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 "Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."—*Jude*.
 "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples."—*Isaiah*.

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REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN.

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No. IX.

SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF JOHN ERSKINE,

ONE OF THE EARLY SCOTTISH REFORMERS.

John Erskine was born in the County of Angus, at the family seat near Montrose, in the year 1508. He was the son of John Erskine, Baron of Dun, a descendant of a former Earl of Mar. He was educated in the University of Aberdeen; but, according to the custom of the age, and a good custom it was, besides travelling into foreign countries, he spent considerable time in the further prosecution of literary studies in several foreign Universities.

On the death of his father, he succeeded to the Barony of Dun, the ancestral estate; and by this title he is known in history. With the paternal estate, he succeeded to the family influence and power in the neighborhood. In his right of a Baron he administered justice in the County of Angus, and repeatedly sat as a member of Parliament. He was, also, during the earlier part of his life, chosen almost regularly Provost, or Chief Magistrate of the town of Montrose.

At what time he became acquainted with the simple doctrines of the Gospel, freed from anti-christian dogmas, and was brought under their enlightening and sanctifying power, we are not informed; nor is there any account given of the circumstances of his conversion: but it is known that this event took place early in life. Knox, in his History of the Reformation, A. D. 1534, when relating the circumstances of David Straiton's conversion, says that "he frequented much the company of the Laird of Dun, whom God, in those days, had *marvellously illuminated*." Thus, at the early age of twenty-six, he had a high reputation for religious intelligence and piety. This strengthens the opinion that he had been brought under the power of the Gospel at a very early period of life. His early associations and companions, all go to strengthen the very favorable account which has been given of

THE USE OF THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

BY REV. J. W. SHAW.

Agreeably to the common and natural mode of human consideration, the question, What use? is expected to claim particular attention. Accordingly, we find that when a subject has been sufficiently thought of, and the mind decides that it is either entirely or partially unprofitable, it is at once rejected; or if allowed to retain a place for future thought, it is by permission—not by right. By a common application of this rule, the distinction so generally made between the theoretical and practical in religion, may be applied to the doctrines of the Bible. Some of these, according to it, while they are allowed to retain a place in the system of divinity, obtain it more because of their necessity to complete a theory, or because the Scriptures being admitted, they cannot be entirely disregarded, than from any favorable consideration on the part of those who admit, and professedly maintain them.

This, it is assumed, may be the case with the doctrine of election. It is possible even that some who admit the divinity of its origin, consider it not only useless, but that to teach it is fraught with dangerous consequences. This accounts for the exceedingly little notice that is generally taken of it, especially by those who profess to deal only in what they consider practicable in religion. Nor is this astonishing. It is perfectly consistent for those who believe that God has simply willed the salvation of man through Christ, and left all else connected with it immediately, if not exclusively, under his own control, to suppose that there is nothing to be believed as essential to salvation but what lies within the reach of his own ability. Such will probably question the use of the doctrine of election. They may even suppose that it is exceedingly dangerous. Does it not tend, they will possibly ask, to render men entirely careless of the law of God, and exclude all personal effort for the soul's salvation? Agreeably to their belief in these respects, it will rarely claim their attention, except in controversy; and it is alluded to then, rather, perhaps, to find fault with its discussion, or reproach its supporters, than to throw light upon the subject.

That it is not dangerous, is sufficiently evident from the fact that God, in his condescension and kindness to man, has revealed it. That it is not without its proper use, will appear from the following considerations:

In reflecting on this subject, it should be remembered, that to become properly acquainted with the use of things, they must be seen in their appropriate places and relations. Without this, it may not be discovered. The different parts of a complicated yet skilfully contrived and useful machine, when viewed separately and

apart from their proper place, may appear useless, and some of them sadly misshaped; but when seen in their proper place, it will be evident that they answer exactly the design of the contriver, and, possibly, without some one of them—and that may be the most ill-shaped of all—the machine would be entirely useless. So it may be with the doctrine of election. Out of its proper place in the system of grace, and when viewed alone, its practical uses will not be so readily seen; but when considered as it is revealed in the Bible, and viewed in connection with the doctrine of man's lost condition by the fall, the way of his recovery through grace, and the absolute necessity of the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost for his restoration to spiritual life and discernment, its utility will be readily perceived.

Admitting, then, man's total ruin by sin, and taking for granted that his salvation must resolve itself primarily and ultimately into the sovereignty of God's grace, it will appear at once to be every way reasonable that he should choose the objects of his mercy. Now, if this choice depends entirely on his own sovereign good pleasure, then man is taught the utter ruin and entire helplessness of his natural condition. Without this knowledge, he will have, at least, some dependence on himself for salvation; for it is evident it must depend either upon himself or the grace of God, or himself and the grace of God combined. Did it depend even in part upon himself, then he maketh himself to differ, and hath whereof to glory; but the glory of all belongs to God alone. Of this he is exceedingly jealous, and will not allow it to be appropriated by, or attributed to another. If, then, the glory of man's salvation belongs to God exclusively, it must depend entirely on his free and sovereign grace. This, the Scriptures teach. Their truthful representations of man in a state of nature, and startling exhibitions of the wickedness of his heart, exclude every idea of his ability to save himself. The knowledge of this brings him to depend entirely on the grace of God, and, in doing so, he has reason to rejoice in that love by which he has been brought from death to the hope of everlasting life.

This hope is the result of the doctrine of election. There is no foundation for it elsewhere. There is none in man himself. The first proper view he has of himself teaches him his entire ruin by the fall, and sweeps away every foundation of that delusive hope which he may have before indulged. It teaches him that if ever again he shall indulge a hope, it must come from some other quarter. And whence shall it come? It comes most unexpectedly in such a declaration as this—"I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." This truth, when effectually applied to his soul, cheers his drooping spirits, and he appropriating it, joyfully exclaims, "Lord, thou wilt have mercy on whom thou wilt have mercy, and not because of any goodness in its object. This meets

my wants. Rejoice, O my soul, for here is a fountain of hope." Thus the doctrine of election promotes conviction, and prevents despair.

It even imparts assurance. Who can doubt, if God has chosen to begin a work, that he will complete it? Who can imagine that he will not perfect the work of man's salvation in a manner answerable to his wisdom, and gloriously illustrative of his mercy and truth. Their exhibition, we may be assured, entered into the scheme of salvation. The ends of this scheme shall most certainly be attained. Christ shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. None of his Father's chosen, which have been given him to redeem, to sanctify and glorify, shall come short of their salvation. How can they? Have they not been given him by the Father? Has he not paid for them the required ransom? Does he not appear in heaven as their Advocate? Has he not, also, for the perfecting of his work, all things placed under his control? The hearts of his redeemed are in his hand to turn them as he will. The world itself, and their grand adversary, too, have, in his providences, their limits so appointed them that they cannot go in anything beyond his "hitherto and no farther." Being thus invested with Mediatorial power, his redeemed shall assuredly be saved. The plan of God shall be completed; and he having, out of his mere good pleasure, chosen from eternity the heirs of salvation, no power in earth or hell shall be able to separate them from his love.

While it thus imparts assurance, it also begets humility. One of the principal thoughts that ever haunts the true believer, is the existence of pride in his heart. One of the most grievous burdens under which he groans is self, and one of his most ardent wishes is to be freed from it and become suitably humbled in the sight of God. From this distress, he finds no deliverance in any other doctrine than the one we are here considering. In denying election, and in leaving it, either entirely or in part, to the will of man whether he shall be saved or not, he finds that pride is fostered and self-exalted. But when he sees that all his hopes of eternal life spring immediately from the will of God, and that in himself he is a wretched and ruined creature, his soul is deeply humbled, and, at the same time, it is filled with gratitude and joy. This ensures his observance of the Divine law; for while he rejoices in the distinguishing mercy and goodness of God, he will furnish an evidence of his gratitude, and yield the native fruits of love in the obedience which he renders. He walks, as it most assuredly becomes him, humbly and blamelessly in all the statutes and commandments of the Lord.

From these facts, it follows that the doctrine of election may be considered as a link in the golden chain of man's salvation; and that without it, the chain would be imperfect. That God's design

to save his own elect by the atonement of Christ, is the cornerstone of the building of mercy; and without it, the building would be both incomplete and insecure. And, also, that it is a doctrine most worthy of being taught and believed as highly practical. To the believer in Jesus, it will appear in every way calculated to excite his love and gratitude, strengthen his hope and confidence, and bring him to ascribe, unreservedly, to the grace of God alone, all the glory of his salvation.

REPORTS OF PRESBYTERIES TO IRISH SYNOD.

The Southern Presbytery report that they have held four meetings during the past year. The days of thanksgiving and fasting have been observed in all the congregations under their jurisdiction, and the Lord's Supper has been dispensed in them all, at least once, and in most of them twice. Since last meeting of Synod, preaching was granted to the few adherents to our cause in Corenary, for four Sabbaths in succession, in the month of November last; but in consequence of the limited supply afforded to that station out of the Missionary Funds, and of the inability of the people in that locality to contribute for the support of the Gospel, and especially as there appears to be but little prospect of an increase of membership in that quarter, Presbytery did not think it advisable to grant more than the above mentioned supply of preaching. The vacant congregation of Dromore has enjoyed preaching about half time during the past year from members of Presbytery and Licentiates, including the ministerial labors of Mr. Graham one Sabbath in the month, although no pastoral relation, strictly speaking, has, as yet, been formed between him and that people. Presbytery has under its care Messrs. Wm. Hanna, Thomas and John Hart, and James Harvey, students in different stages of progress in their collegiate and theological course of study.

REV. ALEX. SAVAGE, *Moderator.*

REV. THOMAS CARLILE, *Clerk.*

The Northern Presbytery report that since the Synod of 1849, the quarterly meetings of Presbytery have been regularly held, and were well attended by Ministers and Elders. In reviewing the records of these meetings, there does not appear much to be reported to Synod. Still there is occasion to regret that much time has necessarily been devoted to the pecuniary concerns of the several congregations under their pastoral care. With two or three exceptions, all our congregations are more or less under the pressure of arrear stipend. Measures have, however, been taken to have a settlement of these affairs in the course of this present