained of being forsaken, Ps. 22:1, and cut off, 31:22, but is confident in the valley of the shadow of death, Ps. 23:4, and 118:5. See Paul's contrasts, Rom. 7:24, and 8:35. But repentance is indispensable, and the use of means; the desire of sanctification is a necessary condition of this certainty. And the Christian is to seek for this certainty in a growing sanctification every day.