



The Doctrine of Saints' Perseverance



Part Four

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In an earlier section we dwelt upon the deep importance of this doctrine, here we wish to show something of its great preciousness. Let us begin by pointing out the opposite. Suppose that the Gospel proclaimed only a forgiveness of all sins up to the moment of conversion and announced that believers must henceforth keep themselves from everything unworthy of this signal mercy: that means are provided, motives supplied, and warnings given of the fatal consequences which will surely befall those who fail to make a good use of those means and diligently respond to those motives; that whether or not he shall ultimately reach Heaven is thus left entirely in the believer's own hands. Then what? We may well ask what would be the consequences of such a dismal outlook: what would be the thoughts begotten and the spirit engendered by such a gospel? what effect would it produce upon those who really believed it? Answers to these questions should prepare us to the more deeply appreciate the converse.

It hardly requires a profound theologian to reply to the above queries; they have only to be carefully pondered and the simplest Christian should be able to perceive for himself what would be the inevitable result. If the Christian's entrance into Heaven turns entirely upon his own fidelity and his treading the path of righteousness unto the end of his course, then he is far worse off than was Adam in Eden, for when God placed him under the covenant of works he was not heavily handicapped from the beginning by indwelling sin, but each of his fallen descendants is born into this world with a carnal nature which remains unchanged to the moment of death. Thus the believer would enter

into the fight not only without any assurance of victory but face almost certain defeat. If such a gospel were true then those who really believed it would be entire strangers to peace and joy, for they must inevitably spend their days in a perpetual dread of Hell. Or, the first time they were overcome by temptation and worsted by the Enemy, they would at once abandon the fight and give way to hopeless despair.

“I will not turn away from them to do them good” (Jer. 32:40). *“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee”* (Heb. 13:5). Nothing whatever can or *“shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Rom. 8:39). *“He will keep the feet of His saints”* (1 Sam. 2:9). How immeasurable the difference between the vain imaginations of men and the sure declarations of God: it is the contrast of the darkness of a moonless and starless midnight from the radiance of the midday sun. *“Of them which Thou gayest Me have I lost none”* (John 18:9) affirmed the Redeemer. Is not that inexpressibly blessed! That every one of the redeemed shall be brought safely to Heaven. The final apostasy of a believer is an utter impossibility, not in the nature of things but by the Divine constitution: not one who has once been received into the Divine favour can ever be cast out thereof. God has bestowed on each of His children a life that cannot die, He has brought him into a relationship which nothing can change or effect, He has wrought a work in him which lasts *“for ever”* (Eccl. 3:14).

It is sadly true that multitudes of empty professors have “wrested” this truth to their destruction, just as many of our fellows have put to an ill use some of the most valuable of God’s temporal gifts; but because foolish gluttons destroy their health through intemperance that is no reason why sane people should refuse to be nourished by wholesome food; and because the carnal pervert the doctrine of Divine preservation that is no valid argument for Christians being afraid to draw comfort from the same. Most certainly it is the design of God that His people should be strengthened and established by this grand article of the faith. Note how in John 17 Christ mentions again and again the

words “*keep*” and “*kept*” (verses 6, 11, 12, 13, 15). And His reason for so doing is clearly stated: “*these things I speak in the world that they may have My joy fulfilled in them*” (verse 13). He would not have them spend their days in the wretchedness of doubts about their ultimate bliss, uncertain as to the issue of their fight. It is His revealed will that they should go forward with a song in their hearts, praising Him for the certainty of ultimate victory.

But the joy which issues from a knowledge of our security is not obtained by a casual acquaintance with this truth. Christ’s very repetition “*I kept them those that Thou gavest Me I have kept*” (John 17:12) intimates to us that we must meditate frequently upon this Divine preservation unto eternal life. It is to be laid hold of in no transient manner but should daily engage the Christian’s heart till he is warmed and influenced by it. A few sprinklings of water do not go to the roots of a tree, but frequent and plentiful showers are needed: so it is not an occasional thought about Christ’s power to keep His people safe for Heaven which will deeply affect them, but only a constant spiritual and believing pondering thereon. As Jacob said to the Angel “*I will not let thee go except thou bless me*” (Gen. 32:26), so the believer should say to this truth, I will not turn from it until it has blessed me.

When our great High Priest prayed “*Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me*” (John 17:11) it was not (as the Arminians say) that He asked merely that they might be provided with adequate means, by the use of which they must preserve themselves. No, my reader, it was for something more valuable and essential. The Saviour made request that faith should be continually wrought in them by the exceeding greatness of God’s power (Eph. 1:19), and where that is there will be works of sincere (though imperfect) obedience and it will operate by responding to the holiness of the Law so that sins are mortified. The Father answers that prayer of the Redeemer’s by working in the redeemed “*both to will and to do of His good pleasure*” (Phil. 2:13), fulfilling in them “*all the good pleasure of His goodness*

and the work of faith with power” (2 Thess. 1:11) preserving them *“through faith unto salvation”* (1 Pet. 1:5). He leaves them not to their feeble and fickle wills, but renews them in the inner man *“day by day”* (2 Cor. 4:16).

That Christ would have His redeemed draw comfort from their security is clear again from His words *“Rejoice because your names are written in heaven”* (Luke 10:20). To what purpose did the Lord Jesus thus address His disciples, but to denote that infallible certainty of their final salvation by a contrast from those who perish: that is, whose names were written only *“in the earth”* (Jer. 17:13) or on the sands which may be defaced. Surely He had never spoken thus if there was the slightest possibility of their names being blotted out. *“Rejoice because your names are written in heaven;”* is not the implication both necessary and clear as a sunbeam; such rejoicing would be premature if there was any likelihood of final apostasy. This call to rejoice is not given at the moment of the believer’s death, as he sees the angels about to convoy him to the realm of ineffable bliss, but while he is still here on the battlefield. Those names are written by none other than the finger of God, indelibly inscribed in the Book of Life, and not one of them will ever be erased.

Take again His words in the parable of the lost sheep: *“I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth”* (Luke 15:7). “Such exalted hosannas would not resound on these occasions among the inhabitants of the skies if the doctrine of final perseverance was untrue. Tell me, ye seraphs of light; tell me, ye spirits of elect men made perfect in glory, why this exuberance of holy rapture on the real recovery of a sinner to God? Because ye know assuredly that every true conversion is (1) a certain proof that the person converted is one of the elect number, and (2) that he shall be infallibly preserved and brought to that very region of blessedness into which ye yourselves are come. The contrary belief would silence your harps and chill your praises. If it be uncertain whether the person who is regenerated today may ultimately reign with you in heaven or take up his eternal abode among apostate spirits in hell, your rejoicings are

too sanguine and your praises too presumptuous. You should suspend your songs until he actually arrives among you and not give thanks for his conversion until he has persevered unto glorification” (A. Toplady).

1. What encouragement is there here for the babe in Christ! Conscious of his weakness, he is fearful that the flesh and the world and the Devil may prove too powerful for him. Aware of his ignorance, bewildered by the confusion of tongues in the religious realm, he dreads lest he be led astray by false prophets. Beholding many of his companions, who made a similar profession of faith, so quickly losing their fervour and going back again into the world, he trembles lest he make shipwreck of the faith. Stumbled by the inconsistencies of those called “the pillars of the church,” chilled by older Christians who tell him he must not be too extreme, he is alarmed and wonders how it can be expected that he shall hold on his way almost alone. But if these fears empty him of self-confidence and make him cling the closer to Christ, then are they blessings in disguise, for he will then prove for himself that “underneath are the everlasting arms,” and that those arms are all-mighty and all-sufficient.

The babe in Christ is as much a member of God’s family as is the mature “*father*” (1 John 2:13) and the former is as truly the object of Divine love and faithfulness as is the latter. Yea, the younger ones in His flock are more the subjects of the Shepherd’s care than are the full-grown sheep: “*He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom*” (Isa. 40:11). The Lord does not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax (Matt. 12:20). He gave proof of this in the days of His flesh. He found some “smoking flax” in the nobleman who came to Him on behalf of his sick son: his faith was so weak that he supposed the Saviour must come down to his house and heal him ere he died—as though the Lord Jesus could not recover him while at a distance or after he had expired (John 4:49): nevertheless He cured him. So too after His ascension, He took note of a “*little strength*” (Rev. 3:8) and opened a door which none can shut. The highest oak was once an acorn and God was the maintainer of its

life.

When we affirm the final perseverance of every born-again soul we do not mean that saints are not in themselves prone to fall away, nor that at regeneration such a work is wrought in them once for all that they now have sufficient strength of their own to overcome sin and Satan and that there is no likelihood of their spiritual life decaying. So far from it, we hesitate not to declare that the very principle of grace (or “new nature”) in the believer considered abstractedly in itself—apart from the renewing and sustaining power of God—would assuredly perish under the corruptions of the flesh and the assaults of the Devil. No, the preservation of the Christian’s faith and his continuance in the path of obedience lies in something entirely external to himself or his state. Wherein lay the impossibility of any bone of Christ being broken? Not because they were in themselves incapable of being broken, for they were as liable to be broken as His flesh to be pierced, but solely because of the unbreakable decree of God. So it is with the mystical Body of Christ: no member of His can perish because of the purpose, power and promise of God Himself.

How important it is then that the babe in Christ should be instructed in the ground of Christian perseverance, that the foundation on which his eternal security rests is nothing whatever in himself but wholly outside. The preservation of the believer depends not upon his continuing to love God, believe in Christ, tread the highway of holiness, or make diligent use of the means of grace, but on the Covenant-engagements entered into between the Father and the Son. That is the basic and grand Cause which produces as a necessary and infallible effect our continuing to love God, believe in Christ and perform sincere obedience. O what a sure foundation is that! What a firm ground for the soul to rest upon! What unspeakable peace and joy issues from faith’s apprehension of the same! Though fickle in ourselves, the Covenant is immutable. Though weak and unstable as water we are, yet that is “ordered in all things and sure.” Though full of sin and unworthiness, yet the sacrifice of Christ is of infinite merit.

Though often the spirit of prayer be quenched in us, yet our great High Priest ever liveth to make intercession for us. Here then is the “*anchor of the soul,*” and it is “*both sure and steadfast*” (Heb. 6:19).

Ere concluding this subdivision it is necessary to point out in such days as these that it must not be inferred from the above that because the grace, the power and the faithfulness of God insures the preservation of the feeblest babe in Christ that henceforth he is relieved of all responsibility in the matter. Not so: such a blessed truth has not been revealed for the purpose of encouraging slothfulness, but rather to provide an impetus to use the means of preservation which God has appointed. Though we must not anticipate too much what we purpose to bring before the reader under a later division of our subject, when we shall consider at more length the safeguards which Divine wisdom has placed around this truth, yet a few words of warning, or rather explanation, should be given here to prevent a wrong conclusion being drawn from the preceding paragraphs.

The babe in Christ is weak in himself, he is left in a hostile world, he is confronted with powerful temptations, both from within and from without, to apostatize. But strength is available unto faith, armour is provided against all enemies, deliverance from temptations is given in answer to prevailing prayer. But he must seek that strength, put on that armour, and resist those temptations. He must fight for his very life, and refuse to acknowledge defeat. Nor shall he fight in vain, for Another shall gird his arm and enable him to overcome. The blessedness of this doctrine is that he shall not be left to himself nor suffered to perish. The Holy Spirit shall renew him day by day, quicken his graces, move him to perseverance and make him “more than conqueror through Him that loved him.”

2. What comfort is there here for fearing saints! All Christians have a reverential and filial fear of God and an evangelical horror of sin. Some are beset with legal fears, and most of them with anxieties which are the product of a mingling of legal and evangelical principles. These latter are occasioned more

immediately by anxious doubts, painful misgivings, evil surmisings of unbelief. More remotely, they are the result of the permissive appointment of God, who has decreed that perfect happiness must be waited till His people get home to Heaven. Were our graces complete, our bliss would be complete too. In the meantime it is needful for the Christian traveller to be exercised with a thorn in the flesh, and that “thorn” assumes a variety of forms with different believers; but whatever its form it is effectual in convincing them that this earth is not their rest or a mount whereon to pitch tabernacles of continuance. In many instances that “thorn” consists of anxious misgivings, as the frequent “fear not” of Scripture intimates: the fear of being completely overcome by temptation, or making shipwreck of the faith, of failing to endure unto the end.

Once again we would quote those words of Christ, *“Of them whom Thou hast given Me have I lost none”* (John 18:9). Is not that inexpressibly blessed! That every one of the dear children whom the Father has entrusted to the care and custody of the Mediator shall be brought safely to glory; the feeblest as much as the strongest, those with the least degree of grace as those of the highest, the babes as truly as the full grown. Where true grace is imparted, though it be as a grain of mustard seed, yet it shall be quickened and nourished so that it shall not perish. This should be of great consolation to those timid and doubting ones who are apt to think it will be well with Christians of great faith and eminent gifts, but that such frail creatures as they know themselves to be will never hold out, who dread that Satan’s next attack will utterly vanquish them. Let them know that the self-same Divine protection is given to all the redeemed. It is not because one is more godly than another, but because both are held fast in the hand of God. The tiny mouse was as safe in the ark as the ponderous elephant.

What encouragement is there here for the godly, who when they view the numerous Anakims in the way and hear of the giants and walled cities before them are prone to dread their meeting with them. How many a one has trembled as he has pondered that word

of Christ's "*Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God*" (Matt. 19:23, 24) and said with the apostles, "Who then can be saved?" If it be such a difficult matter to get to Heaven, if the gate be so strait and the way so narrow, and so many of those professing to tread it turn out to be hypocrites and apostates, what will become of me? When thus exercised, remember Christ's answer to the astonished disciples, "*with God all things are possible.*" He who kept Israel on the march for forty years without their shoes wearing out, can quite easily preserve thee, O thou of little faith.

"*Thou has a mighty arm: strong is Thy hand, high is Thy right hand*" (Psa. 89:13). Grandly is that fact displayed in creation. Who has stretched out the heavens with a span? Who upholds the pillars of the earth? Who has set limits to the raging ocean, so that it cannot overflow its bounds? Whose finger kindled the sun, the moon, and the stars, and kept those mysterious Lamps of the sky alight all these thousands of years? Whose hand has filled the sea with fishes, the fields with herds, and made the earth fertile and fruitful? So too the mightiness of the Lord's arm is manifest in providence. Who directs the destinies of nations and shapes the affairs of kingdoms? Who sets the monarch upon his throne and casts him from thence when it so pleases Him? Who supplies the daily needs of a countless myriad of creatures so that even the sparrow is provided for when the earth is blanketed with snow? Who makes all things work together for good—even in a world which lieth in the Wicked one—to them that love Him, who are the called according to His purpose?

When a soul is truly reconciled to God and brought to delight in Him, it rejoices in all His attributes. At first it is apt to dwell much upon His love and mercy, but as it grows in grace and experience it delights in His holiness and power. It is a mark of spiritual understanding when we have learned to distinguish the manifold perfections of God, to take pleasure in each of them. It is a proof of more intimate communion with the Lord when we

perceive how adorable is the Divine character, so that we meditate upon its excellences separately and in detail, and praise and bless Him for each of them. The more we are given to behold all the varied rays of His pure light, the more we are occupied with the many glories of His crown, the more shall we bow in wonderment before Him. Not only shall we perceive how infinitely He is above us, but how there is everything in Him suited to our need; grace to meet our unworthiness, mercy to pardon our sins, wisdom to supply our ignorance, strength to minister to our weakness. *“Who is like unto Thee, O Lord among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!”* (Exod. 15:11).

How this glorious attribute of God’s power ensures the final perseverance of the saints! Some of our readers have passed through sore trials and severe tribulations, yet they prevailed not against them: they shook them to their foundations, but they did not overthrow their faith. *“Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all”* (Psa. 34:19). Fierce were the foes which many a time gathered against thee, and had not the Lord been on thy side thou hadst quickly been devoured, but in Him thou didst find a sure refuge. The Divine strength has been manifested in your weakness. Is it not so, my brother, my sister: that such a frail worm as yourself has never been crushed by the weight of opposition that has come upon you—Ah, “underneath were the everlasting arms.” Though you trembled at your feebleness, yet, *“out of weakness were made strong”* (Heb. 11:34) has been your case too. Kept alive with death all around you, preserved when Satan and his hosts encompassed you. Must you not say “strong is Thy right hand!”

3. What comfort is there here for souls who are tempted to entertain hard thoughts of God! The awful corruptions of the flesh which still remain in the believer and which are ever ready to complain at the difficulties of the way and murmur against the dispensations of Divine providence, and the questionings of unbelief which constantly ask, Has God ceased to be gracious? how can He love me if He deals with me thus? are sufficient in

themselves to destroy his peace and quench his joy. But when to these are added the infidelities of Arminianism which declares that God takes no more care of His children than to suffer the Devil to enter in among and devour them, that the Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, affords no more security to His flock than to allow wolves and lions to come among and devour them at their pleasure, how shall the poor Christian maintain his confidence in the love and faithfulness of the Lord? Such blasphemies are like buckets of cold water poured upon the flames of his affection for God and are calculated only to destroy that delight which he has taken in the riches of Divine grace.

The uninstructed and unestablished believer is apt to think within himself I may for the present be in a good state and condition, but what assurance is there that I shall continue thus? Were not the apostate angels once in a far better state and more excellent condition than mine: they dwelt in Heaven itself, but now they are cast down into Hell, being *“reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day”* (Jude 6)! Adam in paradise had no lusts within to tempt and seduce him, no world without to oppose and entangle, yet *“being in honour”* he continued not, but apostatized and perished. If it was not in their power to persevere much less so in mine, who am *“sold under sin”* and encompassed with a world of temptations. What hope is there left to me? Let a man be exercised with such thoughts as these, let him be cast back solely upon himself, and what is there that can give him any relief or bring his soul to any degree of composure? Nothing whatever, for the so-called *“power of free will”* availed not either the angels which fell or our first parents.

And what is it which will deliver the distressed soul from these breathings of despair? Nothing but a believing laying hold of this grand comfort: that the child of God has an infallible promise from his Father that he shall be preserved unto His heavenly kingdom, that he shall be kept from apostasy, that the intercession of his great High Priest prevents the total failing of his faith. So far from God being indifferent to the welfare of His children and

failing in His care for them, He has sworn that *“I will not turn away from them to do them good.”* So far from the good Shepherd proving unfaithful to His trust, He has given express assurance that not one of His sheep shall perish. Rest on those assurances my reader, and thy hard thoughts about God will be effectually silenced. As to the stability and excellency of the Divine love, is it not written, *“The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over thee with singing”* (Zeph. 3:17). What can more endear God to His people than that! How it should fix their souls in their love to Him.

Well might Stephen Charnock say of Arminians, “Can these men fancy Infinite Tenderness so unconcerned as to let the apple of His eye be plucked out, as to be a careless Spectator of the pillage of His jewels by the powers of Hell, to have the delight of His soul (if I may so speak) tossed like a tennis ball between himself and the Devil.” He that does the greater thing for His people shall He not also do the less: to regenerate them is more wonderful than to preserve them, as the bestowal of life exceeds the maintaining of it. The reconciliation of enemies is far harder than dealing with the failings of friends: *“while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being now justified by His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life”* (Rom. 5:8-10). If there was such efficacy in the death of Christ, who can estimate the virtue of His resurrection! “He ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

4. What comfort is there here for aged pilgrims! Some perhaps may be surprised at this heading, supposing that those who have been longest in the way and have experienced most of God’s faithfulness have the least need of consolation from the truth. But such a view is sadly superficial to say the least of it. No matter how matured in the faith one may be, nor how well acquainted with the Divine goodness, so long as he is left down here he has no might of his own and is completely dependent upon Divine

grace to preserve him. Methuselah stood in as much need of God's supporting hand during the closing days of his pilgrimage as does the veriest babe in Christ. Look at it from the human side of things: the aged believer, filled with infirmities, the spiritual companions of his youth all gone, perhaps bereft of the partner of his bosom, cut off from the public means of grace, he looks forward to the final conflict with trepidation.

"And even to your old age I am He, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you" (Isa. 46:4). Why has such a tender and appropriate promise been given by God if His aged saints have no need of the same? They, any more than the young, are not immune from Satan's attacks. He is not slow to tell the tottering believer that as many a ship has foundered when in sight of port so the closing storm of life will prove too much for him: that though God has borne long with his unbelief and waywardness, even His patience is now exhausted. How then is he to meet such assaults of the Fiend? In the same way as he has done all through his course. By taking the shield of faith, wherewith he shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the Wicked one (Eph. 6:16), by having recourse to the sure promise of Him who has said "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end."

Ah, my aged friend, how often have you proved in your experience the truth of those words *"thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee"* (Deut. 33:29). What a shameless liar the Devil is! Did he not tell thee in some severe trial, The hand of the Lord is gone out against thee: He has forsaken thee and will no more be gracious to thee: He has deserted thee as He did Saul the king and now thou art wholly given up unto the powers of evil: the Lord will no more answer thee from His holy oracle; He has utterly cast thee off. Yet you found that God had not deserted you after all, and this very day you are able to join the writer in thanking Him for His lovingkindness and to testify of His unfailing faithfulness. How often has thine own unbelief whispered to thee, I shall one day perish at the hand of this foe who seeks my life: my strength is gone, the Spirit withholds His assistance, I am left alone and must perish. Yet year after year has passed, and though

faint you are still pursuing, though feeble you will hold on your way.

Has not Satan often told you in the past, Your profession is a sham, iniquities prevail over you, the root of the matter is not in thee. Thou was a fool to make a profession and cast in thy lot with God's people: there is no stability in thee, thou art certain to apostatize and bring reproach upon the cause of Christ. And did not your own doubts second his motion, telling you that your experience was but a flash in the pan, some evanescent emotion, which like a firebrand would die out into black ashes. Unbelief has whispered a thousand falsehoods into your ear, saying this duty is too difficult, this toil will prove too great, this adversity will drown you. What madness it was to lend an ear to such lies. Can God ever cast away one on whom He has fixed His everlasting love? Can He renounce one who was purchased by the blood of Christ? Thus will it prove of thy last fears: *"Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee."*

5. What comfort is there here for preachers! Many a rural minister views with uneasiness the departure into cities of some of his young converts. And may well he be exercised at the prospect of them leaving their sheltered homes to be brought into close contact with temptations to which they were formerly strangers. It is both his duty and privilege to give them godly counsel and warning, to follow them with his prayers, to write them: but if they be soundly converted he need not fear about their ultimate well-being. Servants of God called to move into other parts are fearful about the babes in Christ which they will leave behind, yet if they really be such they may find consolation in the blessed fact that the great Shepherd of the sheep will never leave nor forsake them.

7. Its Perversion

Nowhere is the depravity of man and the enmity of their minds against God more terribly displayed than in the treatment which His Holy Word receives at their hands. By many it is criminally neglected, by others it is wickedly wrested and made to teach the

most horrible heresies. To slight such a revelation, to despise such an inestimable treasure, is an insult which the Most High will certainly avenge. To corrupt the sacred Scriptures, to force from them a meaning the opposite of what they bear, to handle them deceitfully by picking and choosing from their contents, is a crime of fearful magnitude. Yet this, in varying measure, is what all the false cults of Christendom are guilty of. Unitarians, Universalists, those who teach the unconsciousness of the soul between death and resurrection and the annihilation of the wicked, single out certain snippets of Scripture but ignore or explain away anything which makes against them. A very high percentage of the errors propagated by the pulpit are nothing more or less than Truth itself, but the Truth distorted and perverted.

Broadly speaking the doctrine which we have been expounding in this series has been perverted by two main classes. First, by open Arminians, who expressly repudiate most of what has been advanced in the preceding sections. With them we are not here directly concerned. Second, by what we can only designate “mongrel Calvinists.” This class deny the sovereign and unconditional election of God and also the limited or particular redemption of Christ. They are one with Arminians in believing that election is based on God’s foreknowledge of those who would believe the Gospel, and they affirm Christ atoned for the sins of all of Adam’s race, and yet they term themselves “Calvinists” because they hold the eternal security of the saints, or “once in grace, always in grace.” In their crude and ill-balanced presentation of this doctrine they woefully pervert the Truth and do incalculable damage unto those who give ear to them. As they do not all proceed along exactly the same line or distort the Truth at the same particular point we will divide this branch of our subject so as to cover as many errors as possible.

1. It is perverted by those who predicate of mere professors what pertains only to the regenerate. Here is a young man who attends a service at a church where a “special evangelistic campaign” is being held. He is not seriously inclined, in fact rarely enters a place of worship, but is visiting one now to please

a friend. The evangelist makes a fervent emotional appeal and many are induced to “go forward” and be prayed for, our young man among them—again to please his friend. He is persuaded to “become a Christian” by signing a “decision card” and then he is congratulated on the “manly step” he has taken. He is duly “received into the church” and at once given a class of boys in the “Sunday School.” He is conscious there has been no change within and though somewhat puzzled supposes the preacher and church-members know more about the matter than he does. They regard him as a Christian and assure him he is now safe for eternity.

Here is another young man who is passing a “Gospel Hall” on a Lord’s day evening; attracted by the hearty singing, he enters. The speaker expatiates at length on John 3:16 and similar passages. He declares with such vigour that God loves everybody and points out in proof thereof that He gave His Son to die for the sins of all mankind. The unsaved are urged to believe this and are told that the only thing which can now send them to Hell is their unbelief. As soon as the service is over the speaker makes for our young man and asks him if he is saved. Upon receiving a negative reply, he says, “Would you not like to be, here and now?” Acts 16:31 is read to him and he is asked “Will you believe?” If he says yes, John 5:24 is quoted to him and he is told that he is now eternally secure. He is welcomed into the homes of these new friends, frequents their meetings and is addressed as “Brother.”

The above are far more than imaginary cases: we have come into personal contact with many from both classes. And what was the sequel? In the great majority of instances the tide of emotion and enthusiasm soon subsided, the novelty quickly wore off, attending “Bible readings” soon palled, and the dog returned to its vomit and the sow to her wallowing in the mire. They were then regarded as “backsliders” and perhaps told “The Lord will bring you back again into the fold,” and some of these man-made converts are foolish enough to believe their deceivers and assured that “once saved, saved forever” they go on their worldly way with no trepidation as to the ultimate outcome. They have been

fatally deceived. And what of their deceivers? They are guilty of perverting the Truth, they have cast pearls before swine, they have taken the children's bread and thrown it to the dogs; they gave to empty professors what pertained only to the regenerate.

2. It is perverted by those who fail to insist upon credible evidences of regeneration, as is the case with the above examples. The burden of proof always rests upon the one who affirms. When a person avers that he is a Christian that averment does not make him one, and if he be mistaken it certainly is not kindness on my part to confirm him in a delusion. A church is weakened spiritually in proportion to the number of its unregenerate members. Regeneration is a supernatural work of grace and therefore it is a great insult to the Holy Spirit to imagine that there is not a radical difference between one who has been miraculously quickened by Him and one who is dead in trespasses and sins, between one who is indwelt by Him and one in whom Satan is working (Eph. 2:2). Not until we see clear evidence that a supernatural work of grace has been wrought in a soul are we justified in regarding him as a brother in Christ. The tree is known by the fruits it bears: good fruit must be manifested on its branches ere we can identify it as a good tree.

We will not enter into a laboured attempt to describe at length the principal birth-marks of a Christian; instead we will mention some things which if they be absent indicate that "*the root of the matter*" (Job 19:28) is not in the person. One who regards sin lightly, who thinks nothing of breaking a promise, who is careless in the performance of temporal duties, who gives no sign of a tender conscience which is exercised over what are commonly called "trifles," lacks the one thing needful. A person who is vain and self-important, who pushes to the fore seeking the notice of others, who parades his fancied knowledge and attainments, has not learned of Him who is "meek and lowly in heart." One who is hyper-sensitive, who is deeply hurt if some one slights her, who resents a word of reproof no matter how kindly spoken, betrays the lack of a humble and teachable spirit. One who frets over disappointments, murmurs each time his will is crossed and rebels

against the dispensations of Providence, exhibits a will which has not been Divinely subdued.

That a person belongs to some “evangelical church” or “assembly” and is regular in his attendance there, is no proof that he is a member of the Church which is Christ’s (mystical) body. That a person goes about with a Bible in his hand is no guaranty that the Divine Law is within his heart. Though he may talk freely and fluently about spiritual things, of what worth is it if they do not regulate his daily walk? One who is dishonest in business, undutiful in the home, thoughtless of others, censorious and unmerciful, has no title to be regarded as a new creature in Christ Jesus, no matter how saintly his pose be on the Sabbath Day. When the Pharisees and Sadducees came to Christ’s forerunner to be baptized of him, he said, “*Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance*” (Matt. 3:8): I must first see some signs of godly sorrow for sin, some manifestations of a change of heart, some tokens of a transformed life. So we must demand the evidences of regeneration before we are justified in crediting a Christian profession, otherwise we endorse what is false and bolster up one in his self-deceit.

3. It is perverted by those who sever the cause from its necessary effect. The cause of the believer’s perseverance is one and indivisible, for it is Divine and nothing whatever of the creature is mingled with it; yet to our apprehension at least it appears as a compound one and we may view its component parts separately. The unchanging love, the immutable purpose, the everlasting covenant and the invincible power of God are conjoint elements in making the saint infallibly secure. But each of those elements is active and brings forth fruit after its own kind. God’s love is not confined to the Divine bosom but is “shed abroad” in the hearts of His people by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5), from whence it flows forth again unto its Giver: “*we love Him because He first loved us*” (1 John 4:19). Our love is indeed feeble and fluctuating, yet it exists, and cannot be quenched, so that we can say with Peter “*Thou knowest that I love Thee.*” “*I know My sheep and (though imperfectly) am known of Mine.*” (John 10:14)

shows the response made.

The preacher who has much to say upon the love of God and little or nothing about the believer's love to Him is partial and fails in his duty. How can I ascertain that I am an object of God's love but by discovering the manifest effects of His love being shed abroad in my heart? *"If any man love God, the same is known of God"* (1 Cor. 8:3). *"All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose"* (Rom. 8:28). It is by their love for Him they give proof they are the subjects of His effectual call. And how is genuine love for God to be identified? First, by its eminency: God is loved above all others so as He has no rival in the soul: *"whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there in none upon earth that I desire beside Thee"* (Psa. 73:25). All things give way to His love; *"Because Thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee"* (Psa. 63:3). The real Christian is content to do and suffer anything rather than lose God's favour, for that is his all.

Second, true love for God may be recognized by its component parts. Repentance is a mourning love, because of the wrongs done its Beloved and the loss accruing to ourselves. Faith is a receptive love, thankfully accepting Christ and all His benefits. Obedience is a pleasing love, seeking to honour and glorify the One who has set His heart upon me. Filial fear is a restraining love which prevents me offending Him whom I esteem above all others. Hope is love expecting, anticipating the time when there shall be nothing to come between my soul and Him. Communion is love finding satisfaction in its Object. All true piety is the expression and outflow of love to God and those who bear His image. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness is love desiring more of God and His holiness. Joy is the exuberance of love, delighting itself in its all-sufficient portion. Patience is love waiting for God to make good His promise, moving us to endure the trials of the way until He comes to our relief. Love *"beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"* (1 Cor. 13:7).

Third, real love for God expresses itself in obedience. Where

there is genuine love for God it will be our chief concern to please Him and fulfil His will. *“He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me”* (John 14:21). *“This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments”* (1 John 5:3). Inasmuch as it is the love of an inferior to a superior it must show itself in a respectful subjection, in the performance of duty. God returneth love with love: *“I love them that love Me”* (Prov. 8:17 and compare with John 14:21). “A Christian is rewarded as a lover rather than as a servant: not as doing work, but as doing work out of love” (Manton). If we love God we shall do his bidding, promote His interests, seek His glory. And this not sporadically but uniformly and constantly; not in being devout at certain set times and the observance of the Lord’s supper, but respecting His authority in all the details of our daily lives. Only thus does love perform its function and fulfil its design: *“whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected (attains its proper goal): hereby know we that we are in Him”* (1 John 2:5).

From what has been pointed out in the last three paragraphs it is clear that those who dwell upon the love of God for His people to the virtual exclusion of their love for Him do pervert the truth of the security of the saints, as the individual who persuades himself that he is the object of God’s love without producing the fruit of his love for Him is treading on very dangerous ground. This divorcing of the necessary effect from its cause might be demonstrated just as conclusively of the other elements or parts, but because we entered into so much detail with the first we will barely state the other three. The immutability of God’s purpose to conduct His elect to Heaven must not be considered as a thing apart; the means have been predestinated as much as the end, and they who despise the means perish. The very term “covenant” signifies a compact entered into by two or more persons, wherein terms are prescribed and rewards promised: nowhere has God promised covenant blessings to those who comply not with covenant stipulations. Nor have I any warrant to believe the saving power of God is working in me unless I am expressly

proving the sufficiency of His grace.

4. It is perverted by those who lose the balance of Truth between Divine preservation and Christian perseverance. We may think it vastly more honouring unto God to write or say ten times as much about His sovereignty as we do upon man's responsibility, but that is only a vain attempt to be wise above what is written, and therefore is to display our own presumption and folly. We may attempt to excuse our failure by declaring it is a difficult matter to present the Divine supremacy and human accountability in their due proportions, but with the Word of God in our hands it will avail us nothing. The business of God's servant is not only to contend earnestly for the Faith but to set forth the Truth in its Scriptural proportions. Far more error consists in misrepresenting and distorting the Truth than in expressly repudiating it. Professing Christians are not deceived by an avowed infidel or atheist, but are taken in by men who quote and re-quote certain portions of Holy Writ, but are silent upon all the passages which clash with their lop-sided views.

Just as we may dwell so much upon the Deity of Christ as to lose sight of the reality of His humanity so we may become so occupied with God's keeping of His people as to overlook those verses where the Christian is bidden to keep himself. The incarnation in nowise changed or modified the fact that Christ was none other than Immanuel tabernacling among men, that "*God was manifest in flesh,*" nevertheless we read "*Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren*" (Heb. 2:17), and again "*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man*" (Luke 2:51). The theanthropic person or the Mediator is grossly caricatured if either His Godhead or manhood be omitted from consideration. Whatever difficulty it may involve to our finite minds, whatever mystery which transcends our grasp, yet we must hold fast to the fact that the Child born, the Son given, was "*the mighty God*" (Isa. 9:6); nor must we suffer the truth of God's garrisoning of His people to crowd out the necessity of their discharging their responsibility.

It is perfectly true there is a danger in the other side and that we need to be on our guard against erring in the opposite direction. Some have done so. There are those who consider the humanity of Christ could not be true humanity in the real sense of that word unless it were peccable, arguing that His temptation was nothing more than a meaningless show unless He was capable of yielding to Satan's attacks. One error leads to another. If the last Adam met the Devil on the same plane as did the first Adam, simply as a sinless man, and if His victory (as well as all His wondrous works) is to be attributed solely to the power of the Holy Spirit, then it follows that the exercise of His divine prerogatives and attributes were entirely suspended during the years of His humiliation. Hence we find that those who hold this fantastic view endorse the "kenosis" theory, interpreting the "*made Himself of no reputation*" or "*who emptied Himself*" of Phil. 2:7 as the temporary setting aside of His omniscience and omnipotence.

Contending for Christian perseverance no more warrants the repudiation of Divine preservation than insisting on the true manhood of Christ justifies the impugning of His Godhood. Both must be held fast: on the one hand reasoning must be bridled by refusing to go one step further than Scripture goes; on the other hand faith must be freely exercised, receiving all that God has revealed thereon. That which is central in Philippians 2:5-7 is the position Christ entered and the character in which He appeared. He who was "*in the form of God*" and deemed it not robbery "*to be equal with God*" took upon Him "*the form of a servant*" and was "*made in the likeness of men.*" He laid aside the robes of His incomprehensible glory, divested Himself of His incommunicable honours, and assumed the mediatorial office instead of continuing to act as the universal Sovereign. He descended into the sphere of servitude, yet without the slightest injury to His Godhead. There was a voluntary abnegation of the exercise of full dominion and sovereignty, though He still remained "*The Lord of glory*" (1 Cor. 2:8). He "*became obedient unto death*" but He did not become either feeble or fallible. He was and is both perfect and "the mighty God."

As the person of the God-man Mediator is falsified if either His Godhead or manhood be denied, or perverted if either be practically ignored, so it is with the security of the saints when either their Divine preservation or their own perseverance is repudiated, or perverted if either be emphasized to the virtual exclusion of the other. Both must be maintained in their due proportions. Scripture designates our Saviour "*the true God*" (1 John 5:20), yet it also speaks of Him as "*the man Christ Jesus*" (1 Tim. 2:5); again and again He is denominated "*the Son of man,*" yet Thomas owned Him as "*my Lord and my God.*" So too the Psalmist affirmed "*He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee, will not slumber. . . The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and for evermore*" (121:3, 7, 8); nevertheless, He also declared "*By the Word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer*" (17:4), and again "*I have kept the ways of the Lord. . . I have kept myself from mine iniquity*" (18:21, 23). Jude exhorts believers "*keep yourselves in the love of God*" and then speaks of Him "*that is able to keep you from falling*" (21, 24). The one complements, and not contradicts, the other.

5. It is perverted by those who divorce the purpose of God from the means through which it is accomplished. God has purposed the eternal felicity of His people and that purpose is certain of full fruition, nevertheless it is not effected without the use of means on their part, any more than a harvest is obtained and secured apart from human industry and persevering diligence. God has made promise to His saints that "*bread shall be given*" them and their "*water shall be sure*" (Isa. 33:16), but that does not exempt them from the discharge of their duty or provide them with an indulgence to take their ease. The Lord gave a plentiful supply of manna from heaven, but the Israelites had to get up early and gather it each morning, for it melted when the sun shone on it. So His people are now required to "*labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life*" (John 6:2 7). Promises of Divine preservation are not made to sluggards and idlers but those called

unto the use of means for the establishing of their souls in the practice of obedience; those promises are not given to promote idleness but are so many encouragements to the diligent, assurances that sincere endeavours shall have a successful issue.

God has purposed to preserve believers in holiness and not in wickedness. His promises are made to those who strive against sin and mourn over it, not to those who take their full thereof and delight therein. If I presume upon God's goodness and count upon His shielding me when I deliberately run into the place of temptation, then I shall be justly left to reap as I have sown. It is Satan who tempts souls to recklessness and to the perverting of the Divine promises. This is clear from the attack which he made upon the Saviour. When he bade Him cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple and to rely upon the angels to preserve Him from harm, it was an urging Him to presume upon the end by disdaining the means; Our Lord stopped his mouth by pointing out that, notwithstanding His assurance from God and of His faithfulness concerning the end, yet Scripture requires that the means tending to that end be employed, the neglect of which is a sinful tempting of God. If I deliberately drink deadly poison I have no ground for concluding that prayer will deliver me from its fatal effects.

The Divine preservation of the saints no more renders their own activities, constant care and exertions superfluous, than does God's gift of breath make it unnecessary for us to breathe. It is their own preservation in faith and holiness which is the very thing made certain: they themselves, therefore, must live by faith and in the practice of holiness, for they cannot persevere in any other way than by watching and praying, carefully avoiding the snares of Satan and the seductions of the world, resisting and mortifying the lusts of the flesh, working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. To neglect those duties, to follow a contrary course, is to "draw back unto perdition" and not to "*believe to the saving of the soul*" (Heb. 10:39). He who argues that since his perseverance in faith and holiness is assured he needs exercise no concern about it or trouble to do anything

toward it, is not only guilty of a palpable contradiction but gives proof that he is a stranger to regeneration and has neither part nor lot in the matter. *“Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments, for therein do I delight”* (Psa. 119:35) is the cry of the renewed.

6. It is perverted by those who deny the truth of Christian responsibility. In this section we shall turn away from the “mongrel Calvinists” to consider a serious defect on the part of “hyper-Calvinists,” or as some prefer to call them, “fatalists.” These people not only repudiate the general offer of the Gospel, arguing that it is a virtual denial of man’s spiritual impotency to call upon the unregenerate to savingly repent and believe, but they are also woefully remiss in exhorting believers unto the performance of Christian duties. Their favourite text is *“without Me ye can do nothing.”* but they are silent upon *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”* (Phil. 4:13). They delight to quote the promises wherein God declares *“I will”* and *“I shall”* but they ignore those verses which contain the qualifying *“if ye”* (John 8:31) and *“if we”* (Heb. 3:6). They are sound and strong in the truth of God’s preservation of His people, but they are weak and unsound on the correlative truth of the saints’ perseverance. They say much about the power and operations of the Holy Spirit, but very little on the method He employs or the means and motives He makes use of.

“As many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). He does not compel but inclines: it is not by the use of physical power but by the employment of moral suasion and sweet inducements that He leads for He deals with the saints not as stocks and stones but as rational entities. *“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye”* (Psa. 32:8), The meaning of that is more apparent from the contrast presented in the next verse: *“Be ye not as the horse (rushing where it should not) or as the mule (stubbornly refusing to go where it should) which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle.”* God does not drive His children like unintelligent animals, but

guides by enlightening their minds, directing their inclinations, moving their wills. God led Israel across the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: but they had to respond thereto, to follow it. So the good Shepherd goes before His sheep, and they follow Him.

It is true, blessedly true, that God “draws,” yet that drawing is not a mechanical one as though we were machines, but a moral one in keeping with our nature and constitution. Beautifully is this expressed in Hosea 11:4, “*I drew them with cords as a man, with bands of love.*” Every moral virtue, every spiritual grace, is appealed to and called into action. There is perfect love and gracious care on God’s part toward us; there is the intelligence of faith and response of love on our part toward Him; and thereby He keeps us in the way. Blessed and wondrous indeed is the interworking of Divine grace and the believer’s responsibility. All the affections of the new creature are wrought upon by the Holy Spirit. He draws out our love by setting before us God’s love: “*we love Him, because He first loved us,*” but we do love Him, we are not passive, nor is love inactive. He quickens our desires and revives our assurance, and we “*rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*” He brings into view “*the prize of the high calling*” and we “*press toward the mark, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before*” (Phil. 3:13, 14).

It is very much like a skilled musician and a harp: as his fingers touch its strings they produce melodious sounds. God works in us and produces the beauty of Holiness. But how? By setting before our minds weighty considerations and powerful motives, and causing us to respond thereto. By giving us a tender conscience which is sensitive to His still small voice. By appealing to every motive-power in us: fear, desire, love, hatred, hope, ambition. God preserves His saints not as He does the mountain pine which is enabled to withstand the storm without its own concurrence, but by calling into exercise and act the principle that was imparted to them at the new birth. There is the working of Divine grace first, and then the outflow of Christian energy. God works in His

people both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12, 13). And it is the office of God's servants to be used as instruments in the hands of the Spirit. It is their task to enforce the responsibility of the saints, to admonish slothfulness, to warn against apostasy, to call unto the use of means and the performance of duty.

If the hyper-Calvinist preacher compares the method he follows with the policy pursued by the apostles, he should quickly perceive the vast difference there is between them. True, the apostles gave attention to doctrinal instruction, but they also devoted themselves to exhortation and expostulation. True, they magnified the free and sovereign grace of God and were careful to set the crown of glory upon the One to whom alone it belonged, yet they were far from addressing their hearers as so many paralytics or creatures who must lie impotent till the waters be moved. "No," they said, "*Let us not sleep, as do others*" (1 Thess. 5:6), but "*awake to righteousness and sin not*" (1 Cor. 15:34). They bade them "*run with patience the race that is set before us*" (Heb. 12:2) and not sit down and mope and hug their miseries. They called upon them to "*resist the Devil*" (James 4:7), not take the attitude they were helpless in the matter. They gave direction "*keep yourselves from idols*" (1 John 5:21) and did not at once negative it by adding, "but you are unable to do so." When the apostle said "*I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance*" (2 Pet. 1:13), he was not usurping the prerogative of the Spirit but was enforcing the responsibility of the saints.

7. It is perverted by those who use the doctrine of justification to crowd out the companion doctrine of sanctification. Though they are inseparably connected yet they may be and should be considered singly and distinctly. Under the Law the ablutions and oblations, the washings and sacrifices went together, and justification and sanctification are blessings which must not be disjointed. God never bestows the one without the other, yet we have no means of knowing we have received the former apart from the evidences of the latter. Justification refers to the relative

or legal change which takes place in the status of God's people. Sanctification to the real and experimental change which takes place in their state, a change which is begun at the new birth, developed during the course of their earthly pilgrimage and is made perfect in Heaven. The one gives the believer a title to Heaven, the other a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light; the former clears him from the guilt of sin, the latter cleanses from sin's defilement. In sanctification something is actually imparted to the believer, whereas in justification it is only imputed. Justification is based entirely on the work which Christ wrought for His people, but sanctification is principally a work wrought in them.

By our fall in Adam we not only lost the favour of God but also the purity of our nature, and therefore we need to be both reconciled to God and renewed in our inner man, for without personal holiness "*no man shall see the Lord*" (Heb. 12:14). "*As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (behaviour); because it is written, Be ye holy for I am holy*" (1 Pet. 1:15, 16). God's nature is such that unless we be sanctified there can be no intercourse between Him and us. But can persons be sinful and holy at one and the same time? Genuine Christians discover so much carnality, filth and vileness in themselves that they find it almost impossible to be assured they are holy. Nor is this difficulty solved, as in justification, by recognizing that though completely unholy in ourselves we are holy in Christ, for Scripture teaches that those who are sanctified by God are holy in themselves, though the evil nature has not been removed from them.

None but "*the pure in heart*" will ever "*see God*" (Matt. 5:8). There must be that renovation of soul whereby our minds, affections and wills are brought into harmony with God. There must be that impartial compliance with the revealed will of God and abstinence from evil which issues from faith and love. There must be that directing of all our actions to the glory of God, by Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel. There must be a spirit of holiness working within the believer's heart so as to sanctify his

outward actions if they are to be acceptable unto Him in whom “there is no darkness.” True, there is perfect holiness in Christ for the believer, but there must also be a holy nature received from Him. There are some who appear to delight in the imputed obedience of Christ who make little or no concern about personal holiness. They have much to say about being arrayed in “*the garments of salvation and covered with the robe of righteousness*” (Isa. 61:10), who give no evidence that they “*are clothed with humility*” (1 Pet. 5:4) or that they have “*put on . . . bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another and forgiving one another*” (Col. 3:12).

How many there are today who suppose that if they have trusted in Christ all is sure to be well with them at the last, even though they are not personally holy. Under the pretence of honouring faith, Satan, as an angel of light, has deceived and is now deceiving multitudes of souls. When their “faith” is examined and tested, what is it worth? Nothing at all so far as insuring an entrance into Heaven is concerned: it is a powerless, lifeless, fruitless thing. The faith of God’s elect is unto “*the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness*” (Titus 1:1). It is a faith which purifieth the heart (Acts 15:9), and it grieves over all impurity. It is a faith which produces an unquestioning obedience (Heb. 11:8). They therefore do but delude themselves who suppose they are daily drawing nearer to Heaven while they are following those courses which lead only to Hell. He who thinks to come to the enjoyment of God without being personally holy, makes Him out to be an unholy God, and puts the highest indignity upon Him. The genuineness of saving faith is only proved as it bears the blossoms of experimental godliness and the fruits of true piety.

Sanctification consists of receiving a holy nature from Christ and being indwelt by the Spirit so that the body becomes His temple, set apart unto God. By the Spirit’s giving me vital union with “the Holy One” I am “*sanctified in Christ Jesus*” (1 Cor. 1:2). Where there is life there is growth, and even when growth

ceases there is a development and maturing of what has grown. There is a living principle, a moral quality communicated at the new birth, and under sanctification it is drawn out into action and exercised in living unto God. In regeneration the Spirit imparts saving grace, in sanctification He strengthens and develops it: the one is a birth, the other a growth.. Therein it differs from justification: justification is a single act of grace, sanctification is a continued work of grace; the one is complete the other progressive. Some do not like the term “progressive sanctification” but the thing itself is clearly taught in Scripture. *“Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit”* (John 15:2). *“I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all judgment”* (Phil. 1:9). That you *“may grow up in Him in all things”* (Eph. 4:15) is an exhortation thereto.

8. It is perverted by those who fail to accord the example of Christ its proper place. Few indeed have maintained an even keel on this important matter. If the Socinians have made the exemplary life of Christ to be the whole end of the incarnation, others have so stressed His atoning death as to reduce His model walk to comparative insignificance. While the pulpit must make it clear that the main and chief reason why the Son of God became flesh, was in order that He might honour God in rendering to the Law a perfect satisfaction on behalf of His people, yet it should also make equally plain that a prominent design and important end of Christ’s incarnation was to set before His people a pattern of holiness for their emulation. Thus declares The Scriptures: *“He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps”* (1 Pet. 2:21) and that example imperatively obligates believers unto its imitation. If some have unduly pressed the example of Christ upon unbelievers, others have woefully failed to press it on believers. Because it has no place in the justification of a sinner, it is a serious mistake to suppose it exerts no influence upon the sanctification of a saint.

The very name “Christian” intimates that there is an intimate relation between Christ and the believer. It signifies “an anointed

one,” that he has been endued with a measure of that Divine unction which his Master received “*without measure*” (John 3:34). And as Flavel, the Puritan, pointed out “Believers are called ‘fellows’ or co-partners (Psa. 45:7) of Christ from their participation with Him of the same Spirit. God giveth the same spirit unto us which He most plentifully poured out upon Christ. Now where the same spirit and principle is, there the same fruits and operations must be produced, according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace communicated. Its nature also is assimilating, and changeth those in whom it is into the same image with Christ, their heavenly Head (2 Cor. 3:18).” Again; believers are denominated “Christians” because they are disciples of Christ (Matt. 28:19 margin, Acts 11:26), that is, learners and followers of His, and therefore it is a misuse of terms to designate a man a “Christian” who is not sincerely endeavouring to mortify and forsake whatever is contrary to His character: to justify his name he must be Christlike.

Though the perfect life of Christ must not be exalted to the exclusion of His atoning death, neither must it be omitted as the believer’s model. If it be true that no attempt to imitate Christ can obtain a sinner’s acceptance with God, it is equally true that the emulating of Him is imperatively necessary and absolutely essential in order to the saints’ preservation and final salvation. “Every man is bound to the imitation of Christ under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ. The necessity of this imitation convincingly appears from the established order of salvation, which is fixed and unalterable. Now conformity to Christ is the established method in which God will bring many souls to glory. *‘For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren’* (Rom. 8:29). The same God who hath predestinated men to salvation, hath in order thereto, predestinated them unto conformity to Christ, and this order of heaven is never to be reversed. We may as well think to be saved without Christ, as to be saved without conformity to Christ” (John Flavel).

In Christ God has set before His people that standard of moral excellence which He requires them to aim and strive after. In His life we behold a glorious representation in our own nature of the walk of obedience which He demands of us. Christ conformed Himself to us by His abasing incarnation, how reasonable therefore is it that we should conform ourselves to Him in the way of obedience and sanctification. *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 2:5). He came as near to us as was possible for Him to do, how reasonable then is it that we should endeavour to come as near as it is possible for us to do. *“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me.”* If *“even Christ pleased not Himself”* (Rom. 15:3), how reasonable is it that we should be required to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24), for without so doing we cannot be His disciples (Luke 15:27). If we are to be conformed to Christ in glory how necessary that we first be conformed to Him in holiness: *“he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk even as He walked”* (1 John 2:6). *“Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”* (2 Tim. 2:19): let him either put on the life of Christ or drop the name of Christ.

The fourth of seven booklets.

