



A SECOND FEAST

“THE DOCTRINE
OF THE OLD ORDER
OF BAPTISTS”

VARIOUS AUTHORS

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Tom Adams

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Preface

“The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd. And further by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” (Ecclesiastes 12:10-12)

Acceptable words are the principle aim in sending forth “A Second Feast.” The earth is wearied by volumes without end that are completely unacceptable to the flock of God. Most books on religion cast more shadows than they give light, and create more confusion than instilling peace. Thus this collection of writings from days that are past; wherein is “A Second Feast” of fat things from the hand of the Good Shepherd. We feel it will be clearly seen that each article in this little book was “given by one Shepherd.”

There was no attempt to make this an exhaustive work. Rather, the articles were selected as representative of the Old Order of Baptists. The writers are familiar to many today who seek the old paths, and the way of truth. These were men raised up of God to feed His flock in a time of spiritual prosperity. We believe they will feed the sheep yet today. The doctrine contained herein is that which was believed and held sacred then, and is no less revered by God’s people in this present day.

In this time of great falling away there is a definite need for a reaffirmation of things most surely believed among us. May the God of all grace bless this work to that desired, and worthy end.

The Publishers.
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Number 1

ROMANS 9:21

“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?”

These words are used by the apostle in his arguments in support of the indisputable and righteous sovereignty of God, and in illustration of the position this appeal is made. It is readily conceded, we presume, that a potter (that is, a mechanic whose occupation it is to make a clay stone or earthen ware) has a right to manufacture his own stock into whatever description of ware he pleases. Should he make a vessel to be used as an ornament for the parlor, and of the same mass of clay another for the vilest use in the kitchen, no sane person would accuse him of injustice - or of transcending his undoubted rights. This figure is used (Isa. 64:8) to show the sovereignty of God in directing the destiny of man, and that we should be passive in his hands. “But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we are the work of thy hand.” And in Isaiah 45:9-12, “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? Or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe unto him that saith unto his father, What begetteth thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth? Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me. I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.” Men are thus described as mere potsherds of the earth, the earthen vessels which are formed of the dust, and broken by apostasy, into potsherds; and as such - let the potsherds of the earth strive with the potsherds of the earth; or fallen man strive with his fellow fallen man; for they are equals, they occupy equal ground in their strife. But woe to him that striveth with his Maker. How can the clay maintain a conflict with the potter? “He hath no hands.” And if the disparity between the clay and the potter is too great to admit of strife, how much greater the distance between man and his Maker. The potter is himself made of the same material of which his hands fashion the vessels which he makes, and the difference between animate and inanimate clay can give but a feeble idea of the infinite disparity of man in his best estate, and his Creator, who has stretched out the heavens, and commanded all the host of heaven and earth. The very earth on which we subsist, and of which we were made, God has created. It belongs wholly to him, and he has a supreme right to dispose of it as he pleases. But he has not only made the earth, but he has also created man upon it. Who shall then be allowed to contest his right to dispose of earth and man as seemeth good in his sight? Have we as the creatures of God any power, any rights, or any privileges, that he has not endowed us with? And can we conceive that a God of all wisdom would endow his creatures with power to subvert his purposes, and prevent the execution of the orders of his eternal throne?

“Shall the vain race of flesh and blood
Contend with their Creator God?
Shall mortal man presume to be
More holy, wise, or just than he?”

If it be admitted then that the potter has a right to form his clay as he pleases, and to fashion from the same lump one vessel to honor, and another to dishonor, can it be denied that God had the right to create just such a world as he has made, and for the very purpose for which he has made it? And that he

had the right to diversify his creatures, from the shining angels to the crooked serpent and the groveling worm? Had he not the right to make one star to differ from another star in magnitude and glory? Deny this right and we deny his prerogative to make a greater and a lesser light, and to assign to each their office and their place; the one to rule the day, and the other to rule the night.

The apostle applies this sovereignty of God to his supreme control of our eternal destiny. Has one a hope of life and immortality and another living without hope and without God in the world; who has made them to differ? Jacob is loved of his God and Esau is hated. How comes this to pass? Was Jacob and Esau not made of the same lump of clay? Were they not the children of the same earthly parents, and twin brothers? Certainly they were. Could one more than the other have influenced the love or hatred of their Maker? ("For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, (their mother) the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." (Rom. 9:11-12)

For lack of space we leave the subject for the present. We may resume it hereafter, if the Lord will.

*Elder Gilbert Beebe
Middletown, N.Y.,
December 15, 1861*

Number 2

ELECTION

The doctrine of “personal, unconditional election,” is a Bible doctrine, and as such has always been accepted and believed among the people of God. It also is a necessary part of true Christian experience, and as such is a truth dear to all believers. It was one of the principles of truth which was incorporated by “Baptists” at the Black Rock division, in their confession of fifth, and ever since has been one of the things earnestly contended for by all Regular, Old School Baptists. I do not know that any one among us at this day attempts to question this truth, but yet it is well to occasionally point out this among the old “landmarks,” and show again our right and title to it. Therefore today I feel like penning a few thoughts upon this one theme, which I am aware will be only a reiteration of what has been said, perhaps far better, a thousand times before.

1st. The term “elect”, “election”, means chosen, choice. It is a word in common use among nearly all men, and when used, ordinarily, no one has any doubt as to its proper meaning, and the word has always meant just precisely what it means now. When we

speak or read of the election of God, it means that God has chosen some person or thing, just as it means when spoken of us. The words “election”, “choice”, “elect”, “chosen”, have always the same intrinsic meaning in the Bible. Now it is beyond all question that the Bible teaches that God has an “elect” or “chosen” people among mankind. (Isaiah 42:1) “Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” (Mark 13:27) “Gather together his elect.” (Luke 18:7) “Avenge his own elect.” (Romans 8:33) “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect.” (I Peter 1:2) “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God.” And many other scriptures.

2nd. The scriptures teach that this people are chosen to salvation; that they are chosen *to salvation* from sin here, and from eternal death hereafter. They are not merely chosen to fill a *certain place* in the ranks of the army, but chosen to be in the army. It is true that the *place* of every one is also appointed them, with his or her peculiar gifts, but the choice or election is, *that they may be saved*. See the following scriptures: (John 15:16) “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and *bring forth fruit*, and that your fruit should remain.” (Eph. 1:4) “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we *should be holy* and without blame before him in love.” (II Thess. 2:13) “God hath from the beginning chosen you to *salvation*, through sanctification of the Spirit,” etc.

3rd. This election is a personal one. I mean by this that in the matter of salvation God has chosen *persons* I and not communities or nations, or certain characters, but individuals as such. I mean that he has chosen Abel, Enoch, Paul, Peter, you and me, from other persons, such as Cain, Saul the king, Judas, etc. See the following scriptures in proof of this: (Acts 9:15) “But the Lord said unto me, Go thy way; for *he is a chosen vessel* unto me,” etc. (Rom. 16:13) “Salute *Rufus, chosen* in the Lord.” (Rom. 9:11) “That the purpose of God according to election might stand,...the *elder* shall serve the *younger*.” (I Thess. 1:4) “Knowing, brethren beloved, *your* election of God.”

4th. This election is unconditional. It is absolutely of God’s own will and purpose. It was not based upon any conditions of our performance; not upon condition of our faith, for he says we are “chosen to salvation, through [not on account of] sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” (II Thess.

2:13) It is not upon condition of our good works, for he says again, that he has chosen us “that we should be [not because we were] holy and without blame before him in love.” (Eph. 1:4) Election is not based upon any other condition than just the sovereign will of God, as he says, (Exodus 33:19) “And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.” (Rom. 9:11) “That the *purpose* of God according to election might stand.” (Rom. 9:16-18) “He saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up.” “Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.” Now if the scriptures teach anything, they do most certainly teach that the whole matter of salvation to the chosen, and the rejection and hardening of the non-elect, is based wholly and solely upon the purpose of God. God’s purpose is the alone agent in this matter.

5th. This view of election is in exact agreement with the truth of God’s foreknowledge. I shall not stop to present scriptures to prove the fact of God’s foreknowledge of all things, but admitting the truth of this, I will try to show that therefore the doctrine of personal election must be true. And first, no one can argue from God’s foreknowledge that his people are chosen because God foresaw that these would repent, believe, and do good works; for the scriptures named before expressly show that we were chosen not because of good works, faith, etc., but that we might have them, as fruits of that salvation to which we had been before chosen. Now the foreknowledge of all things must include the foreknowledge of those who should eventually be saved or lost. Now we might ask, Can any whom God foreknow to be either saved or lost, change places? I answer, No; because this would be to say that God was mistaken; or, in other words, it would say that he did not foreknow this one thing. Therefore if we admit God’s foreknowledge, we must admit election. And to deny election is to deny foreknowledge. And let not any one object to applying the term foreknowledge to Omniscient Deity, for God himself has authorized the use of the term. If he has told us that he declared the end from the beginning, then we are also forced to conclude that he has declared the destiny of every fallen child of Adam. And this is election.

6th. Election is also in harmony with true Christian experience. The first step in salvation, the last step, and every intermediate step, is God’s work. He loved us when we were enemies to him. He gave his Son to die when we sought no gift at his hand. He quickened us by his spirit when we were dead in sins. He called us by his grace when we were going away from him. He chose us when we chose not him. And it is said, “We love him because he first loved us.” This is Christian experience. Now all this is in harmony with the doctrine of election. We did not begin to sorrow for sin till God gave us repentance. We did not cry for pardon till we were constrained by a sense of need. God has prevented, or gone before us, in every step of the way. If all this is the work of God, and not of us, surely it must be because God chose to do all this for us. And if he has done this for any of us, we have experienced the power of election. All who have to confess that their conviction of sin is of God, that the deliverance into light and hope is of God, must eventually confess to the praise of divine grace that election is also true. This view of the matter makes the doctrine a joyful one to all believers, for it gives God all the glory of their salvation, and their future joy is wholly based upon it. The believer has to sweetly confess, If the dear Lord had not freely chosen me, and then lovingly called me, I should never have chosen him; therefore all praise to election, and all glory to God who chose me to eternal salvation from the beginning. If any child of God is not clear in his or her mind as to the place election ought to have in their affections, let them examine their own experience, and see if God did not work alone with them, if he did not work effectually in them, if he did not in all things precede them, so that they have nothing spiritual that they did not receive. Let them see if they are not constrained by that

very experience to confess that God must have chosen them, else they would never have chosen him. This is election in their experience.

7th. Election always implies its opposite rejection, or passing by. This is an insurmountable stumbling block to the theory of universal salvation. If God's people are elected to salvation, (and it has been shown that they are) then it follows from the law of language itself that all are not saved. If all are to be saved, election is a misnomer--a word without any meaning. Men of the Bible are spoken of as being elected; therefore it is infallibly certain that some men are rejected. This is true as a rule. Choice always takes one and leaves one. Whatever we choose, we reject some other object of the same class. I have been opposed to applying the term election to the spiritual life of God's people, because it would of necessity imply that a portion of that life or spiritual existence was rejected. It seems conclusive that *men* are elected, and *men* are rejected.

8th. Because God's people are an elect people, the term is also applied to our Lord Jesus Christ himself. (Isa. 42:1) "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine *elect* in whom my soul delighteth." The term here means just what it means everywhere else, that is, *my chosen one*. Compared with him, all beauty, all glory, all excellence, fade away. He is the only and well beloved Son, and his people are all chosen in him. They are also redeemed in him, kept in him, and shall be glorified with him. The very hope of the believer is Christ in them. All the blessings of eternal life are treasured up in him. It is he whom God accepts, and we in him, and by him we come to God and find acceptance. Thus he is all and in all to his redeemed ones. Of God he is made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Compared with Jesus, all worlds, all beings, whether heavenly or earthly, fade into darkness, and over them all he has the pre-eminence, and is therefore in the highest and most glorious sense "the elect of God, holy and beloved." "Elect" is one of the precious, excellent names applied to him, to show that beside him all things are passed by, and he only is worthy to be honored and glorified in the highest, forever and forever. God's people are not chosen because they are of themselves lovely or excellent, but are chosen that they may be made lovely and holy; but Jesus is the elect of God because he is worthy to receive all honor and praise and blessing in heaven and in earth.

9th. One of the commonest objections to the doctrine of election is the assertion that it would, if true, ascribe injustice to God in his dealings with men. To this it might be amply sufficient to reply, that all we have to ascertain is, what does God teach us in his word concerning the matter? And Paul, in Romans 9, severely rebukes those who would think of replying against God, by seeking to bring him to account at the bar of their own puny reason. What startling force and withering rebuke are in those words of Paul, "Nay, but, O man, [as if he had said, "O worm"] who art thou [truly but a presumptuous fool] that repliest against God? [To bring God's decrees to the standard of our finite reason, then, is to become a rebel at once.] Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" etc. We are not called upon to apologize for God's decrees. It is only our place to declare his word. He will justify himself. It would better become us to say, in the first place, God's word is true. God is holy and just and good. I may fail to always trace his holiness and justice in what he does, but still I know that he is just. When I read his word, therefore, let my first inquiry be, What has God said? And when I have found out, let me believe it. Now if such an one finds that election is a truth taught in the Bible, he will believe it because God has taught it. And I think it has been shown that it is a Bible truth, and an experimental truth. But while I might leave the matter here, I feel like adding a few thoughts in reply to this objection, which I doubt not keeps many a child of God away from the full enjoyment of this gracious doctrine. There is no injustice in election.

First, because all were lost, and under the curse of the fall, and justly condemned to eternal ruin. God was under no obligation to fallen man to save anybody. All might therefore have been justly left to perish. This, too, is a truth felt in Christian experience. The only man that denies it is he who never felt his just condemnation.

Second. Therefore election is not the cause of ruin to any of the race of men. It adds nothing to the weight of woe hanging over the impenitent. It works no hardship.

And, thirdly, it is the blessed cause of salvation to thousands, who could not otherwise be saved. Why should it be so abused then? Will men arraign God before them, and say that because he sees fit, in infinite mercy, to save some, who are unworthy, therefore it is not infinitely just for him to inflict vengeance upon the rest of the ungodly?

Fourth. Why do not men argue that Deity should also provide salvation for fallen angels, as well as fallen men?

And, fifth, if God is *bound* to provide *one chance* of salvation for all fallen men, why is he not equally bound to provide another chance – a hundred chances?

10th. If election is unjust, then is God unjust in the daily dispensations of his providence. We see his daily providence, and we know he is just and true in all his ways therein; but yet, if we can accuse him of injustice in election, by the same train of reasoning precisely we may conclude he is unjust in his daily administration of the affairs of men. What shall we say when we see one man wise, his brother a fool; one man strong, his brother weak; one child with a drunken, degraded father, another with all that earth can afford; one born rich, the other poor; one born in civilized lands, another in savage countries? Is God unjust here? No, surely not. Then neither can it be shown that injustice attaches to election.

In conclusion, I would say, that with all who accept the plain letter of Bible truth there is enough to settle the doctrine of election in the ninth chapter of Romans. Whether Paul alludes there to Jacob and Esau as individuals, or to their descendants as nations, he in either case is sustaining the doctrine of election beyond all controversy. And whether Paul looked at the men, or the two manner of people who descended from them, he clinches the argument concerning election, so that it can never be assailed.

A brother said once in my hearing, while speaking of this strong foundation truth, “I am sure that if God had not chosen me before the foundation of the world, he never would have chosen me afterward.” As I close this letter, I believe this is my feeling regarding the matter.

As ever, your brother in hope of eternal life.

Elder F. A. Chick
Reistertown, MD
Feb. 4, 1880

Number 3

THE WILL OF MAN:

ITS SUPPOSED FREEDOM IN OBTAINING SALVATION.

Brother Shipman, of Arkansas, has asked me to give my views on the above mentioned theme. In compliance with his request I submit to him and all the readers of the Signs of the Times a brief and hurried discussion of the subject. Volumes have been written upon the nature, tendencies and capacities of the human will by the different schools of philosophy and theology, beginning in the early history of Christianity. That the will is free, and is the decisive power in morality, salvation and damnation, seems to be the favorite system of all nominal christian moralists, philosophers, and all work-mongrel, Arminian, will-worshiping churches. Free-will forms today the chief god of nineteenth century thought and theology, and still sits as of old, in the temple exalted above all that is called God, and showing itself that it is God.

The discussion of the will belongs properly to the domain of psychology, but I shall know nothing in this article but the Bible and christian experience. My motto is that where fact contradicts philosophy, to take fact and let philosophy go. Where Christ contradicts theology, take Christ and let theology go. If the will were such an important factor in man's salvation, Christ certainly would have emphasized that fact, the apostles would have dwelt more pointedly upon it, and the whole volume of inspired truth would have been given upon entirely different principles, for entirely different purposes, and would necessarily be made up of entirely different contents.

The first condition found in the human will that disqualifies it for the important functions claimed for it that I shall notice, is its weakness, its uncertainty, its utter fallibility. The Saviour said there was a man who had two sons; and he said to them, Go work in my vineyard. One said he would go, but did not; the other said he would not to, but afterward repented and went. Why do you suppose this incident is recorded in the scriptures? To fill up space, to finish out a page? It is written for our instruction, and serves not to teach us which of the two boys did the will of the father, but gives us a practical example of the uncertainty of the will. One said he would not, but he did; the other said he would, but did not. How constantly do we find this uncertainty of will exemplified in ourselves and those around us. We say today, I will do a certain thing tomorrow; but when tomorrow comes we are out of the notion entirely, and perhaps doing the very opposite. We say we will not do a thing; but perhaps before an hour has elapsed we are fully in the will to do the very thing which we had but a short time ago averred that we would not do. Is it not true then that the will cannot be depended upon for the most trivial things of everyday life? Then how much less can it be depended upon for the incomparably weightier issues of eternity? The world is full of failures in everyday life, resulting from this feebleness of will. How many men and women fail of success in providing comfortable homes in this world from this uncertainty of the will. Then how infinitely farther short must they fall of laying up treasure in heaven through will power. How unreasonable to suppose that God has left the issues of eternity upon the feeble, fickle, uncertain, incompetent will of man. This uncertainty and incompetency of the will is not only a matter of worldly experience, but it is most constantly, powerfully and painfully present in the everyday life of the saints themselves. Has not Paul recorded concerning himself that the good which he would he did not, and the evil which he would not that he did? Is this the language of a man endowed with free-will, and preaching the doctrine of free-will? This is the common experience of all

saints. If the christian cannot depend upon the strength, certainly and freedom of his will for his daily conduct, is it reasonable that the sinner who is dead, can bring himself from that state into life and light by his will power?

“The carnal mind is enmity against God.” Rom.8:7. The will is an attribute of the mind. They stand in the logical relation to each other of container and thing contained. Then, if the mind is enmity against God, the will is necessarily enmity against God. Is it reasonable to suppose that God has placed himself, his Christ, his grace and salvation, at the disposal of that which is enmity to him? If this were so, would not all they who know the sinfulness of sin and the weakness of the flesh cry out in hopeless despair, Who then can be saved? Christ called attention to the practical working out of this enmity when he said to the Jews, “Ye will not come unto me.” Arminians, in their ignorance of the Scripture and the power of God, frequently quote these very words to prove that coming to Christ is left with the will of the creature, when in fact the words prove the very opposite. It is the will that keeps them away, because it is enmity against him. This enmity shows a practical demonstration of itself in the choice of the people when Pilate offered to release a prisoner, in compliance with Jewish custom at the feast of the Passover. He put before them two celebrated personages, Christ and Barabbas; the one, the meek and lowly Lamb of God, the Saviour of sinners, the other a notorious thief, robber and murderer. When Pilate said, “Which of these men shall I release unto you,” with one accord they chose a thief and a robber, and condemned the holy and just One. They were well acquainted with the character of both these persons as men. They knew the innocence of the one and the guilt of the other; but enmity against God made the choice. Such is always the choice of the carnal mind. It seems to me that this incident, properly presented, would be enough to stop the mouth of any one proclaiming that salvation depends upon the freedom of the will in choosing Christ. Here was a fair test, a demonstrative trial, and a convincing result. When the Arminian’s favorite theory is brought to the test it will invariably result in this way – a thief chosen, Christ rejected.

Again, ignorance of God, and of right and wrong, of good and evil, is most conclusive evidence against the doctrine of free-will and salvation through its choice. A man cannot choose that of which he has no knowledge. Before a man can choose God he must know God; before he can choose Christ he must know him as Christ; because intelligence is essential to the validity of a choice. But men in nature do not know God; they are totally ignorant of Christ. A fundamental principle of Bible doctrine is that the world by wisdom knows not God. Not only is this fact asserted by the Scriptures, but it is strikingly exemplified in the history of our race. Did men know Christ when he was in the world? When he asked his disciples; “Whom do men say that I the Son of Man am, what was the answer? “Some say John the Baptist; some Elias; some Jeremias, or some of the old prophets risen from the dead.” All of them wrong. Their highest conception of him was no more than that of a risen prophet, a man who had come up out of the grave, instead of one who had come down from heaven. Every incident in his life, from the cradle to the skies, is concurring testimony that men did not know him. Even his own disciples, they of his own choice, knew him only as he would reveal himself unto them, both before and after his resurrection. He declared himself that “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; and no man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” God and Christ are known only by and to each other. They dwell mutually in the secrecy of their own glorious, eternal and invisible personality; and no man {there is no exception to this} knows either except through their mutual revelation.

Then it is of the utmost folly to talk of men having power to choose, and their destiny depending upon the exercise of that power. But the boast of this ignorant, idolatrous, blasphemous age is that men are

wiser now than ever before; and although they might have been somewhat ignorant two thousand years ago, that matters are quite different now. The man who would take this subterfuge from plain declarations of Bible truth, and the universal exemplification of the same in the conduct of men, is to be pitied for his ignorance, and his cause is to suffer in the estimation of all sensible men for lack of argument. Did not the Jews have an acknowledged advantage over all other men in respect to these things? To them the law was given, to them were committed the oracles of God, and through them as concerning the flesh Christ came. They searched the Scriptures continually, and studied them most diligently. They received the most rigid and thorough religious instruction and training; and when Christ came they in ignorance rejected, persecuted and killed him. If the Jews, who were his own kindred, and among whom he did his wonderful works, in whose streets he taught, and who had been instructed out of the law and the prophets concerning him, did not know him, how much less shall all other nations be expected to know him. If men knew him not when he was here in the flesh, and all nature witnessing and acknowledging his power, how much less shall they know him now when he has ascended into the heavens. Man's ignorance of God, and his conduct towards the man Christ Jesus, prove that salvation is not through the choice of the human will.

The doctrine of free moral agency, as it is called, is universally based upon the idea of man's knowledge of right and wrong, of his qualification to choose between good and evil. This doctrine necessarily gave origin to the old cunningly devised fable of the line of accountability which is founded in ignorance and superstition, and requires very little investigation of the proper kind to explode it. If our future destiny depends upon the choice of the will, it necessarily depends upon our knowledge of right and wrong; and if our destiny depends upon our knowledge of right and wrong, this knowledge must be so infallible that there can be no possibility of making a mistake. But does man possess this absolute knowledge of good and evil? If it can be shown that he does, then the doctrine of free-will may stand, so far as this argument is concerned; but if it can be shown that he does not, then the doctrine of free-will must fall with it. The first field for investigation in this matter is ourselves. Have we that knowledge? Have you that knowledge? As for myself I must frankly confess that I have never yet arrived at that place where I always know right from wrong. Perhaps in many things, in the traditional sense, I know right from wrong; but where is my absolute knowledge of good from evil? Where is yours? How often do we perplex ourselves every day over matters continually coming before us in which we are at a loss to know the right things to do? Frequently, not being able to decide by our own deliberations, we seek counsel of friends and advisors, and after all find that we have done the wrong thing at last. This is an indisputable fact in the everyday experience of every man. Every christian has found in his own experience that the commandment which he thought was unto life was unto death. Is not the whole religious world, who are engaged in teaching the way to heaven, divided among themselves as to what is the way? Did not the builders in ancient times disallow the stone that became the head of the corner? I will give one example before leaving this part of the discussion. The Apostle Paul, or more properly Saul of Tarsus, who had all possible advantages in ethical culture and religious training, after his call declared that when he was persecuting the saints, compelling them to blaspheme, delivering them to death, wasting the church of God, he went not against his own conscience, and that he truthfully thought that he was doing God's service. Many others have lived and labored and died under the same delusive ignorance. What need we further witness that men in nature do not know good from evil? The saints themselves only knew as led by the Spirit of God. With the false idea of man's knowledge of right and wrong must fall the favorite air-castle of free moral agency.

The whole process of salvation is directly opposed to the doctrine of free-will. The doctrine of election, which lies at the foundation of all salvation, is in direct antagonism to free-will; so much so that in

order to establish the latter the former must be emphatically denied. That the purpose of God according to election might stand, it was said of Jacob and Esau, "The elder shall serve the younger." Is not this opposed to the will of the creature? Would free-will lead the elder to serve the younger? But this is so in order that the purpose of God according to election might stand. Then it is true that free-will and God's purpose according to election cannot stand together. Which must fall? Furthermore, if salvation were through the will of the creature, where is the necessity of the election of grace? All believers in the doctrine of free moral agency are led necessarily into a flat denial of election, and, in fact, every other principle of the doctrine of God our Saviour.

What had the will of man to do in bringing Christ into the world? Did men make a contract with God that if he would send Christ to die they would accept the sacrifice? Did Christ come into the world to do men's wills? But he says that he came not even to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him; "and this is the will of him that sent me," continued Christ, "that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but raise it up again at the last day." Christ himself was not a free moral agent; he did not come upon that principle. He came not to do his own will; he came as one sent of the Father, bound by the everlasting covenant to execute the will of the eternal Jehovah.

The Saviour said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Is there any harmony between this expression and the doctrine of free-will? Does not the one essentially down the other? Does not the fact that this birth is a necessity prove most conclusively that all the powers and capacity of the natural man are wholly inadequate to bring him to God? Does it not absolutely cut off every shadow of possibility of salvation through the combined powers of men, angels and devils? A christian is a child of promise; just as much a child of promise as Isaac was. "We, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." Gal.4:28. A child of promise is a child that was to be; a child especially promised, which could not come into existence upon natural principles. Isaac was by promise. He was not born after the flesh; his birth was absolutely impossible from that source. So then the christian comes by promise, by the promise of the Father, and is born of the Spirit, because the flesh cannot produce him. If a man should preach that Isaac was born after his own will, or even through the procreative powers of his parents, men would at once reject it as false. A man would be at once apprehended as insane if he were to preach that any man is born after his own will. It is just as unreasonable to preach that men are born again after their own will, or even through means of any kind. That man who has not been born again has no more existence as a christian than the generations who are yet unborn have as citizens of this world. It is just as impossible and unreasonable for a man to come into the kingdom of God through the power of his own will, as for a man who shall be born a hundred or a thousand years hence to determine where, when and under what circumstances he will be born, or whether he will be born at all or not.

The doctrine of free-will is contradicted by every principle of salvation as taught in the Bible and exemplified in the experience of them that are saved. It is contradicted by many direct quotations of Scripture. "It is not of him that willeth." Rom. 9:16. "Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man." John 1:15. Salvation is always ascribed to the will of God. There is a willingness that accompanies the experience of the saints, but it is given them of God, the fruit of his Spirit, God himself working in them both to will and to do his own good pleasure.

Elder H. M. Curry.

Number 4

REPENTANCE

My Dear Brother Beebe: – I some time ago received a letter from my esteemed friend and brother, John Mesamore, of Fayette County, Ohio, in which he says:

“As this is a day of cavil and differences, no marvel if there should be a slight difference among the children of God, and that on every important subject, too. We, as a church, at Waterloo, have been favored in regard to differences as much as any church in Ohio. Brother N. Loofbourrow has come to the conclusion that he would make a judge of brother Johnson, if he would be so good as to give his views through the “Signs of the Times.” The difference is in respect to the command set forth by Paul to the Athenians, Acts 17:30, latter clause: ‘But now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.’ We wish you to be particular on the ‘all men everywhere to repent.’”

I hope my brethren will excuse me for respectfully declining to be a judge in the case. I am willing, however, to do the best I can with my limited capacity in aiding them to recognize the conclusion arrived at in relation to this and all other subjects by the King who reigns in righteousness and the princes who rule in judgment, those who were seated upon twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel; “For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our King,” etc. It may not be amiss to observe:

First, that the apostle was addressing the “too superstitious” Athenians, exhibiting to them the unknown god (whom they ignorantly worshiped) as the God of *providence*, not of salvation by grace, knowing that it was Him only that could “give grace and glory,” and that grace and salvation were never designed to be *taught by man to men* who were not “born of the Spirit,” as grace and all things that pertain to salvation are spiritual gifts, which natural men receive not, and can not know. He presented God, therefore, to them as the Creator and Preserver of all things, the providential Benefactor of all men; and that he is not worshiped with men’s hands, as though he needed anything, as he gives to all life and breath and all things; that he has made of one blood all the nations, and appointed their times and the bounds of their habitation. “That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.” There is a marked difference in this language of the apostle to those who “ignorantly worship,” and that used to those who “worship in spirit and in truth;” but here it is, “If *haply* they might,” etc. This word *haply* signified, “by chance, perhaps it may be.” Paul could not say as it is said to Christ’s disciples, Seek, and ye shall find, nor yet as work-mongers do, that all may or can find the Lord by seeking after him, for he knew that none by seeking could find him out; but he uses the word *haply* because it was not known to him whether they were to find him or not. And then this other expression, “feel after him,” seems to represent to me something like one groping or feeling in the dark, or without light. He then informs them that he is not far from every one of us; for in him we live and move and have our being, as certain of their own poets had said, For we are all his offspring. And as that fact had been admitted by them, they ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man’s device. “And the times of this ignorance God winked at.” While he had not made any special revelation of himself as the God of providence to any nation save the Jews, he winked at their ignorance and superstition, as though he did not see it, (for to wink is “to close the eyes, to seem not to see;”) or in other words, he withheld his judgments, and did not punish the heathen for their sacrilege, as he did the Jews for theirs, to whom he had by so many outward demonstrations made known himself as their divine Superintendent, and upon

whom he so frequently sent his judgments and just retribution for their idolatry. But as he had now made so many visible displays of his eternal power and Godhead to all nations by numerous miracles, signs and mighty wonders, by relieving the demoniac, healing the sick, raising the dead, magnifying or multiplying a few loaves and fishes to feed thousands, calming the raging tempest, allaying the high rolling billows, with many other open and outward manifestations of his Deity, he “*now commands all men everywhere to repent,*” turn away, or cease from serving those dumb idols. Now, as before intimated, I do not understand the apostle here to be treating upon or undertaking to teach those idolaters the way of life and salvation, of presenting the Lord to them in the relation of a Savior of sinners, nor of speaking of that repentance is a *command*, that is always spoken of in the scripture as a *gift*. Hence we read in Acts 5:31, “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance unto life.” Thus the scriptures clearly distinguish between the repentance that is a command and that which is a gift. Idolatry is a most fruitful source of evil, and the Lord in this particular case, as well as in many others, commanded the nations, or all men everywhere, to repent, turn away from or cease from their sacrilegious services. He has certainly the undisputed right to command his rational creatures to cease from their outward acts of rebellion against him – he has in many instances forbidden such rebellion, and often have the nations writhed under his sore chastisements, by disregarding his authority and bowing down to idols. How often did he command the Jews, *as a nation*, (not as Christians, nor to make them such) to abstain from their idolatry, and how often did he visit them with righteous retribution for their disobedience! And now that he has so conspicuously portrayed his divine power as the wise and provident God of the universe, showing that he gives to all life and breath and all things, no nations need expect to escape his rod when they look to idols, and worship them instead of him. It matters not whether they are made of gold, silver, wood or stone, or whether those set up in the imaginations of men. If we pay adoration to a god that cannot save without men as means or instruments, or one that is desiring very much to save everybody, but cannot, because they will not repent, believe, etc., or one that cannot reach the case of the heathen without Missionary Boards, men and money, or in short, one who does not work all things after the counsel of his own will, cause his counsel to stand, and do all his pleasure, we are, to all intents and purposes, worshiping an idol, and ought, as rational beings, to repent of our wickedness, and turn away from it. When such commands are given, and we obey them to the letter, we reap the fruits of our obedience amply in this world, but that has nothing to do with preparing us for another. Let us not forget, then, that a command to repent, and a gift of repentance, are very different. A command is not a gift, neither is a gift a command; and these two are diverse in their nature, operation, tendencies and effects. When a crime has been committed, a command from an authoritative source, given to repent, and that command obeyed strictly, it does not place the individual or nation in any better condition than he or it occupied before the commission of the crime, or repentance occurred. When the Lord had placed the children of Israel in the land of Canaan, blessed them with the plenitude of its fruits, and the high privileges they enjoyed, when they went after idols, and he commanded them to repent, and they disobeyed, he punished them rigorously for their sacrilege. If they did repent, he simply restored them to their former prosperity and privileges. They were not enhanced thereby, but set back rather to their previous condition. Not so, however, with that repentance which is a gift. It manifests an outward and upward tendency. The possessor is developing a more exalted position than was occupied before the gift was bestowed, and, therefore, it is said to be “repentance unto life,” and “not to be repented of.” There is nothing more loquacious than the argument that arminians attempt to sustain by this text, that the Lord is commanding all graceless men to repent and turn to God, that they may be saved. “Salvation is of the Lord,” etc., and all that pertains to that eternal life to which his people are saved is

from the same source, as Peter has declared, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.”

But my brother wishes me to be particular in noticing the “*All men everywhere to repent.*” I have no objection to giving this command its widest possible latitude, and admitting it to be obligatory in its true and legitimate sense upon every man that ever did or ever will hear it. But it is evident from the connection with which this text stands, that the apostle was addressing the Athenians in a national and not in an individual capacity. After being encountered by the Epicureans and Stoics, he was taken and brought to Areopagus or Mars’ Hill, which was the highest court in Athens, and there publicly addressed them in their national character; and upon the subject of God’s creating all nations, sustaining and providing for them, and, therefore, his right to command and require their obedience. How perfectly absurd then is the notion of conditionalists who contend that this is repentance unto life, and that all individuals are thus commanded to repent as a condition of salvation! How many myriads of men have lived and died since the utterance of this mandate, who never heard of this command! Men who thus argue seem to have no general idea of the scriptures, but must particularize every general expression, and confine each to local or individual cases. Thus, in Luke 2:10, it is said, “Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.” Was it and has it been *good tidings and great joy* to every individual person? What great joy was it to Herod and all Jerusalem with him when they heard the news? (See Matthew 2:3) The truth of the case is, that the Lord was about to transcend the narrow limits of Judea and Palestine with the revelation of himself, and the people of all nations, Gentiles as well as Jews, were to be glad and rejoice in the name of the Savior. Again, in Acts 2:12, it is said, “And they were all amazed and in doubt, saying one to another, what meaneth this?” In the fifth verse of this same chapter it is said, “There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven,” who said, “We do hear in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” Are we to conclude because the word all is used here, that each individual of that immense concourse heard in their own tongues the wonderful works of God, and were amazed and in doubt? If so, why is it said in the very next verse, “Others mocking, said, These men are full of new wine?” The truth is, that the *all* who heard it and were amazed and in doubt, were those *devout* characters, and the *all people* in the former text are simply to be understood as referring to people of different nations, and neither can reasonably be understood to have reference to all Individual persons. The fact is, as before observed, that Paul was addressing the people in their *national*, not their individual relations, proclaiming God as the sole *Ruler* and wise disposer of men and things. Those were the subjects of his discourse, and not that of the salvation of sinners. And when he refers to Christ, it is not in the relation of a Savior or Mediator, but that of a judge. He, therefore, bases the command to repent upon the consideration that God will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. This widespread development of the Deity in which the Lord has so extensively made himself known to the different nations, or all men everywhere, leaves them in a condition different from the one in which they stood in the former times of their entire ignorance of him, and in which their superstition is not to be “*winked at,*” as previously, and, therefore, he *commands all men everywhere to repent.* But, we should remember that the mere repenting in the sense of this text, and abstaining from the worship of idols, beneficial as it may be to nations or individuals here in this world, has nothing to do in preparing them for another, or for the spiritual service of God, for the preparation of the heart for that service is from the Lord. (See Prov. 16:1) It has nothing to do with saving sinners from their sins, for Christ has done that once, effectually and forever; it has nothing to do with giving them eternal life, for that is the Lord’s work exclusively.

That repentance that God gives to his people, is different, widely different. They are not driven to the exercise of it by a command, but led by the goodness of him. (Rom. 2:4) They are not satisfied merely to cease from sacrilege, but they pant for God as the hunted hart pants for the cooling water brooks; not content with merely forsaking their sins, but they hunger and thirst after righteousness. Not set back to a former state of uprightness, but moving onward and upward in a higher, holier, happier sphere, and finally will be “Raised to a paradise of bliss, where God triumphant reigns.” Wide indeed is the contrast between the repentance which is a command, and that which is a gift. But that gift is beyond the extent of mortal arms! beyond the scan of mortal wisdom! and beyond the control of mortal powers to reach, see, or exercise, until God is pleased graciously to bestow it!

I have now tried to comply with the request of my brethren, as well as I can. If what I have written is in accordance with the scriptures, I hope they will be satisfied, notwithstanding its homeliness; if not, I trust that some friend will correct the error.

I freely submit this, brother Beebe, to your disposal, and still continue to be, as I trust, the friend and brother to you, and all the household of faith.

Elder J. F. Johnson
Georgetown, KY
April 25, 1862

Number 5

BAPTISM.

Elder Beebe: – Is it according to the order of the gospel for an Old Baptist Church to receive as members those who have been baptized by any other denomination of religionists, not recognized by them as the church of Christ, without baptizing them in the fellowship of the Old Order of Baptists?

Your views on the above will oblige
An Inquirer After Truth.

Reply: – To the law, and to the testimony. Whatever is not authorized by the laws of Christ, in relation to the faith or practice of a gospel church, is forbidden. Those who dispute this proposition cannot regard the New Testament as a perfect and complete rule for the government of the kingdom of Christ. If we accept the New Testament as our rule, as the Old Order of Baptists have always professed to do, we must decide this and all other questions as that rule directs. If then a person offers to become a member with us, on condition that we accept as valid baptism administered by denominations not recognized as the church of Christ, such application must be declined, unless we can find authority for it in the New Testament; otherwise we reject that Testament as a complete and infallible rule. We have carefully examined the Scriptures on this subject, and have failed to find either precept or example for any baptism that has not been administered by a gospel administrator, to a gospel subject, in fellowship, at the time of administering, with a gospel church.

By a gospel administrator we mean a member of the church of Christ, fully recognized by the church at the time of administering, as one who is called to the work by the Holy Ghost, and duly set apart to the work of the ministry by solemn ordination to preach the gospel, administer baptism, and break bread to the church or churches of the saints. If the Scriptures authorize any others to baptize, it also authorizes them to preach and to break bread to the churches; and we cannot consistently recognize them as competent to baptize without also allowing them to preach for and break bread to the same. If there be any such rule given to the church, we have failed to find it, either expressed or implied in the precepts or examples of the apostles and usage of the primitive church.

In the Jewish ritual under the ceremonial law, the carnal Israelites had among their ordinances “*divers washings*,” some of which probably required immersion in water; and the pagans also probably performed similar washings; they were religious denominations. These religious denominations stood in the same relative position to the primitive church as those of modern times do to the church of Christ. Is it supposable that the primitive church would have recognized any of those Jewish or heathen ablutions as Christian baptism?

To admit to our communion any upon what other denominations call baptism is to remove one of the discriminating institutions of the church and inaugurate what is called “Open Communion.” Almost all the different denominations now practice (occasionally at least) immersion; even the Mormons; and if any one denomination of them may immerse for us, then so may all. If the precise order of the gospel, and the fellowship of the gospel church may be dispensed with in one thing, why not in all things? And if so, what use shall we have for our Bibles?

By a gospel candidate we mean one who has been born of the Spirit, and is a believer, with all his or her heart in the Lord Jesus Christ, desiring to honor and obey Christ, and to take his yoke, and follow him through evil as well as through good report. Such an one, on profession of his or her faith, and in obedience to the command of Christ, should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by one who, like the apostles, is commanded by the Lord Jesus to baptize.

A person professing to be converted, reformed, or desirous to make a public profession of religion, but satisfied to receive what is called baptism by one who is not duly authorized to administer for the gospel church, we cannot recognize as a gospel subject. It is sometimes urged that such an one has been baptized *in good faith*. But how can that be *good faith* which has misled him and wedded him to any branch of anti-christ? Again, the candidate, it is said, was sincere: let this be admitted, and are not others sincere who are sprinkled, or poured, or who regard the ordinance as unimportant? If sincere when doing wrong, after being convinced of the error, should they not be sincere in abandoning the error, and in doing what Christ has commanded them? Saul of Tarsus was probably as sincere when persecuting the church as when feeding the flock of God. Sincerity cannot supply the place of righteousness.

By a gospel church we mean a regularly organized company of regularly baptized believers, walking in the faith and order of the gospel as laid down in the New Testament; standing apart and altogether separate from all other professed religionists on earth, supporting by their fellowship the regular ministers of Christ, as a candlestick supports and holds up a lighted candle, that it may give light to all who are in the house.

It is a fearful thing to tamper with the laws of Christ; who, in the last chapter of the New Testament, says, "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches." "For I testify unto every one that heareth the words of the prophesy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, Come, Lord Jesus."

If any are satisfied that in having been baptized into any body or organization of anti-christ, they have done right, why do they not remain where they are? Why attempt to defile the temple of God by exacting an endorsement of their errors?

It may be argued that some have stood in the fellowship of the church as competent administrators, and have administered while so standing, but afterwards have proved to be hypocrites; and that our position if admitted, would invalidate the baptism administered by them when in good standing. This conclusion is wrong. We are to carefully avoid, so far as in us lies, receiving into the ministry unworthy characters, and to withdraw our support and fellowship from all such, as soon as they develop their true character; but we are not required, nor endued with wisdom to search the hearts, or try the reins of men. Had Judas Iscariot baptized any while he was an apostle, it would have been apostolic baptism; but when he apostatized from that standing he was no longer qualified for the work.

Now if there be any who feel disposed to dispute our position, let such ask themselves which of what we hold to be indispensable requisites for gospel baptism may be omitted, and the baptism be according to the laws of Christ and order of the gospel?

If the baptism administered by a minister of a denomination which is not in fellowship with us is valid gospel baptism, then we may with propriety call on a Mormon, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, or a New School Baptist minister to baptize for us, when candidates apply to us for baptism and membership. Is it not equally as valid when the candidate applies to our church for baptism, if we call on a minister of Satan to administer the ordinance, as when the candidate receives the ordinance at their hands, in the fellowship of some branch of anti-christ? If such a course can be regarded as gospel order, then our churches may at any time call on ministers of the various unscriptural denominations to preach, baptize and break bread; and it would be schismatic for us to organize a Baptist church in any place where there already exists a denomination of a different order, who are willing to preach, baptize and break bread for us. But if this is not the order of the gospel, and sustained by the Scriptures, it should not be allowed.

What we have written on this subject we respectfully submit, not only to the consideration of an Inquirer after Truth, but also to all who belong to the household of faith.

Gilbert Beebe
Middletown, N.Y.
September 15, 1868.

Number 6

THE GOSPEL

To Whom Is The Gospel Preached?

Many who are evidently children of God believe that the gospel is preached to those dead in sin for the purpose of quickening them; that the Lord uses the ministry of the word as the ordinary means of bringing his people from death to life. I believe this to be an error, and like all error it tends to the discomfort of those among the living amity of God who embrace it.

Throughout the scriptures living souls are designated as the subjects of gospel address. “He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.” Luke 4:18) “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” (Matt. 11:5) “Children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you feareth the Lord, unto you is the word of this salvation sent.” (Acts 13:26) “Ho, every one that thirsteth.” (Isaiah 55:1) “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. “ (Rom. 1:16) All these, the poor, those who fear God, the thirsty and the believer, are living characters. But when it is said that to such only is the gospel sent, then some will assume that we believe that the minister must be careful to select those whom he knows to be the elect and speak only to them. The apostles whom the Saviour sent “unto all the world,” that is, among Gentile nations as well as to the Jews, could not know the elect until they were manifest by believing the gospel which they preached. They proclaimed the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation, wherever a door was opened in providence to all that came within the sound of their voice; and so do all of the ministers of Jesus Christ. But none hear it spiritually but those who have spiritual ears; none believe it but those who have faith to believe. Some say it is to be preached to those without faith. In a literal sense this is true, but not in order to produce faith in them, but to separate from among them those who have faith. Paul tells of some unto whom the gospel was preached who were not profited by it because they had no faith. (Heb. 4:2)

If one should be sent with a message from a king to all his subjects in a certain distant land, he would not have to inquire out those subjects before delivering it; for the message itself, proclaimed openly among all the people, would find out those in whose native language it was delivered, and thus distinguish them from among all the multitudes as the ones unto whom it was sent. So the gospel is a message of glad tidings sent in the language of Canaan, and though proclaimed among all people, none hear and understand but those who have been born of God. Unto these he “has turned a pure language,” and by hearing and believing that sweet message they are manifest as those unto whom it was sent by the Great King. These are new creatures in Christ, unto all of whom the gospel is preached.

The Saviour said to his apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” The expression “every creature” is acknowledged by all to have a limited meaning. Unlimited, it would embrace the animal creation. But all must acknowledge that it is still further limited, for it could not include infants and those not literally capable of hearing and understanding (This shows that the preaching of the gospel is not necessary to eternal salvation, as some ignorantly imagine, for infants of days, removed from this world, sing the glory through Jesus Christ our Saviour.) But of those who are capable of hearing and understanding naturally, how very few have ever heard the literal sound of the gospel. If, then, we understand the Saviour’s command to the apostle to be that they should preach the

gospel to every one of the race of Adam who was capable of hearing and understanding the words, we must conclude that his command has not been obeyed, and that the will of God has not been done. But this cannot be, for many scriptures declare that all of his will is done in heaven and on earth; that “whatsoever his soul desireth even that he doeth.” Also, he declared that “The poor have the gospel preached to them.” And an inspired apostle has said that this gospel of the kingdom was preached to every creature which is under heaven. (Col. 1:23) It has been asserted that the expression, “every creature,” as used by the apostle does not mean the same as when used by the Saviour. But to prove this assertion the very point in controversy is assumed. It is said that the apostle could not have meant that the Saviour’s command was fulfilled, because the gospel had not then been preached very far from the Mediterranean Sea. But the apostle is authority for believing the gospel was preached to every creature which is under heaven in that age, and has been ever since, in full obedience to the Saviour’s command, which embraced every creature only in a spiritual sense, every one who is created in Christ Jesus. These only have ears to hear, and the Saviour said, “Let them hear.” These only hunger and thirst after righteousness, and the Saviour said, “They shall be filled.” These only are poor in spirit, and the Saviour said, “Unto the poor the gospel is preached.”

How often it is said that the preaching of the gospel is the means of quickening dead sinners. But it is not so said in the Bible. Our Saviour said, “As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whomsoever he will.” And again, “It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing” And again, “The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.” “Yes,” it is replied, “this is true, but the spirit sends that life or quickening power through the preaching of the word; the dead hear the voice of the Son of God in the gospel, believe and live.” A little more thoughtful attention would cause them to reverse the order of those words, remembering that life must precede both hearing and believing And in considering all the scriptures which are presented to sustain the idea that the preaching is instrumental in bringing the dead to life, such as the command to teach all nations, and the apostles’ obedience to that command, and the declaration that many hearing the preaching believed, we must bear in mind that none but the living can be taught, or can believe.

There are no instances recorded where eternal life is said to have been communicated through the preaching of the gospel. But there are instances where it is known to have been possessed by those who had not heard the preaching by human lips, as the eunuch, the jailer, Saul of Tarsus and Cornelius with all his house; and in the case of Lydia the power of God is expressly declared as preparing her to attend the things spoken, while Paul was preaching. In my mind this is expressly to teach that the preaching, and the preparation to hear and receive the preaching, are to be considered as distinct from each other. It was not said that the Lord opened Lydia’s heart through Paul’s preaching I must therefore believe that not only in some, but in all cases, spiritual life is communicated before there is power to hear and believe, instead of being given through and by the hearing The life must precede the hearing, though it be but for an instant.

It is very often the case that condemnation on account of sin is first felt when not under the sound of preaching, and often by those that never heard the truth preached. Also deliverance from that condemnation is experienced most generally, perhaps, when the poor soul is in secret trying to cry and beg for mercy. Now the preaching of the gospel can be heard and understood by that one. If he has sat under the sound of it before, it now has a new sound. It tells what he has felt. He believes because he has the witness in his own heart to prove the truth of what the preacher says. It is to him the power of God unto salvation, because that power has been experienced within him. “This gospel of the

kingdom,” the Saviour said, “must be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.” (Matt. 24:14) This was done before the apostles had fully finished their work in declaring the end of that dispensation, and establishing the gospel church in all its order in obedience to the command of Christ. It must be preached, not to quicken dead sinners, but for a witness, manifesting those unto whom the dear Saviour has communicated eternal life and the glad tidings of salvation. The preacher can tell no one anything which has not already been taught him by that anointing which he has received of Jesus, and which teaches of all things. (I John 2:27) And it is only concerning the work of God’s grace and his power unto salvation experienced in the heart that any one is fed with knowledge and understanding by the pastors after God’s own heart whom he sends unto them. It is supposed by some that “Feed my sheep,” is not the limit of the Saviour’s command to the apostles, and of the apostle’s directions to ministers; that when Paul said to Timothy, “Preach the word,” he opened up a larger field of labor than when he said to the Elders of Ephesus, “Feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. “ But did the apostles or ministers ever preach anything in obedience to his command but the truth as it is in Jesus? And is not every part of that truth always the food which is to be ministered to the sheep and lambs, to the church of God? Did any one ever profit by the preaching of the gospel but the sheep? Then it must be acknowledged that neither apostle or prophet can go beyond the command given to Peter, “Feed my lambs.”

To speak of the Lord using means and instrumentalities to bring his people from death to life appears to me derogatory to his majesty and power. It seems like limiting the Holy One of Israel. Although many who believe this would not limit him, but wish to honor his name. If such a thing were expressly declared in the scriptures that would settle it as the truth, but since it is not, it is always an inference. In defending the doctrine of means, one says, “The tool of the mechanic will of itself never accomplish anything, yet in all the mechanic’s purposes the tool and its uses are included.” And with this he illustrates how he supposes the gospel ministry has been appointed by God as instruments to be used in severing the stones from the rocks, and in building up the church. But the mechanic is dependent upon the tool. Is the Lord dependent upon the ministry to do that work? The very thought is limiting him. I know it is said that he has ordained the means with the end. But when the Bible talks that way, I will receive it. He has ordained everything, in a certain absolute sense. Nothing transpires but is in accordance with his eternal purpose. He has chosen to feed his people by the hand of poor sinners saved by grace, but he does not speak of them as means and instrumentalities. This is the inference of men, and is calculated to make them appear of some importance. And generally the means are said to be in men’s hands, as though the Lord worked by means but men used the means. He works in and through them by his controlling and directing spirit, causing them to preach in such a way that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of man. But not to give life through them or through their preaching

The same author just alluded to speaks of the ram’s horns as the means by which the walls of Jericho fell down, and implies that the preaching of the gospel is thus represented as the means of quickening dead sinners. But Paul, in presenting the truth concerning this subject, does not even allude to the blowing of the ram’s horns, but says, “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were compassed about seven days.” One might reply that faith enabled them to use the means. Then we must refer to some of the other examples which the apostle gives in the same connection of the character and power of faith to see if this is to be so understood. “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death.” “By faith women received their dead raised to life.” Were any means used here? Were the empty pitchers and lamps and trumpets in the hands of Gideon’s little army means by which the Midianites were overthrown, or were they dispersed by the sword of the Lord and of Gideon? the word

of God, which by faith the little company believed. In all these instances the apostle is showing examples of faith as the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen. Faith is the knowledge of God's will and purpose which he gives to his people according to his own pleasure, causing them to desire and pray for the very things he has foreordained for them, and to be absolutely assured of them, so that they will move on in obedience to his commands against impassible barriers, against all the dictates of worldly wisdom, not to effect the fulfillment of his purposes, but to display the power of that faith of which he is the author and finisher, by holding the pitchers and lamps, compassing the walls, blowing the ram's horns, and even sounding the trumpet of victory before the enemy knows of defeat. Joshua did not say, Shout, that the Lord may give you the city; but, "Shout, for the Lord hath given you the city;" and after that the walls fell down. The Lord threw them down without the aid of the ram's horns. He overthrew the armies of the aliens. He raised the dead to life, and translated Enoch that he should not see death. And he gave his people faith as the substance and evidence of these things before they were seen, and by that faith made them overcome the world. They were witnesses of his work. And so are all the Lord's servants witnesses of his work. He sent Paul as a witness both of the things he had seen, and of those things in which he would appear unto him. (Acts 26:16) If any insist that the Lord Jesus opened the eyes of the heathen and turned them from darkness to light through the preaching of Paul, they must still remember that only the living are blind. That the Pharisees, our Saviour said, were not blind in the sense that those were whose eyes he came to open. Those who experience a hope are often left long in the bondage of error and delusion, before the Lord sends the truth home to them, opening their eyes to see it as in accordance with what they have experienced. So when they hear the truth preached and the Lord attends it with power to them as living souls, their eyes are opened to see it, they believe it, they are turned from the darkness of error to the light of it, and as sheep they feed upon it.

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." (James 1:18) This is regarded by some as a declaration that the preaching of the word quickened those alluded to. But the apostle James includes himself with those of whom he speaks. What he says of them was true in his case. But we know he was not made alive by means of preaching, for the Saviour called him by his own voice, saying, Follow me. That same voice is heard by all his sheep. By him as the word they are begotten and born; for Peter says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. " He does not say they are born again by the preaching of the gospel, but he says that this word of God by which they are born again, and which endures forever, is the word which by the gospel is preached unto them. (I Peter 1:23-25) That word is Jesus, whose name in salvation is called the Word of God. (Rev.19:13) This is the word which was in the beginning with God, and which was God, and which was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (See John 1:1,14) The gospel is not this word, but is glad tidings of it. This word by the gospel is preached unto the saints who have felt the glorious power thereof, as the apostle John says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that your fellowship may be with us." (I John 1:13) Here is the word of truth, the word of life, the word of God, the eternal life, by which the saints are all begotten and born again. This is the word of God by which hearing and faith come. If that word of God be not in the heart, there can be no power to hear, nor can the faith or truth of the gospel be received. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who hath believed our report?" They all heard

literally, for “their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” But only those who had been begotten by the word of truth could hear and understand. (Rom. 10:15-20)

The gospel stands contrasted with the law. A little consideration of this point will show that the gospel cannot be to the dead, but to the living. The Lord’s people must first know the law in its condemning power before they can receive the gospel, the glad tidings of salvation. But none can know himself to be a lost sinner, justly condemned by the holy law of God, until he has been made alive by the quickening spirit of God. Only by the light of divine life can one see himself dead in trespasses and sin. Paul was alive spiritually or the coming of the commandment would not have caused sin to revive and him to die. It is only to the living soul that the law is felt to be a ministration of condemnation and death. On the day of Pentecost there were many living souls, who up to that time had been working under the law. When Peter was inspired by the Holy Ghost to proclaim the end of that dispensation, and the abrogation of all its ritual service by the death of Christ whom they had crucified, and to proclaim him as having been made both Lord and Christ, this word that he preached pricked them in the heart, inflicting a death wound, killing them to all hope of ever again approaching a holy God by the works of the law. Only those who had spiritual life, and were by that enabled to see the just demands of the law, making its service a heavy yoke to them, and yet knowing no other way of pleasing God but by striving to keep it, only those could be pricked in the heart. No natural man was thus made to feel the sword of the spirit which is the word of God. But those who had seen a necessity for a sacrifice for sin, as Abel did, and who had heretofore known no other than that which pertained to the worldly sanctuary and Levitical priesthood, were made to feel the hopelessness of their case when the end of that dispensation of legal sacrifices was announced, and they were assured that God would never accept them again. Then was fulfilled in their experience the words of Joel, the prophet. The sun, representing all natural wisdom and knowledge, was turned into darkness, the moon, representing the law, was turned into blood, demanding the death of the sinner, and they saw signs of death, destruction and desolation in those legal heavens and in that legal earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke, and cried out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Then Peter proclaimed to them the gospel and its blessings and privileges, and they gladly received his word.

This was apostolic work. Since the last word by the apostles was spoken and written none can ever do apostolic work again. They are still on the twelve thrones, but it is by the words left on record that they judge the church of God.

But in the experience of the saints the same order still prevails. First a knowledge of the law by the light of divine life, then a knowledge of the death it demands, then an experience of salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. In this experience the preacher can render no help. But his preaching follows on in the path the Saviour leads. He tells the story to the hearer no faster than it is told in his soul by the Saviour. His preaching of the truth is sweet, for its sweetness has been felt within. Many have passed through all the order of experience, from the first knowledge of the law’s demands to a full deliverance, before they have ever heard the gospel preached by man. Then from that time it is a savor of life unto life to them. They are fish that are caught by it. They are sheep and lambs to be fed by it. Wherever they are, among false professors, or in the world of the unbelievers, they can never listen to it with indifference, but it will have a drawing power upon their souls. By it they are ministered to, edified, perfected in the knowledge of the truth whose power is in the heart, sustained under heavy trials, comforted in affliction, encouraged in darkness, until they have finished their course as witnesses in this world of sin and sorrow. Then tongues will cease, prophecies will fail. Knowledge will vanish away, faith will be lost in sight. And love, sweet, holy love, which has been the one never failing light

and comfort and guide of our souls while here, will open to us the gates of eternal day, and usher us into that world where all is love.

Elder Silas H. Durand

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THE NEW BIRTH.

When Jesus said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," He gave a name to a hitherto nameless fact. The doctrine of the new birth, as announced by Christ and developed in the New Testament Scriptures, was a novel doctrine at that age of the world, and remains a novelty yet. The fact of the new birth, as exemplified in the experience of God's people, is as old and as universal as man himself; but the doctrine had never been named before. The new birth is not stated in the Old Testament, although the effects of it are clearly manifest in the experience of patriarchs, prophets, priests and kings, and many in the humbler walks of life, among both Jews and Gentiles. It is not mentioned in any religious writings, either Jewish or Pagan, before the New Testament. The ancient epics of India, the ethical codes of China, the complicated systems of Egypt, the fanciful philosophy and poetry of Greece, the gorgeous ceremonials and mystic rituals of ancient Mexico and Peru, are all silent upon this doctrine. It came from the lips of Jesus, a novelty, an original doctrine, a new name for a hitherto nameless truth, a golden key to unlock the rich mines of Christian experience so long closed by human ignorance, so completely covered by ceremonials, and so deeply buried in tradition, a lamp by which the wonderful works of God in the children of men was to be more clearly understood, the exceeding greatness of His power to usward more fully known, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints more fully beheld.

The novelty of the doctrine is one of the clearest proofs of the divinity of the great Teacher who was the first to announce it. The most gifted prophet, the most highly favored priest, the great law-giver, Moses, nor even the favorite Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, had never been blessed to discover this truth or honored with the commission to announce it to men. Thus the novelty of the doctrine gives weight and prominence to its import.

"Ye must be born again" is the initial statement of the doctrine of Christ, and constitutes the fundamental difference between Christianity and all religions. Take away the necessity of the new birth and Christianity will take its place on the common plane of all other religions, and will be robbed of that which alone entitles it to the distinction of divinity, and will be degraded to a mere system of ethics, a naked code of morals, or to empty, meaningless and vain ceremonials. The fundamental idea in all other religions is man's ability to reform himself into newness of life, based upon the alike false idea of the universal fatherhood of God. The last of these, the universal fatherhood of God, gave birth to the World's Congress of Religions in Chicago; and the first, man's ability to save himself, formed the basis of every system presented, whether by Buddhist, or Brahmin, Mohammedan or Mormon, Catholic or Protestant. Hence all of them are loud in their cry for reformation; and the only difference to be found among them is the name and manner in which the end is to be reached.

The superficial notion of religion is deeply fastened upon all men; but it seems that modern Protestantism has a double portion of it. The Jews, in the time of Christ, were extremely zealous for vain traditions, empty formality and hypocritical appearance. They thought that making wine and eating with unwashed hands polluted and defiled a man. But the Saviour condemned their foolish tradition by the simple axiom, "It is not that which goeth into a man that defileth him, but that which cometh out." Matt. 15:11. It is from the heart that evil thoughts, thefts, murders, and all other wickedness, proceed. Evil thoughts are not in the wine a man drinks. Bad conduct does not come from

the food taken with unwashed hands. A man steals because he is a thief; a man kills because he is a murderer, or lies because he is a liar. The theft is in the heart before the hand is put forth to steal; the murder is in the heart before the hand is stained with blood; the lie is in the heart before it rises to the tongue or is coined by the lips. The tree bears fruit after its kind. Cultivating the tree can never change the kind of fruit; the only effect of cultivation are seen in the quality and quantity of the fruit. Can a thorn tree ever be made to produce grapes, or a thistle to bring forth figs?

Men are carried away with the notion that through religious instruction, training and favorable opportunities, children or men are made Christians; that men enter the kingdom of God through teaching and moral suasion. Agrippa had this idea when he said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian," and Nicodemus betrayed the same weakness when he said to Christ, "We know that thou art a man sent from God." But the answer of Jesus covered the whole ground when He said, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." This is as much as to say, "Why, Nicodemus, this is not a mere matter of teaching; there is something vastly deeper; a man must be born again." A man does not have to be born again in order to be religious; he may be infatuated with religion, and be a zealous devotee to creed and ritual; he may be taught to observe most rigidly forms and ceremonies, and to subject himself to the strictest discipline; to mutilate his body and deprive himself of all earthly comforts; to yield perpetual obedience to priestcraft; to pray three times a day and give tithes of all he possesses; take up the sword in defense of his religion, or lay down his life in testimony of his zeal; but except he be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. A man must be born again in order to receive Christ, or embrace His doctrine in truth and reality. The import of the doctrine leads us to consider its necessity.

"Ye must be born again" is not a mere dogma of theology, but a necessity, arising from deep fundamental, basic principles of biology; hence we shall first consider the biological necessity. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." John 3:6. The term flesh here is generic, and is used in the Scriptures to designate man as a whole, and comprehends him with all his attributes, all his powers, parts and capacities, including body, soul, and spirit in their mysterious combination in constituting human personality. It is equivalent to saying, "That which is born of man is man." Men by nature are dead in trespasses and sins. Eph. 2:1. This death is not merely a moral or ethical condition, but a condition extending far beyond the moral or ethical sphere. It is a biological condition. Take this illustration: Science divides this world into two great kingdoms, the organic and inorganic, or in equivalent terms, the dead and the living. The stone belongs to the inorganic or dead kingdom, the plant to the organic or living kingdom. The difference between the stone and the plant is a biological difference. Again, the organic kingdom manifests different orders of life; animal and vegetable life.

The difference between the animal and the tree is a biological difference. They belong to different orders of life. Now, just as the animal life is of a higher order than vegetable life, so Christ's life is of a higher order than Adamic or natural life. And just as the tree, although alive in its own order, is dead to the presence and voice of the birds that sing among its branches, so is man, although alive to all within his environment, dead to the things of the Spirit of God. This truth, although most persistently disputed, most vehemently opposed and wickedly ridiculed by professors of Christianity, is legibly and indelibly written in the stones and in the trees, in the earth and in the sky, and in the experiences of millions of human hearts. Man, then, is cut off from the kingdom of God by the deep, mysterious, impassible gulf that separates the nonliving from the living, the organic from the inorganic, the natural from the spiritual. As man enters this world by birth, just so he enters the kingdom of God by birth; and as his

birth into the world was contingent upon things entirely outside of himself, so his birth into the kingdom of God is contingent upon things entirely outside of himself.

This birth is “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1:13. Except a man be born he cannot see the world, is a fact which none can deny, and which none would ever think of denying. But how few of all who have read it acquiesce so readily in the conclusive truth of its analogous expression, “Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

We turn now from the biological to the experimental necessity of this birth. Children may be most carefully trained from their youth in the name of Christ and in the precepts of the Scripture and religious observances, but except they be born again they have no more knowledge of Christ than if they had never heard His name.

This birth is the beginning of the Christian experience, and all that is ever seen, felt, heard, and known of grace in this world, or glory in the world to come, is but the development of the life imparted in this birth. All knowledge of Christ is vital or experimental knowledge; this includes all knowledge of the need of Christ. I once thought that the time when a child of grace received his hope and experienced deliverance was when he was born again; but I have come to a different conclusion. Who can remember when he was born naturally? Let the mind run back to childhood, to our earliest recollections, even to the very borders of infancy; but our birth was prior to that. All things fade from our memory, and we are lost in a sea of oblivion, and still the time of our birth is not reached. We grew into the domain of memory, passing through a long stage of which we know nothing at all. Think back over your experience; you came to many Ebenezers, to many milestones and memorable places; you approach the time when hope came to you, a helpless sinner; but the birth was before this. You pass on to the time when you first realized that you were a sinner indeed; but the birth was before this, and this was only the result of it. How long before you felt the first movements of soul, I cannot tell, but life was before this. Those who place their birth upon conditions to be complied with by those receiving it, have never seen the necessity of it. If a man can repent of his sins and believe in Jesus before he is born again, then the Scriptures are not true. This notion of religion puts the cart before the horse, puts the fruit before the tree, the effect before the cause. Without this birth sin would never be hated and holiness would never be loved, poverty of spirit would never be felt, and the riches of Christ would never be prized; none would ever hunger and thirst after righteousness, and the bread which came down from heaven would never be desired; the fountain of living water would never be sought, there would be none to love the truth, and faith would not be found on the earth; the wilderness would never blossom as the rose, and the parched ground would never become a pool; the name of God would be but an empty sound, and His existence a mere matter of speculation, and all worship would be but dry formality and empty mockery.

The person affected by the new birth is the Adamic sinner. This needs no argument, for there is no other personality on earth, and personalities in heaven do not need it. The immediate effects makes up what is called “Christian experience,” and belong to time; the ultimate effect is to awake in the likeness of Christ, and is realized in the resurrection.

The effects are evidences to us that we have been born again. Let us now examine ourselves, and prove ourselves, and see whether we are indeed what we profess to be, or only graceless hypocrites, carnal professors, who have never known the love of Christ or the power of His resurrection. The most momentous question ever propounded to an exercised heart is, Have I been born again? And when we begin to examine ourselves, the evidence that the carnal mind seeks is not found within us; but we are

full of things that our traditional notions of religion record against us. The carnal mind is not eligible to sit as judge or to testify as witness in the trial of a christian, because it is enmity against God, and cannot be subject to his law.

One of the best evidences that any one has ever had that he is born again is that he is personally concerned about his own case. The man who thinks that salvation is by works is never concerned about the new birth; but the heart upon which the import and necessity of being born again have been impressed is bound to be very personally concerned in the matter; but the import and necessity of the birth are only communicated through the birth itself. Let us begin the examination with a question. Do you know that you are a Christian? Every exercised heart answers at once, I do not know that I am a Christian. Do you know that you are a sinner? O yes, I know that I am a sinner. Do you know that you are saved? O no, I do not know that I am saved. Do you know how a sinner is saved? O yes; a sinner is saved only by grace. How did you find that out? Everybody does not know that. If you experimentally know that salvation is by grace, rest assured that you are saved, for that knowledge comes only by experience. None of the princes of this world know that. Human wisdom has never made that discovery. Those who have this knowledge are in possession of that "hidden wisdom which God before the world ordained to our glory."

The knowledge of sin is one of the brightest evidences that you will ever have that you have passed from death unto life. Permanent, incorrigible, inherent sinfulness has always been acknowledged by holy men. David said, "I am a worm, and no man." Psa.22:6. Isaiah confessed that he was a man of unclean lips, and Paul exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom.7:24. There was a time in the experience of many of us, perhaps, when we thought that we would never know sin or sorrow again, but that we would live in the comfortable peace of that sweet deliverance all the rest of our days. But when we began to feel again the power of sin in our members, we sank into a sea of doubts and fears, and disappointment bordering on despair. We thought that one who is born again is free from the motions of sin; and when we found that sin still remained in us, we concluded that we were still in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. But we have learned many lessons since that time, and are still learning. We have learned that in the flesh we are ignorant, sinful creatures, no better now than at the first dawn of our hope. I think these lines of Newton express the experience of us all:

"I asked the Lord that I might grow,
In faith and love and every grace;
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.

I hoped that in some favored hour,
At once He'd answer my request,
And by His love's constraining power,
Subdue my sins and give me rest.

Instead of this He made me feel,
The hidden evil of my heart,
And let the angry powers of hell,
Assault my soul in every part.

Yea, more, with his own hand he seemed,
Intent to aggravate my woe,
Crossed all the fair designs I schemed,
Blasted my gourds and laid me low.

Lord why is this? I trembling cried;
Wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death?
'Tis in the way, the Lord replied,
I answer prayer for grace and faith.

These inward trials I employ,
From self and pride to set thee free,
And break thy schemes of earthly joy
That thou may'st seek thine all in Me."

Men in nature have most strenuously assailed the doctrine of total, innate, inherent depravity, and have long devised and proclaimed their lying, deceptive and seductive argument against it; but God will make His own people know the truthfulness of it by a daily experience of their own sinfulness. A vital knowledge of sin puts to flight every traditional theory of human ability or Adamic purity, and fastens upon the conscience a pungent conviction that man is a sinner from the cradle to the grave, with no part or capacity reserved. It is not the Christian's burden that he only sins by word and deed, but his thoughts are unclean, and above all he discovers lurking like a serpent in the deep recesses of his heart the love of sinful things. This almost drives him to despair, and makes him hate his own life, and trust nothing but the blood and righteousness of the adorable Redeemer.

How prone we are to take comfort in the thoughts of our own hearts, or the state of our own feelings, and to look within ourselves for something good to build our hope upon. How often do we say, "O! if I could only see myself as I desire to see myself, I would have some hope that I am a Christian." If you could always see yourself just as you would like to be, would you ever deny yourself? And if you should never deny yourself could you ever be the disciple of Jesus? Did He not say, "If any man will be my disciple let him deny himself?" When Jesus said, "Let him deny himself," denial of self must follow. God said, "Let there be light," and light was. He also said, "Let the earth bring forth," and it was so. Have you not yet been able to translate those feelings of unworthiness that fill your soul, and stand like an impassable wall, an immovable mountain, between you and your ideal christian character that your own imagination conjures up and places before you? They are translated into this sentence, "Let him deny himself." This is the first qualification to follow Christ.

The tempter comes with another plea that we are not the children of God. This plea is our weakness. How often do we consider this suggestion of the tempter and put it on file as evidence against ourselves? Christ put the tempter to flight by quoting what is written; so allow me to bring the same weapon to our defense; it is written, "Except ye be converted and become as a little child ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." Mark 18:3. What did the Saviour mean by this expression? I have heard preachers say, in my early exercise of mind, that little children are innocent, pure and sinless, and that we must get like them or we can never be saved. I thought this was true, and set about most diligently to attain unto this child-like purity of character, but failed – utterly failed – failed as completely as Hermes in his search for the philosopher's stone, or Ponce de Leon for the fountain of youth. The more I tried it, the more helpless it seemed to grow, and yet I thought it must be so. O! What absurd things will men not undertake in the name of religion. If all the absurdities that have been taught

and practiced in the name of religion could be collected and placed before men's eyes, the exhibit would shock the world, and would doubtless surpass in quantity and quality all other follies, caprices and wickedness that the world has ever known! Suppose for one moment that little children do receive the kingdom of heaven upon the grounds of their purity of character, and we must become as they, where is hope to be found for any who have grown out of infantile purity? How can a man ever be a child again? We might repeat the question of Nicodemus, "How can a man be born when he is old. Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Suppose a man could be born when he is old, would he not come forth again in the likeness of his parents?

A man might be made a child again ten thousand times, if such a thing were possible, and still he would never be raised above the nature and likeness of his parents. A corruptible seed can never bring forth an incorrupt object. So if a man should be born again of the same father and mother, would he not come forth the same natural man, and grow up the same blind, alienated, wicked sinner? It is not only necessary to have another birth, but a birth proceeding from an entirely difference source, a birth from above, from an incorruptible seed, a birth of water and the Spirit, of that water which is above the firmament. The Saviour did not mean that the little child is sinless, and we must become such. Sinless persons would have no need of Christ, and He has no blood for them. What is the characteristic of the little child that forms the basis of the Saviour's teaching here? It is the helplessness, the weakness of the child, its inability to provide for itself. The child is not only unable to provide for itself, but unable to minister to itself what others may provide for it. Food and drink and raiment might be abundantly provided and placed in the closest proximity to the child, and if left to itself, it would be none the better off. It would perish as certainly and as speedily as it would if nothing had been provided. The man or woman who has experienced this helplessness in a spiritual sense has become as a little child, or, in other words, has been born again; and the very weakness which he so much deplures and from which he would daily fly, is the sure and abiding evidence that God is his Father.

Our blindness is often urged as an evidence against us, but God says He will "bring the blind by a way they knew not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known." Isa.42:16. God leads His people as those who are blind, and cannot find their own way. If your travels have been in entirely different ways from what you yourself marked out, if you experience daily the opposite of your own planning, if you are led as one blind in unknown ways, then you are led of the Lord; and "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. 8:14.

Belief in Jesus is an effect of the new birth, and consequently an evidence of it. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ *is* born of God." I John 5:1. What a comprehensive, decisive and conclusive statement! This birth raises men to a knowledge of Christ, and imparts to them the evidence that He is the Christ. The doctrine that men have the capacity to believe in Him as a condition of salvation is as fabulous, as illusive and as foreign to the Gospel of the grace of God as the grotesque mythologies of the ancient Northmen, the fanciful poetry of the ancient Greeks, or the nonsensical nursery rhymes of Mother Goose. Belief is NOT a volition of the will. We do not have to revert to dusty libraries of philosophy to prove this statement, but to our own minds. Each man knows more about himself than the wisest philosopher knows about him. Belief is a condition of mind produced by evidence; it is an effect, and evidence is the cause. Every day we hear reports that we do not want to believe, and seek in every direction a refuge from the conviction of the truth of the report. Every power of the mind is aroused against it; but facts come, evidence conquers, and we reluctantly, unwillingly sink into a belief on the very thing we tried so hard not to believe. Upon the other hand, how often have we exerted every power of will to believe a certain thing to be true; but notwithstanding our ardent desire and

willing efforts we at last had to yield to lack of evidence or to contrary evidence, and believe against our will to the contrary. Believing in Jesus is brought about by the new birth. It is only by the Holy Ghost that any man can knowingly say that Jesus is the Christ; and the man who believes in the only begotten Son may rest assured that he is born of God. "He that hath the Son hath life." It is he that hath the Son that believes on Him.

Faith, which is the substance of the Christian's hope, is the evidence upon which we believe; and this faith is born of God, is the fruit of the Spirit, and is found alone in the man who has been born again. Believing in Jesus, repentance and faith are new covenant blessings themselves, instead of being conditions of blessings, and are the fruit of the new birth instead of conditions upon which it is brought about.

The ultimate effect of the new birth is to awake in the likeness of Christ. This birth constitutes the man who receives it as a son of God, and consequently an heir of God, and guarantees to him a resurrection in the likeness of Christ, and consequently an eternal and enduring satisfaction. The development of Christ's character is a process begun, carried on and consummated by the inherent, sovereign, unfailing working of Christ-life in the soul. It is an evolution, but a grander evolution than ever Darwin dreamed of; not the process that transforms a monkey into a man as he advocated, but an evolution that conforms a wretched, wicked, hopeless, helpless sinner into the image of Jesus the immaculate Son of God. This process is first the blade, then the stalk, and after that the full corn in the ear. The blade and the stalk may appear here, but the full corn in the ear must appear hereafter. Inasmuch as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

This birth originates from *above*, and is directed alone by sovereign, unconditional election. It comes by virtue of life given us in Christ before the foundation of the world; according as the saints were chosen in Him in the ages eternal. We could never be born from above without a life above. This heavenly, eternal, incorruptible Christ-life is implanted in the subjects of God's electing grace, by the sovereign, irresistible, unconditional working of the Holy Spirit. It is implanted in God's own time, whether it be in the babe upon its mother's breast, as was the case with David, {Psa.22:9} or from its very birth, as with John the Baptist, {Luke 1:44} or in the declining days of old age and decrepitude, as may be the case with many; but whether in the babe upon its mother's breast, or in the man in the prime of life, or in old age upon the verge of the grave, the issues are all the same, and alike certain in results. All who receive it shall awake in the likeness of Christ.

Elder H. M. Curry.

Number 8

GOOD WORKS

With your permission, beloved Editor, I feel moved to offer some thoughts to the household of faith upon good works, their nature, extent and use.

First. Their nature. Three things are essential to a good work. First, it must be done from a right principle; secondly, it must be performed according to a right rule; and thirdly, it must be directed into a right end. This principle is *love*; this rule is *the divine command*; and this end is *the glory of God*. These are the essential properties of every good work, and in the absence of either of them no work can be truly a good work, and therefore can not be pleasing in the sight of God; not acceptable to him. Let us consider them separately in their order.

First, Love. Every good work must be wrought in God, and must therefore spring from love; “for God is love.” “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.” Therefore, “Love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.” But “He that loveth not, knoweth not God.” So love is the evidence that we have passed from death unto life; (I John 3:14) and it is also the first fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22) Hence the divine Master said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” “For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.” Therefore without the love of God it is impossible to keep his commandments; for “love is the fulfilling of the law.” Now suppose a mere natural man, whose carnal mind (the only mind he has) is enmity against God, and whose heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, should endeavor to do good works, it must be apparent to all that it would be impossible for his works to have their existence in love to God. How vain and absurd then, to call upon such to engage in a religious life and observe the commandments of Christ.

Secondly, The divine command. No work can be good, unless it has this holy sanction, and is performed according to this righteous rule. “If ye love me, *keep MY commandments*,” says our only Law giver. This absolutely forbids us to keep the commandments of *any* other, while it lays us under binding and solemn obligations to *keep*, or strictly obey every commandment of his. “Teaching them (Christ’s disciples) to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,” (the apostles). So that not even the apostles themselves, though sitting upon thrones as princes and judges in the kingdom of Christ, are permitted to depart in the least from the “all things” commanded them by the adorable King of saints. How is it, then, that so many things are taught and observed professedly in the name of Christ, which are clearly outside of all things in the apostolic commission, as they who teach and observe them will themselves admit? The apostles have solemnly affirmed that “they gave them no such commandment.” (Acts 15:24)

The Lord Jesus himself decides the question, saying, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments *of men*.” All such vain oblations and dead works the Lord abhors and rejects as reprobate silver, saying, “Who hath required these things at your hands?” The commandments of Jesus are positive enactments; and where there is a positive law, it must be observed according to its provisions. Now suppose a true believer should have a little water sprinkled upon him, or be immersed by one who is outside of Christ’s visible kingdom, and hence who has no authority according to the law of Christ’s visible kingdom, and hence who has no authority according to the law of Christ to administer his ordinances; or suppose an unbeliever, who has not the love of God in his

heart, should be “buried in baptism” by a true servant of Jesus, and received into the gospel church; in either case the act cannot be a good work, because it would not have been performed according to the divine command.

Thirdly, The glory of God. This is the end of every good work. “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do al to the glory of God.” (I Cor. 10:31) “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” (John 15:8)

The apostle Paul shows that the end of our salvation in Christ is, that we should be “To the praise of the glory of God’s grace.” (Eph. 1:1-6) And the apostle Peter says, that God hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, “that we should show forth his praise.”

Therefore, as to love God and delight in him is the chief good, so to glorify him is the highest and noblest end to which saints and angels can aim in all that they do. This is an aim worthy of the glorious God himself, for the manifestation of his glory is the design of God in all his glorious works, and especially in his most glorious work of salvation, as we have seen. Therefore, the royal psalmist says, “All thy works shall *praise* thee, O Lord; and thy saints shall *bless* thee.” (Ps. 145:10) Good works, therefore, have their foundation, existence and end in God, and he is their author, working in his children both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Hence a prophet of God’s people says, “Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us.” (Isa. 26:12)

Now suppose a man is religious and engages in religious works, but with some other end than the glory of God in view, as, for instance, that he may escape hell and go to heaven; this is only a selfish aim, and his works cannot therefore be good.

Second, Their extent. Good works belong to the household of faith; for they cannot be produced in carnal nature’s barren soil. They are the fruits of the tree of life, but cannot be found upon the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Or, they are the fruits of the Spirit, and not the works of the flesh. (Gal. 5:19-23) Therefore, those only who are born of the Spirit can perform good works. “These things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they who have *believed in God* might be careful to maintain good works.” (Titus 3:8) Good works are defined in the scriptures to be the “*work of faith and labor of love.*” (I Thess. 1:3; Heb. 6:10) and are therefore limited to those who believe in and love God. Hence the unbeliever, who is an enemy in his mind by wicked works, (Col. 1:21) has no part in good works, and cannot possibly participate in them or perform them.

“First make the *tree* good, and its *fruit* will be good,” says Jesus, who was a perfect model of good works, and who asks, “How can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruits?” That is not a good work which is not done in obedience to a divine command; and that is no obedience which springs not from love; for attempted obedience without love must arise from selfish, servile fear, and is nothing but abject slavery. But true obedience is that of the *heart*, and is the filial service of a loving child. “If ye *love me*, keep my commandments.” “Be ye therefore followers of God, *as dear children, and walk in love.*”

Third, Their use. “I will shew thee my faith by my works.” (James 2:18) “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” (Matt. 7:16) “If a man love me, he will keep my words.” (John 14:23) “And let ours also learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that they be not unfruitful.” “These things are good and profitable unto men.” (Titus 3:8, 14) “For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that *lacketh* these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye *do* these

things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you *abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” (II Peter 1:8-11) “Blessed are they that *do* his commandments, that they may have *right* to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” (Rev. 22:14)

“If ye *keep* my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.” (John 15:10) “For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have *shewed toward his name*, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” (Heb. 6:10) “Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee; but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” (Psa. 16:2, 3) “For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; while by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ.” (II Cor. 9:12, 13)

Now these texts very clearly and connectedly show the use and importance of good works, without which we can neither receive to ourselves nor give to others the assurance of our calling and election. Good works are, therefore, the test of our character, the proof of our love, and the fruit of our vital union with Christ the living Vine. For this reason the Lord says, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” (For,) “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these *my brethren*, ye have done it unto *me*.” But, he says again, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it *not* to one of the least of *these*, ye did it not to *me*.” (Matt. 25:34-36, 40, 45)

Therefore, as that is no obedience which does not spring from love, so that it is not love which does not produce obedience; for if the former is only slavery, the latter is mere hypocrisy. Because the Lord says, “He that loveth me *not*, keepeth *not* my sayings.” (John 14:24) For “This is love, that we walk after his commandments.” (II John 6) “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And *hereby we know that we are of the truth*, and shall *assure* our hearts before him.” “And whatsoever we ask we receive of him, *because we keep his commandments, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight*. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.” (I John 3:18-24) How eminently useful, then, are good works! and how very important it is that they who have believed in God might be careful to maintain them. For it is only in this way that they can glorify God. “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” And it is in this way also that the body of Christ, the church, is edified. “Charity edifieth.” (I Cor. 8:1) “Follow after charity.” (I Cor. 14:1) “Let all things be done unto edifying.” (Verse 26) “We do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.” (II Cor. 12:19) “According to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” (Eph. 4:16)

Finally, we are elected “unto obedience,” (I Peter 1:2) and “created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph. 2:10) Therefore good works are to the believer in Jesus what good fruit is to the tree the husbandman selects, plants and nurtures the tree, to the end that it may bear him good fruit. And that tree which bears much good fruit, brings more delight and honor to the husbandman, than the unfruitful tree. So Christ says, “Every branch in me that

beareth not fruit he (the Husbandman) taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” (John 15:2)

Therefore, with the apostle let us pray that God would “Make us perfect in every good work to do his will, working in us that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Heb. 13:21)

I send this, brother Beebe, as I wrote it, without copying. It is imperfect, but I hope it may be useful in stirring up the pure minds of the dear saints. Yours in the good hope through grace.

Elder David Bartley
1869

Number 9

ROMANS 8:28

My dear Brethren Beebe: – In the third number, present volume of the “Signs of the Times”, I find the following request: “I desire the views of our dear brother J. F. Johnson on Romans 8:28. Whether the all things mean natural things or not.”

The whole text reads thus: “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.*”

The apostle was not guessing at things here, and I cannot imagine how a more comforting and encouraging expression could be formed out of words. He knew what he affirmed, and he knew its importance to “them that love God,” and therefore would leave them without the shadow of a doubt. I wish to make some remarks on the text found in Eph. 1:11, as I consider the two passages intimately connected. There it is said, “In whom we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Here we are informed that God works all things, and in the text under consideration, that he works them all for good to them that love him, and are the called according to his purpose. But my brother desires to know “whether the ‘all things’ mean natural things or not.” I answer unhesitatingly, that spiritual things and natural things, great things and small things, good things and bad things, things in heaven, things on earth and things under the earth, all, all things work together for good to them that love God, as I shall now try to evince. I suppose it will be conceded by all who are “spiritually minded” that all spiritual things are managed or worked for the good of God’s people, and for them exclusively. They were given us in Christ Jesus for our good before the world began. No doubt my brother has realized this in every one that he has enjoyed. It is equally evident that natural things also are for our good. Our food, drink and raiment are all for our good. The natural earth that we tread upon which produces our food, raiment, etc., the rain and the snow that falleth upon the earth and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, are evidently for our good. Our trials, afflictions, disappointments and temptations, that seem for the time being to be against us, are often proved by after experience to be for our good. When the sons of Jacob brought to him the news from Egypt where they went to buy corn, he said, “All these things are against me,” when in reality they were opening the way for the joyful meeting of his supposed long lost son Joseph. David said, “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word.” And again, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.” (Psalms 119:67,71.)

I am here reminded of a circumstance that took place with brother Beebe and myself a number of years ago. We had been away attending some meetings, and started home, eager to meet a certain train of cars to return on, but they had just left when we reached the station. We were disappointed, but it was likely for our good, for we afterward learned that that train was terribly smashed and a number killed and many seriously injured.

Again, the apostle says, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” Why? “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.” (James 1:2,12.) I have said that great things and small things work for our good. “The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.” (Psalms

126:3.) These great things include spiritual and natural ones innumerable. All spiritual things that he has wrought in and for his people are great things, and all for their good. He “rebukes strong nations” for the good of his people; makes kings their nursing fathers and queens their nursing mothers; subdues kingdoms for them. And in connection with the great we may include the great work of redemption, all that pertains to the salvation of his people; and to accomplish these great things he uses the small things. To accomplish the great deliverance of his national people from their bondage in Egypt, he used the frogs, the lice, the flies, the locusts, etc.

Imagine the frogs bubbling up out of the rivers, and there they go, hop, hop, hop, the Lord directing every hop to the very house, bed-chamber, bed, oven and kneading-trough where he decreed it should go. Then Aaron stretches his rod over the dust of the earth, and instead of dust the earth is alive with lice; and here they go, every step of every louse to every Egyptian where the Lord sent it; not a stray louse on Pharaoh or any of his hosts. And the flies. Go along the border of Goshen, where the Hebrews dwell; look on that side where the Egyptians dwell, and see the air swarming with flies, and on the Hebrew side not a fly, for God had said no flies should be there; and when they strike the dividing line, they stop or turn as though they had encountered a stone wall. Then the locusts; and other miracles are worked there by the Lord, but none of the plagues troubled the Lord’s people; he was working all for their good. Finally Pharaoh is humbled and subdued, and the Lord’s people liberated. But I must not note here all the minute things that occurred to the Jews on their long journey to the promised land. One more circumstance, however, I will refer to. When they were about to enter that land the Lord told them, saying, “I will send hornets before thee, [they are little things, too] which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite and the Hittite before thee.” And he did it, for he says in Joshua, “And I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out,” etc. This kind of warfare looks a little ludicrous. What must those “ites” have thought on seeing the country swarming with hornets? And presently they feel them, pop, pop, pop. I can’t tell how they knew where to get rid of them; but they must leave the country, for the Lord said they should drive them out.

All things work together for good to God’s people, it matters not how small, if it is large enough to call a thing. See myriads of motes and tiny insects dancing in the sunbeams. Think you they are frisking about there at random? God “worketh all things.” I do not know what he wants with those little things, nor do I know what he wants with a mammoth; but he made them all, and, of course, has use for them all. If it is best for one of his people to take him out of this world of trouble, (it is always best for them when they are taken) he can do it by sending a mote into the eye, produce inflammation there, extend it to the brain, and do it as effectually as with a thunderbolt. Or if it is his will to take an enemy away from them, he can do it in the same way. There may be smaller things yet, but he works them all. I have no idea that the fiercest hurricane that ever blew has ever carried a particle of dust farther, or suffered it to fall short of where God predestinated it to stop. One has said, and I think truthfully, “If providence should be taken by surprise, by the casual impinging of an accident, one fortuitous grain might dislocate the banded universe. The smallest seeming trifle is ordered as the morning light, and he that rideth on the hurricane is pilot to the bubble on the breaker.”

I have said that good things and bad things work together for good to God’s people. That good things work together for their good, I suppose is evident to my brother, and is no doubt often experienced by him; but that bad things do, may not appear so obvious to him; but there are plenty of circumstances recorded in the scriptures evincing the fact. When the brethren of Joseph sold and sent him to Egypt as a slave, all will admit that it was bad in them to do so; for Joseph told them afterward that they thought evil against him, but God meant it for good. (Gen. 50:20.) And after he was taken to Egypt and sold to

Potiphar, that libidinous wife of his acted very badly in telling a falsehood on him and having him imprisoned in a dungeon for his virtue; but that was only another step toward his greatness. Then the king's officers must be imprisoned, and must dream dreams, and Joseph interprets them. Then Pharaoh must dream. He interprets the king's dreams, and then is made governor over all Egypt. Then see the result to his father's family, as well as to himself.

But there are other bad things, worse, if possible, than the ones named, that have worked for good to God's people; and I know not but that all the bad things that have ever been done have been worked for the glory of God and the good of his people; for the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. (Psa.76:10.) Reference to one other circumstance will perhaps be sufficient on this point, and that is the crucifixion of the Saviour. Could there be more heinous, diabolical wickedness than the murdering of the innocent Lamb of God on the Calvary cross? And yet God so overruled the whole matter that it turned out to be the *magna carta* of the salvation of sinners. The cross secures their crown and confirms their hope as an anchor both sure and steadfast forever.

“Great was the mystery! truly greats
That hell's designs should hell defeat;
But here eternal wisdom shined,
For Satan wrought what God designed.”

The fiends fulfilled the scriptures in condemning him; and though they did it unwittingly, it was what God's hand and counsel before determined should be done. (Acts 4:28; 13:27.)

Then I have said that things in heaven, things on the earth, and things under the earth, all work for the good of God's people. O the mysterious, heart-cheering work that has ever been going on, and will ever go on, in heaven for the people of God. Love has been beaming toward them forever. “Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.” (Jer.31:3.) There the glorious Mediatorial Head of his people was set up from everlasting or ever the earth was. (Prov. 7:23.) “Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” (Mic. 5:2.) There matchless grace that consummates the glorious work of salvation was given us in him before the world began, and

“Grace all the work shall crown
In everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise.”

There, too, absolute predestination decreed the adoption of the Adamic man into the family of God, putting him among the children, securing to him a glorious resurrection life, and there their names were indelibly written in the book of life from the foundation of the world. (Rev. 17:8.) I firmly believe that even the devil's wiles in the fall of man is worked by the unerring wisdom and power of God for the good of his people. If not, why did Paul say, “God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin?” (Rom. 6:17.)

“Here Satan was nonplus'd in what he had done,
The fall wrought the channel where mercy should run,
In streams of salvation that never run dry,
And all for the lifting of Jesus on high.”

And from the bud of time until now, the Lord has so ruled and overruled the works of men and devils as to make them conducive to the good of his people and the glory of his hallowed name; for the wrath of man shall praise him; the remainder of wrath he shall restrain. (Psa. 76:10.)

Yes, all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. This call is the voice of God, and must be heard and obeyed. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live.” (John 5:25.) And the call must reach “even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” (Acts 2:39.) It is a holy calling, and therefore a call to holiness. “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” (II Tim. 1:9.) The “purpose” is steadfast as the throne of God, and is an eternal purpose. According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Eph. 3:11.) No frustrating this purpose. “The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass: as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” (Isa. 14:24.) This purpose embraces every one of God’s people, this grace saves every one, and this call penetrates the ear of every one, and “they shall hear,” and “shall be saved.” “And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13.) It is the work of God, and therefore done forever. “I know that whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it.” (Eccl. 3:14.) Things under the earth must work for good to the Lord’s people. This expression, I conclude, will hold good if we descend to the regions of devils; for

“If devils move, ‘tis by consent
Of him who is omnipotent.”

I think it has been evinced that in the enemy’s first work on earth he outdid himself, and opened for the saints a never-to-be-exhausted channel of mercy. If it were not so, then

“How could sin-forgiving grace
‘Mong all the creatures find a place?
While all were good, no room be
For mercy’s aid to misery.”

Then it must be admitted that the work of him and his cohorts, overruled and directed as it was by the omnipotency and infinite wisdom, secured a “good hope through grace” for all that love God; and how is it possible that we could indulge that hope today, if Satan and his imps had not crucified the Lord of glory?

Brother McAdams, I have tried to comply with your request. Please examine what I have written closely, and compare it with the scriptures. If it accords therewith, and is of any benefit or comfort to you, I am amply paid. It seems to me a source of great pleasure to all that love God, that he does thus dispose of all things. May we all, then, be enabled to meet our miseries with a becoming fortitude and submission to the divine and righteous will of him who worketh all things together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

“If thus the Lord doth work all things
Together for our good,
How should we praise the King of kings
And triumph in his blood.”

Your brother in hope of eternal life.

Elder J. F. Johnson
Clay Village, KY
February, 1880

Number 10

THE CHURCH

“And I saw no temple therein.” (Revelation 21:22)

We have read this morning from the inspired record a striking description of the city of God; the city of which we have heard, and read, and sung from our earliest childhood; but we have heard that it was far away above the skies; we have sung that it is among the stars; we have read in popular religious fiction that it is the place where good people go when they die. All these notions are no better than the various heathen fabrications of heaven, and are as foreign to the true location and nature of the city as the sensual paradise of Mahomet, or the happy hunting grounds of the American Indian. Our eyes have been so long blinded by tradition that we can scarcely see the plainest facts of Bible truth; our ears have been so completely stuffed with fables from our early youth that we are deaf to the plain declarations of the inspired record; and our understanding is so darkened by material affections that it is indeed difficult for us to conceive the most prominent principles of the doctrine of Christ. May the God of all grace enlighten our eyes, unstop our ears, and open our understanding this morning, that we may hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

First, let us have a proper understanding of the location of this city. It is not in heaven, for John saw it coming down from God out of heaven. It is declared to be the tabernacle of God with men; God dwelling with men, and not men gone above the sky to dwell with God. This city then is in the world, though not of the world; it is the present abode and inheritance of the saints, and not something they come to possession of at the close of their mortal pilgrimage. It is the new Jerusalem, arrayed in the splendor of the covenant of grace revealed in living contrast with the old Jerusalem, clothed in the blackness of legal servitude. It is the gospel church revealed in the perfection of her living worship, contrasted with all humanly devised and conditional systems of religion.

The jeweled walls, sparkling, gleaming and glittering with all manner of precious stones; the new earth upon which it stands, stretching away in all the beauty of its virgin landscape; the new heavens spread above like a tent of righteousness; the pure, peaceful, gladdening river; the tree of life in the midst of its street of gold, each furnishes a theme for a thousand volumes; but more significant to me than all these this morning, is the absence of the temple: “I saw no temple there.”

What a novel sight to a Jew was a city without a temple! and what would a modern Arminian think of a city without a church? The religious prosperity, the state of morals, the degree of intelligence, and even the social and business advantages of a village, town, or city, are all estimated by the number and height of its temples; and if a community could be found without a church, the unfortunate inhabitants would be stigmatized as heathens, notwithstanding they may have attained to a high standard of morals, intelligence, piety and virtue. But the gospel church, walking in the Spirit, is the perfection of society; and the perfect society is revealed from heaven under the similitude of a city without a temple, or, in modern parlance, a city without a church.

The absence of the temple suggests, first, the complete removal of the law of Moses. The temple was a symbol of the law, and an almost necessary attendant of all law worship. Jerusalem was the pride of the Jews; and the glory of Jerusalem was the temple. The carnal Jews were less boastful of their temple privileges as a mark of special distinction, than of their fleshly relation to Abraham. They saw nothing

in the goodly stones of the temple but the gratification of their own pride; they saw nothing in the streaming blood and quivering of the evening sacrifice but the things which Moses commanded; they beheld nothing more in the gorgeous trappings and imposing ceremonies of the high priest than the pomp and splendor of an earthly priesthood. But to the remnant according to the election of grace, who were born, not of blood nor the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, the temple with all its service spoke a different language. They looked beyond the matchless pile of stones, to that temple that was to be thrown down and in three days raised up again; they saw beyond the blood that daily drenched the Jewish altars, the blood of the everlasting covenant that was to be shed for the remission of the sins of the many; they recognized in their high priest the type of Him who should offer Himself without spot to God, and by that one offering perfect them forever; they heard in the tinkling of the golden bells upon the high priest's garment the joyful sound of the gospel of their salvation.

They groaned under the bondage of temple service, and waited and longed for the consolation of Israel. There was no hope for the flesh in the deeds of the law, and no rest for the spirit in the earthly Jerusalem. But God had provided some better things for them, and in the fullness of time the new Jerusalem was revealed from heaven, arrayed in bridal splendor, enshrouded in gospel glory, clothed in vestments of peace, with gates wide open to receive all those predestined to enter its walls of salvation, its towers of refuge and palaces of peace. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus spiritual Israel was redeemed from the law of Moses, having become dead to it by the body of Christ, and by Him were led out of bondage, and brought with singing unto Zion, which is the new Jerusalem. They saw from afar the heavenly city. Joyous welcomes greeted them, written above the gates in letters of gold, "Come, ye blessed of my Father." "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden." They gladly enter, and, to their increased delight, they find no temple therein. No more sacrifice, no more burnt offerings, no Sabbath keeping, no more observance of new moons, feasts and holy days. Even the sun and moon which mark times and seasons, days and months, are obliterated from the sky. No Easter celebration, no Christmas frolics. Every vestige of the law removed, and no temple to bring these buried things to remembrance. The justified inhabitants find themselves possessing what angels have desired to look into, and what the prophets of their fathers had searched diligently concerning.

The absence of the temple signifies the perfect deliverance of the elect Gentiles from every species of vain philosophy and esteemed and cherished idolatry. The Gentile Christians were under equally a galling bondage as were the Jews, although they owed no allegiance to the law of Moses. They were under the law of sin and death, and were by nature alienated from the life of God through their ignorance, and were brought into bondage by the lusts of the flesh and the wiles of their priestcraft. The temple is not only a symbol of the law of Moses, but is a universal attendant of every form of Gentile idolatry. Stupendous temples adorned the cities of Egypt five thousand years ago. These temples were the homes of Egypt's gods, sources of revenue to Egyptian priests, and the oppressors, enslavers and robbers of Egypt's people. Marble shrines of exquisite beauty brightened the cities of ancient Greece; massive temples of costliest design contributed to the imposing grandeur of the once mighty Rome; and gorgeous temples of gold, of fabulous wealth, dazzled the eyes of Spanish robbers in the far away mountain recesses of Mexico and Peru. The gigantic remains found in every quarter of the earth proclaim in tongues of crumbling stone, the universal reign of temple service over the benighted sons of men. The reign of grace has broken the reign of sin, and the Gentiles have seen the salvation of God. Grace searched the dark places of heathen idolatry, and brought forth to the light of the glorious gospel the hidden objects of electing love.

Many of the saints at Ephesus had served in bondage in the temple of Diana; many of the “washed, justified and sanctified” ones of the Corinthian church had been gathered from the temples of Olympian Zeus, which adorned and burdened that opulent city; and many of the called saints of Rome had been led out of the temples of Jupiter. When Paul declared to the Athenians of Mars’ Hill that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, some who worshipped at the altar of the unknown god came unto him and believed. All the inhabitants of this city, whether Jew or Greek, bond or free, have learned that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but that He is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit. They have found to the joy of their hearts, that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. The truly spiritually minded seek no temple, but God Himself. In Him they live and move and have their beings, and in this gracious environment they enjoy all the fulness of the blessing of Christ.

The absence of the temple signifies the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jewish temple was the great objective distinction between the Jews and all other nations, and stood as an outward evidence of God’s favor to the Jews and rejection of the Gentiles. But, as an outward evidence that God is no respecter of persons, and that the Gentiles are brought nigh by the blood of Christ and reconciled in the same body with the Jews, the temple of Jerusalem was utterly destroyed, completely thrown down, so that not even one stone remained upon another, as Christ had said before should be done. In addition to this outward evidence, the new Jerusalem was revealed to the eye of faith with no temple in it, so that the believing Jew can no more be offended by bringing Gentiles into the temple. The grounds of disputes concerning Jewish prerogatives have been completely removed from the church under the gospel dispensation, and now representatives of every nation dwell together in unity in this spiritual commonwealth, each esteeming others better than himself, all hearts having been purified by faith with works by love. All have God for their father, having been born again; all washed in the same blood, and all possessing one life, live together in the unity of the Spirit and in the bond of peace.

The absence of the temple signifies the absence of priestcraft. There is but one city in which priestcraft is not to be found, and that is the city of God. Priests have sought to rule the world; and are still seeking. A priesthood is a necessary element of all formulated religions, whether Jewish, Mohammedan, Catholic or Protestant. The priesthood of all will-worshipping idolaters has always pretended to stand between the people and their gods, and that in some way or other they are instrumental in bringing about a reconciliation between offending men and offended gods. This important element is common to all carnal religious systems; it is found alike in heathen, Catholic and Protestant, and is a plain evidence of the common origin and common interest of all these religious enterprises. The Catholic priest assumes to forgive sins for a stipulated sum, and pray souls out of purgatory for wages. The different Protestant hirelings will not exactly promise to do this, but they are equally cunning, and as little to be trusted. They hold out that men cannot be saved unless they hear them preach, and believe them; and some even go so far in their blasphemous presumption as to say that the heathen cannot be saved, neither can God justly damn them, until they preach to them. They array themselves in hypocritical robes of false Christs, and profess to be commissioned to evangelize the world and bring it to Christ. They even ascribe the salvation of their own children to their incantations, to penny tracts and religious fiction. They have invented hundreds of schemes and tricks to delude the people, and are meeting in conventions from year to year to devise new fables, to send out their agents with new demands for money.

The absence of the temple implies the absence of all these workers of darkness and propagators of iniquity. The inhabitants of this city have been delivered from the base deceptions of both Catholic and Protestant priesthoods. They have learned that there is but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. They are themselves a royal priesthood in Christ, prepared by grace to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. In this new creation they worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh. They have no need of a candle, or the light of the sun or moon, all of which are emblems of worldly wisdom, as claimed by the carnal priesthoods; but the Lord God giveth them light, and the Lamb is the light thereof. Carnal worshippers seek a temple, but the spiritually minded seek no temple but God himself; the carnal worshipper delights in rites and ceremonies, but the spiritual seeks the secrecy of his closet; the carnal worshipper seeks the intercession of priests, but the spiritual is satisfied with no intercession outside of the unutterable groanings of the Spirit itself.

The absence of the temple signifies the absence of all fraud, deceit and violence. All the great temples of the world, from Thebes to Athens, from Athens to heathen Rome, from heathen Rome to Catholic Rome, from Catholic Rome to Protestant London, have been intimately connected with the blackest crimes of history; they have been the cradles of superstition, folly and vice, the nurseries of antichrist in every phase and form, the depots of hypocrisy, the resorts of religious deceivers and oppressors: the sepulchers of liberty, prison house of saints, and the high seats of spiritual wickedness. The absence of the temple from the city of God is evidence that all the works of the flesh are unknown either to Jew or Greek in pure spiritual worship. This city is redeemed from all iniquity, and in this spiritual city, the true gospel church, no guile is found. The deeds of the body are mortified, and the fruit of the Spirit abounds. The inhabitants are blessed with good and upright hearts and are in possession of charity which thinketh no ill of his neighbor. The contrast was no greater between this city and old Jerusalem, than between this city and the communities of carnal religionists now. This is an age of extravagant temple worship. The chief ambition of the different sects is to surpass each other in temple building. Religious societies in every place from the country cross roads to the metropolis of the nation, render themselves a pest to their neighborhood and a disgrace to the name of Christianity, in going beyond their means to gratify the foolish, wicked, antichristian pride in erecting fine places of worship. The huge piles of stone and stained glass, thrown together in all the fantastic forms of heathen architecture that adorn our towns and cities, are regarded with quite as much reverence and admiration by their benighted votaries, as the temples of any of the ancient heathen nations.

This city is the whole election of grace, as they in one body worship the Father in spirit, as they stand holy and without blame before Him in love. God Himself dwells in them and with them, and He is their temple, and they are His.

The glory of the city is seen only by faith; the carnal senses of the saints themselves have never seen it. But the time shall come when still more grace shall be brought to them. The city shall be unveiled until all shall see it plainly and all earthly cities with all their temples and idolatry shall be finally and forever overthrown, and the city of God shall stand a living, enduring, eternal monument to the love, mercy and power of God, and the victory of Christ over all enemies.

Elder H. M. Curry

Number 11

ABSOLUTE PREDESTINATION

The Old School or Primitive Baptists in former years have been very definitely identified and distinguished from all other religious or ecclesiastical organizations as *Predestinarian Baptists*, and as such have borne reproach and vituperation from those who hold more limited views of what we regard as the absolute and all pervading government of God over all beings, all events, and all worlds. With deep solicitude and painful concern we have witnessed in the preaching and writings of some of our brethren a disposition to so yield or modify the doctrine as to limit its application to such things as the carnal mind of man can comprehend or the wisdom of this world can approve. While some will concede that all things that they regard as pure and holy are ordained or predestinated of God, they deny that the absolute government of God does dictate by absolute decree the wicked works of wicked men and devils, for that, they say, would make God the *author of sin*. They therefore set up their judgment, and set bounds for Infinite Wisdom to be restricted to, and beyond which limitation He must not extend His government, without subjecting Himself to their censure as an unjust God and the author of sin. But how lamentable is the infatuation of poor, blind mortals, when

“The vain race of flesh and blood
Contend with their Creator, God;
When mortal man presumes to be
More holy, wise or just than He.”

There are undoubtedly many of the dear people of God who feel jealous for the glory of God, and who, without any aspiring ambition to be wise above what is written in the sacred Scriptures, from inability to comprehend the two great parallel mysteries of *godliness* and of *iniquity*, have felt a commendable concern lest in our weakness we should impute to God aught that would reflect on His adorable perfections, or withhold from Him that which He has ordained for the manifestation of His glory. It certainly becomes us, as finite beings, to speak of Him and of His government with fear and trembling. He is the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, and His name is Holy. His attributes are veiled in that infinity which no finite being can by searching find out. He keepeth back the face of His throne, the place and power of His government, and spreadeth His cloud upon it. As the Heavens are higher than the earth, so are God’s ways higher than our ways, and His thoughts higher than our thoughts. The standard of infinite purity and holiness is the will of God. There can be no higher law than the will of God, for only to the standard or counsel of His own will and pleasure does He Himself conform. “He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will (Ephesians 1:11).” “Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isaiah 46:10).” In this connection He said, “I am God, and there is none like me.” And in the revelation of the Lamb, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, “The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat upon the throne, and worship Him that liveth forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created (Revelation 4:10,11).” “O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed

unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen (Romans 11:33-36).”

When God created the Heavens and the earth no other power than His own was employed, no wisdom but His own was consulted, nor was there any other than His own will to dictate what, how, or for what purpose anything should be created. As a potter has power over the clay, it is his right to form his vessels as he please; and if he forms of the same lump vessels to honor and vessels to dishonor, who shall dispute his right to do so? The prophet says God is the potter and we are the clay; then, “What if God, willing to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory (Romans 9:21-23).” Dare any of us poor, finite worms of the dust dispute the sovereign right of God to do all His pleasure in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of earth? “Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?” How appropriate and forcible are the words of Job, “Hell is naked before Him [God], and destruction hath no covering. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them. He holdeth back the face of His throne, and spreadeth His cloud upon it. He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of Heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof. He divideth the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through the proud. By His Spirit He hath garnished the Heavens; His hand hath formed the crooked serpent. Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him? but the thunder of His power who can understand (Job 26:6-14)?”

Can we contemplate the awful majesty, profound wisdom, deep and unsearchable counsel, infinite goodness, unerring workmanship in all that He has condescended to let us know of His great and marvelous works, from the spreading abroad and garnishing of the wide Heavens, down to the formation of the crooked serpent, and still stand in doubt of His predestinating power and unrestricted government over all beings, all worlds, and all events?

Are death and hell and all things naked before Him, and destruction uncovered to His all-seeing eye, and yet unlimited by His power and wisdom? Has He stretched out the north, and balanced the earth upon nothing, without any design, purpose or decree concerning their subsequent destiny? Has God bound up the waters in His thick cloud, and “given to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment (Proverbs 8:29),” and yet left all to the vagary of chance? When He set His throne above the Heavens, was it to be the place of no power in controlling the destiny of all things in Heaven and earth and hell? For about six thousand years the sun, moon and stars have with exactness filled their respective orbits, and without the variation of a second of time from their creation made all their revolutions, in obedience to the decree of the Creator. Is it by chance that “The Heavens [thus] declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork?”

But, say some to whose minds the doctrine of the universal government is obscure, “We admit that God has predestinated some things, but do not admit that He has predestinated all things which come to pass.” Let us see how this partial or limited government would accord with the Divine record. Suppose that in what we have been contemplating of the Heavens we should find the sun and moon, and all the stars but one, held firmly in their orbits by the irresistible will and decree of God, and that one solitary star, without any fixed orbit, is allowed to range the infinity of space, wandering with more than lightning velocity, guided only by chance; where would be the safety of all the other stars? What would

become of the predestination of those heavenly bodies intended to be preserved from hazard by the decree of God?

To us it has been a comforting thought that God has set the bounds of our habitation on the earth, and the number of our months is with Him, and our days are appointed to us as the days of an hireling, who cannot pass His bounds; but what assurance of safety would that afford, if He has left murderers and blood-thirsty men or devils unrestricted by His predestinating decree? To our mind, either everything or nothing must be held in subjection to the will and providence of God. Even the wickedness of ungodly men is restricted by predestination, so that “the wrath of man shall praise God, and the remainder of wrath He will restrain.”

“Pains and deaths around us fly
Till He bids we cannot die;
Not a single shaft can hit
Unless the God of Heaven sees fit.”

For death and hell can do no more than His hand and counsel have determined shall be done. Does this make God the author of sin? or, in other words, does this make Him a sinner, or charge on Him an imputation of impurity? By no means. Against whom is it possible for God to sin? Is He amenable to any law above Himself? If so, by what law can He be indicted, in what court can He be tried or convicted? How preposterous! It is His eternal right to do all His pleasure,

“Nor give to mortals an account,
or of His actions or decrees.”

It savors of atheism to deny that He is the self-existent, independent God who has created all things for His own sovereign will and pleasure. And if it be admitted that He had a right to create the world, and all worlds, it must then be also admitted that He had a right to create them according to His own will and pleasure. Worms cannot charge Him with error because He did not assign them a more exalted place in the creation, or for creating them worms instead of men. Men cannot justly charge Him for not creating them angels, nor angels because He did not make them gods. The world, with its infinite variety of living creatures, from the minutest insect to the most huge monster, as well as man, were all made for the pleasure of their Maker, and all must subserve the exact purpose for which they were made. Even the crooked serpent, as well as the harmless dove, all were pronounced good in their respective places; not good in the sense in which God is good, but good because they were precisely what He intended or predestinated them to be. Had the serpent been straight, or the dove crooked, or if the things made had been different from what the Creator intended, there would have been a defect in the workmanship. We cannot, with such exalted views as we entertain, think that God has ever failed to secure the perfect accomplishment of His own design or purpose in anything He has ever done. The entrance of sin into the world, and death by sin, which by the offense of one man has passed upon all mankind, was no unprovided-for event with Him, to whose eyes sin, death and hell have no covering. The eternal purpose which God had purposed in Himself before the world began was sufficiently perfect and comprehensive to include all that could and can possibly transpire, or He would not have declared the end of all things from the beginning. “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world (Acts 15:18).”

But there are many who admit the foreknowledge of God, and yet deny His determinate counsel, on which the certainty of all the events of time depends. Men may have a limited foreknowledge of things

which God has made certain by His determinate counsel and irrevocable decrees, as it is said, “The living know that they must die;” but God’s foreknowledge depends on nothing outside of Himself, for He has challenged the universe to tell with whom He has taken counsel, or who has instructed Him. To us it seems perfectly clear that nothing could be foreknown that was undetermined, and that the foreknowledge and determinate counsel of God are inseparable.

It is also generally admitted that in the salvation of His people, “Whom He did foreknow, them He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son (Romans 8:29).” but that the well-beloved Son of God was delivered into the wicked hands of men to be crucified by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, is not so readily admitted. The wicked works of those who crucified the Lord of glory were not foreknown by His murderers; but it was foreknown and determined of God, Peter said, to those whom he charged with the wickedness of killing the Prince of life. “I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled (Acts 3:17,18).” “For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done (Acts 4:27,28).”

The wickedness of men in betraying and crucifying our Lord had been positively predicted from the days of Abel, in what God spake to the fathers by the prophets, and by what was signified by all the offerings which were made under the former dispensation. The pieces of silver for which He was betrayed were counted and declared hundreds of years before Judas was born; and the dividing of His garments, and the lot cast for His seamless robe, was determined of God and declared by the prophets. The history of Joseph, and the wickedness of his brethren, was in fulfillment of his dreams, and in accordance with the purpose in which Joseph said, God meant it for good.

It has been said by some that these great events which God has overruled for good were ordered of the Lord, but that the smaller matters, and the wickedness of men, were not predestinated. Our Savior has informed us that the determinate counsel of God in His all-pervading providence numbers the hairs of our head, so that not a hair can fall to the ground without Him; even the little sparrows are protected, and the ravens are provided with food by His determinate counsel. And Paul assures us that, “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”

It seems to us unreasonable, as well as unscriptural, to say that the government of God directs and controls some things, and that other things are left to the control of men or devils. If God’s government extends only to the good deeds of men, then is His absolute government totally excluded; for “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Romans 3:10-12).” We would not limit the government of our God, nor, because we cannot comprehend His designs, dare to say He has no designs.

“He in the thickest darkness dwells,
Performs His work, the cause conceals;
But, though His methods are unknown,
Judgment and truth sustain His throne.

“In Heaven, and earth, and air, and seas,
He executes His firm decrees;
And by His saints it stands confess’d
That what He does is always best.”

Men act voluntarily when they commit sin; they have no more knowledge of or respect for the purpose of God, than Joseph’s brethren or Potiphar’s wife had in his case, for there is no fear of God before their eyes. It is even so with the princes of this world; if they had known Jesus, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But it was needful that Joseph should be cast into prison, and it was expedient that Christ should suffer, therefore that knowledge was withheld from the persecutors of Joseph and of Jesus, until they should fill up the cup of their wickedness. And it is thus in the wisdom of God that the world by wisdom shall not know Him. Yet such is the wisdom, power and righteous government of our God that He can and does set the exact bounds by which the wickedness of men and devils is limited, and beyond which they cannot go. Satan is bound a thousand years with a great chain, and after the thousand years he shall be loosed for a short time. With all his rage and malice he is restricted by the supreme power and decree of God, to do no more nor less than what God will overrule for the good of His people and for His own glory. And thus also, “God, willing to shew His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,” as in the case of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, hardening the heart of Pharaoh until all the plagues and judgments were accomplished, and His own almighty power and glory were then made known in delivering the Hebrews, and in overwhelming Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. “Therefore hath He mercy on whom He will have mercy, and whom He will He hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus (Romans 9:17-22)?”

The Apostle, fully aware of the disposition of the carnal mind to cavil and reply against the sovereignty of God in the execution of His pleasure, did not attempt to apologize for God, or so to modify the doctrine as to render it less objectionable to the carnal mind; but he called attention to the infinite disparity between the infinitely wise, holy and omnipotent God, who holds our everlasting destiny, and by whose longsuffering we are permitted to live, and poor, finite, depraved, short-sighted man, and the daring presumption and extreme folly of questioning the justice or wisdom of God in working all things after the counsel of His own will. We regard it as a very serious matter to charge that God cannot govern the world, by His own determinate counsel, wisdom and power, according to the eternal and immutable design or purpose purposed in Himself before the world began, without subjecting Himself to the charge of being the author of sin. Sin is the transgression of a law under which the transgressor is justly held amenable, and to the penalty of which he is subject. But we have endeavored to show that God is under no law but that of His own will and pleasure, and therefore He doeth His pleasure in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. He could by no law be held under obligation to leave the affairs of this world or any part of them to be governed by chance, or by the will of men. As He is in one mind, and none can turn Him, His purposes are eternal, like Himself. His decrees being perfect from everlasting, admit of no improvement or change. If He had not the right to predestinate all things pertaining to the events of time before He created the world, we ask what right has He acquired subsequently to execute the orders of His throne? If it had been His pleasure to have prevented sin from entering into the world, can we doubt His power or wisdom or ability to have done so? If sin has entered this world in opposition to His will, or because He had not the wisdom and power to prevent its entrance, what assurance have we that it will not also enter the world to come? But it is to our mind far

more consistent with what God has graciously made known to us of His being and attributes to believe that God had a purpose worthy of Himself, however inscrutable to us, in regard to the entrance of sin, as well as in regard to all things else. He bids us “Be still, and know that He is God.” To our feeble mind the conclusion is unavoidable, that the predestination of God either controls all things or nothing.

We look at a vast complicated machine, with its ten thousand wheels. We cannot comprehend or understand its workings, but we are told that the machinist has a perfect knowledge of all its parts save one; there is a definite use for every wheel and spring, but one is held in the machine which has no certain motion or definite use. How long could that machine run in safety, with the unruly part liable at any moment to throw the whole into confusion? We cannot see how any part of the government of God can be absolute and secure, if God has not the undivided government of the whole in all its parts; and if He has today the full control, had He not the same control yesterday and forever? If He has not the full control today, is there any certainty that He will have tomorrow or at any future period? If we admit that God absolutely governs all things according to the counsel of His own will, and that He is immutable, then we must admit that He has determined what shall and what shall not transpire in time or in eternity. But to deny His universal control of all things, including all principalities and powers, thrones and dominions, things present or to come, whether they be visible or invisible, is to deny that He is the God of the whole earth, and virtually deny His eternal power and Godhead. If He has not the power and wisdom to determine all events, how can He cause all things to work together for good to them that love Him?

But while we hold that He is supreme in power, and that He works all things after the counsel of His own will, we are certain that He reigns in righteousness, and that there is no unrighteousness with Him. To admit the universal government of God is to admit the predestination of all things, from the falling of a sparrow to the dissolution of a world. In the absence of predestination, with what certainty could the Holy Ghost inspire the holy prophets and Apostles to foretell all that should ever come to pass? If it were undetermined in the purpose of God, how could the Apostles tell us of perilous times that should come in the last days, or apostasy from the faith, and spiritual wickedness in high places?

But we will submit these remarks to the consideration of our readers, and desire that what we have written may be carefully tested by the infallible standard, the Scriptures, and received only so far as they are sustained by the word and Spirit of our God.

October, 1880
Elder Gilbert Beebe

Number 12

RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (Cor. 15:22)

The apostle’s subject in this connection, is “the resurrection of the dead;” and he ties it up with especial reference to objections which had been made to the doctrine by some among the Corinthian brethren. It is likely that these objections were various. The Sadducee said there was no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit, (Acts 23:8) but we do not know that any member of the church of God had been led away into this error. It is not likely. The Pharisees allowed what Paul expressly declared to be his belief, “that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust;” (Acts 24:15) but of course, this was only a natural or traditional belief with them, and not a spiritual belief, as it is with those and those only who are taught of God. We learn in the first epistle to Timothy (1:17,18) that one great error upon this subject was, “that the resurrection is past already.” Hymenaeus and Philetus proclaimed this error, and “overthrew the faith of some;” and it must have been regarded by the apostle as a very dangerous error, for he says the word of them that hold it “will eat as doth a canker,” destroying the peace and comfort of those upon whom they take effect, as a canker does, and causing great injury and sore trouble to the church. It seems likely that this error is the principal one with reference to which this particular argument of the apostle was made. I have regarded it as something like this: to hold that all the resurrection there is for us to experience is our experimental resurrection with Christ from under the condemnation of the law at the time our burden of sin is removed, and we find peace in believing, so that as soon as one becomes a believer the resurrection with him is “past already.” This would be simply to deny the resurrection of the body, and this it appears that the objectors referred to in this place did, by the peculiar question they are represented as asking, “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” By this question, they intended to suggest the natural impossibilities of such a thing as the same body being raised up, as a strong argument against it.

It is clear also that the apostle is referring throughout this chapter to something yet to be experienced by the believer, in speaking of the resurrection of the dead, and not to something which was experienced in becoming a believer; for he is talking to believers only, and yet is speaking of what is still in the future for them.

The first argument used in proof of the resurrection is, that Christ is risen. This he reminds them that he had preached to them, even as he had received it, as had also the rest of the ministers of Christ; and he recounts to them the evidence of that resurrection. He does not, however, speak of it as something which any of them had doubted, but rather as that which they all had believed, and in the belief of which they were still well settled. And now he declares to the saints that the resurrection of Christ necessarily implies the resurrection of the dead, that the two things are inseparably connected. The force of this argument evidently depends upon the doctrine of the union of Christ and the church so clearly taught in the Scriptures, but which the world can not receive. To the believers in a conditional salvation, there could be no force in this argument; for they declare that some for whom Christ died and rose again are lost, their salvation and resurrection to eternal life being ensured by the resurrection of Christ, but depending upon their performance of conditions. But the apostle declares their resurrection to depend absolutely upon his as the cause, so that if Christ is risen, then the dead shall rise, and “if the dead rise not, then is not Christ risen.” Now, by “the dead” in this connection the apostle does not, I

think, include the “unjust” but those only who are in Christ. To them alone has he addressed the epistle, and of them alone is he speaking. Some one, I can not now remember who, has suggested to me that the resurrection of both the just and the unjust is by virtue of the resurrection of Christ, although one is unto life, and the other to shame and everlasting contempt, and that both are included in the reference to “resurrection of the dead” in the first part of this chapter. There are sufficient considerations to show that this is not so. First, the declaration for the comfort of the saints that the resurrection of Christ is an absolute proof that the dead will be raised. How could this be an assurance and comfort to the believer if the resurrection to damnation were also assured by it, as well as the resurrection to glory? Second, How could the resurrection of Christ be presented as a proof and necessary assurance of the resurrection of the dead, unless because of a vital connection between him and them? There can be no such connection between him and those unto whom he will say, “I never knew you.” Third, Why should Paul say, “If Christ is not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins?” How could that faith by which they are justified, and cleansed from their sins, be in the resurrection of Christ, if his resurrection also caused that of those who are not justified? Fourth, The apostle here, as well as in other places, sometimes uses the pronoun we, by which he includes only those who, with himself, are subjects of grace, and “shall bear the image of the heavenly.” From all these, and many other considerations, it is clear to me that the argument is confined to the resurrection of the saints.

The apostle evidently regards those to whom he is writing as prepared to appreciate the force of his argument by a knowledge which they all have. They all know that Christ came to save his own people from their sins; and that those who are saved by virtue of his death, were his by a vital relation; and that the efficacy of his death in satisfying the law for them, was because of this relation or vital union existing between him as Head, and them as members of his body before the transgression was committed, in which relation as he appeared under the law, payment for their trespasses could be justly demanded of him, and the punishment due to their sins inflicted upon him. The apostle could, therefore, direct their minds to the full power and effect of this relationship, and show them that when Christ was raised up from the dead, the resurrection of every one thus related to him was absolutely insured. In other places, he speaks of the saints as already risen with Christ, “raised up together.” He is their Resurrection and Life, and when he was raised up from under the law, from under the power of sin and dominion of death, they were raised with him. But not until now have they received the experimental knowledge of this, so as to be addressed as “risen with him.” In this place, he speaks of a resurrection yet to be experienced, clearly showing that it is the resurrection of the body, but which is just as absolutely certain as that which they have already experienced.

To the twentieth verse of this chapter the apostle is considering what would be the case if Christ were not risen, by way of argument. Then he leaves this argumentative style, and declares positively and authoritatively, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” In the twenty-third verse is a more general statement in regard to his being the first-fruits of all the saints. “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.” This also is a positive declaration of a truth, but presented rather as a doctrinal reason for, or proof of the former declaration, more fully to be comprehended by the saints, showing that as death was a penalty incurred by man, the law would demand that man should receive it; and, therefore, to bring any of the mortal race from under its power, our Saviour must appear in the flesh under the law, as a man he must receive the wages of sin which man had earned, as a man die, and rise again by the power of the Father, thus becoming the first-fruits from the grave, of all the family of God.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” A still farther positive declaration in proof that Christ is raised from the dead as the first-fruits of all his people; but a statement so broad, so deep, so full, that the whole subject seems to be covered and embraced in its condensed form. If we should understand the word “all” in the first clause of this sentence to include all the descendants of Adam, still the same word in the next would not necessarily include the same number, but only those who are in Christ as their progenitive spiritual Head. In that case, however, I think it would have been written, “As in Adam all died.” It appears to me that the word “all” in each clause refers to the same characters, and includes all those of whom the apostle is speaking throughout the chapter, who shall be raised in immortality and glory. The use of the present form, die, is the strongest reason for this in my mind, probably, that I can express. When Adam transgressed, death passed upon all his race, so that all are in a state of death when they are born. But none “die” experimentally, none feel the power of that death while in this mortal state, except those who are quickened by the Spirit. Paul was dead in trespasses and sins before the commandment came, but he knew nothing of it, but rather thought himself fully alive in every respect in which he could live. But when the commandment came, with its glare of spiritual light, he saw his sins, felt their penalty, and thus experimentally died, losing all hope or confidence in himself; and ever, so far as his Adamic nature was concerned, he continued to experience that death, though he lived in Christ, who was revealed in him the hope of glory. So with all the saints. Of them alone can it be said that they “die,” except in regard to physical death. All that rises from their Adamic nature is but a manifestation to them of the death that reigns there. Their natural hopes, joys, expectations, all fail and disappoint them, and prove but as exhalations from a body of death. In reference to all things worldly, they “die daily,” as Paul protested to the saints by their rejoicing that he did. If he had not died daily, they could not have rejoiced in his preaching, for he would have preached himself and the power of man, instead of Christ crucified, as soon as he ceased to die in this sense, as the Arminian and worldly preachers all do. Those who do not know their natural state and condition can do much in religious things that they can feed their pride and vanity upon. But not so with the saints. In reference to all their own works, they experience only death. They never live but by the faith of the Son of God.

Now, the death spoken of in the text, I understand to cover the whole ground of the consequences of Adam’s transgression as it is experienced by the saints, from the first sense of sin resting upon them as a burden, to the last gasping struggle of this mortal body. In order to fully understand the points of comparison presented by the words, “as--even so,” and to see where the great force of the comparison is intended especially to bear, we must keep in mind the particular doctrine upon which he is endeavoring to establish the minds of his brethren. It is the resurrection of the dead. His subject is not the new birth, not the first experience of the gift of life by faith in Jesus, but the resurrection of the body; not the quickening, which causes us to walk in the spirit while yet in the flesh, but the change by which our mortal bodies are raised spiritual and immortal bodies.

How, then, do we die in Adam? First, we die spiritually. That may not be a strictly correct expression, but will, perhaps, convey my meaning I do not mean to infer by the word “spiritually” that Adam was created a spiritual being, as one is who is born of God, but to express that death which he immediately experienced, and in which all his posterity are born, in distinction from the death of the body, which is afterwards experienced. He was created perfect as a man; good, pure, innocent. That perfection as a man, that goodness, purity, innocence, he lost, was separated from, in the day he transgressed. In that first condition he was happy, self-satisfied as a man. When he sinned he lost that happiness which was connected with innocence. He was then dead in sin, and in this state all his descendants come into the world. But only when quickened by that “life which is the light of men” do any realize this death; and

therefore with reference to the saints the expression, “they die,” must be used instead of “they died.” As they begin to realize this condition of death, they begin to make efforts to get back into the life which Adam enjoyed in his first estate; but the more they struggle towards this, the more fully do they feel and understand that death which came upon him by sin. They can not talk with God, as the innocent Adam could. They can not approve of themselves, and be at rest in self-complacency, as he was. They can not be satisfied with what is about them, as he was. But, on the contrary, there is continual unrest, bitterness, pain, self-abhorrence, and fear of a justly angry God. Not that they know any thing literally about Adam before his fall, but there is in their minds a picture, as it were, of what he was, of what an innocent man would be, and towards that their desires and struggles tend. They feel or imagine what might be their state, and privileges, and enjoyments, if they were only innocent. Every one can remember, and even notice yet, that all his natural efforts when suffering under pain, sorrow, guilt, self-reproach, are, to get back into the enjoyment of such a perfect and happy life as he thinks man might enjoy but for this painful sense and consequence of sin. But this never can be, because in Adam he is dead; and this death he is just now merely becoming more and more conscious of by the light of another life. Experimentally, therefore, in Adam he dies; in Adam all the saints die.

To suit all our natural desires and ideas, and all the theories of worldly or conditional religion, the apostle’s expression must have been, “As in Adam all die, even so in Adam shall all be made alive.” But it is not so. They are made alive, not in Adam again, never more in Adam, not even for a moment, but in Christ. None are ever to know the joys of the perfect life of a man, only the sorrows of his fallen state. But when they are made alive, it is with a life as much higher and more glorious than the perfect life of Adam, as Christ, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace, is higher and more glorious than Adam, the creature of his power and wisdom. As they die in Adam to all the joys and comforts of that innocence and goodness in which he was created, while yet the body lives, so they are made alive in Christ while yet in the flesh, enjoying by faith a taste of the holy pleasures and heavenly comforts of that divine life. This joyful experience of the Christian I regard as corresponding to what I have called the spiritual death in Adam. As in Adam they die thus, in Christ they are made alive thus. Not that the life which they lost is restored, but that another life, infinitely glorious, and eternally theirs in Christ, is now manifested in them; and that life which they now live in the flesh, they live by the faith of the Son of God. They taste the joys of this heavenly life even while enclosed in the body of this death. It is a present experience, not merely an expectation or theoretical looking for. Christ comes into their souls from time to time, experimentally, with sweetness and power, and thus gives them a taste, an earnest, of the rapturous joys of that eternal life.

All this the saints know by experience, and now to this knowledge the apostle addresses himself in speaking what they must recognize as a clear and truthful proposition. They have known that as in Adam they died in sin, so in Christ they are made alive unto holiness, have been given a hope of eternal life, and have been made to taste of heavenly joys. They have known that as sin and death come by Adam’s transgression, so righteousness and life come by the obedience of Christ. And yet, some of them have denied the resurrection of the body. Well, is the death of the body, which all must certainly experience, because of Adam’s transgression? In laying down the natural life, do we “die in Adam?” Then, in this respect also shall we be made alive in Christ. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” This, it seems to me, is the very thing which the inspired apostle means to establish by this expression. To every part of the death-work of Adam there must be a counterpart in the life-work of Christ; and so as the body must go down to death because of the disobedience of Adam, it must come up again into life because of the obedience of Christ; but not as it went down; not into the life from which it was separated. It is made alive in Christ. In answer to the caviling question of the

natural mind, the apostle presents the figure of a seed sown in the earth, and says, “Thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it pleased him, and to every seed his own body.” The putting of the body into the grave literally is not this planting or sowing, but the going down to death, the sowing of the body of the saint in death. As we stand by the bedside of the dying saint, how strikingly the words of the apostle apply. It is sown in corruption, in dishonor, in weakness. It is sown a natural body. That is the kind of a body that every descendant of Adam has. But the bodies of the saints are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God. By the power of that Spirit they shall be raised. But the resurrection power is not only a quickening, but a changing power; and so they are raised in incorruption, in glory, and in power. In a word, they are raised spiritual bodies.

The truth of the resurrection is thus clearly proven, but not to the understanding of the natural mind. The faith of God’s elect discerns it, and by that faith they embrace and rejoice in it. It is a mystery to them, but not a question of doubt, at least when faith is in exercise. They can not understand how, but they believe. Should they give rein to the carnal mind, and follow it in all its attempts at philosophical investigation, they would be lost in a maze of speculation. But compassed about this subject with “the form of sound words,” which they are admonished to hold fast, they are safely enclosed and kept in from error, and can rest in faith and love, even though they can not understand fully the great mystery that is shown them. They do not know how they shall appear when they are raised, but the spiritual body must be beyond the natural sight or comprehension; but they know that they shall be raised, and that is enough. “It does not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory.” (1 John 3:2; Cot. 3:4)

Elder Silas H. Durand
February 24, 1871

Number 13

THE JUDGMENT

The Scriptures assure us that God will judge the world in righteousness at the last day, by that Man whom he hath appointed. Paul testifies that that judgment shall be according to his gospel.

By the term judgment, in a scriptural sense, and when used in reference to God's judgment, we are not to understand a court of investigation, for the purpose of ascertaining the guilt or innocence of those who are to be judged. A trial, according to law, examination of witnesses, and an investigation of circumstances, is indispensable before a finite court, in order to convict the guilty or justify the innocent. But God, the Judge of all, is infinite. All things are naked and open to his omnipotent eye, so that he needs not to be informed of the state and condition, prospect or destiny of any of his creatures. The ungodly are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them. Judgment has already come upon them to condemnation, and under that condemnation they are even now held, under chains of darkness, reserved unto the day of judgment, (not to be tried,) but to be punished for the guilt of which they are already convicted. This guilt has been found upon all the posterity of Adam; all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; and, as evidence of this, death has passed upon all men. Even the subjects of grace and salvation were by nature children of wrath, even as others. There is nothing in their nature or practice, as the children of the earthly Adam, to distinguish them from the rest of the fallen family of mankind. The judgment of the last day, as we have said, shall be according to Paul's gospel; and as we read the gospel preached by Paul, we understand that God, from the beginning, has chosen his people unto salvation through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth. This choice, Paul says, was anterior to the foundation of the world. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." - Eph. i. 3, 4. The salvation to which God has chosen his people is from sin and wrath, and the accomplishment of it is by their full, free, perfect and eternal redemption, which is in Christ Jesus, in whom they are chosen. Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. (Eph. i. 5-7). By virtue of this election, wherein God hath chosen his people to salvation, a ransom was provided, and they are redeemed from sin and wrath, and made acceptable unto God in the Beloved, in whom they have redemption, and they are freely justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." - Rom. viii. 1. This is as the waters of Noah unto the Lord: for as he has sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so has he sworn that he will no more be wroth with his people, nor rebuke them; for the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but his kindness shall not depart from them, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed, saith the Lord that has mercy on them. (Isaiah liv. 9, 10.)

The sins of God's people were open, going beforehand to judgment. They were carefully reckoned up, and in all their magnitude of number and turpitude, they were all laid upon him who was made sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him. In laying upon him the iniquities of us

all, (that is of all whose sins he bore in his own body on the cross,) their sins necessarily went beforehand to judgment. Also, in an experimental sense, when the sinner is quickened and made sensible of his lost and helpless condition, his sins are set in order before him, and he sees, feels and acknowledges his guilt, and the dreadful sentence of the law of God in his condemnation; not until the precious Savior is revealed to him, and an evidence that he has canceled the law's demands on his behalf, can he see how God's justice can be sustained in his damnation. But in the revelation of Christ, he is enabled to say, "Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." The saints of God are already judged, condemned and executed in their Head and legal representative. They are crucified with Christ. (Gal. ii. 2.) Baptized unto Jesus Christ, baptized into his death, buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Rom. vi. 3,4.) They are redeemed, justified and cleansed by the washing of regeneration, and shall never again come into condemnation for they are passed from death unto life. Their sins can never be brought in judgment against them again, neither in time nor in eternity, for God has promised to remember them no more. As a thick cloud he has blotted them out. They have therefore nothing to fear in regard to a judgment to come. This matter is forever settled from the following considerations:

First. Their judgment has already past, as we have shown by the foregoing arguments and testimony.

Second. Sin is a transgression of the law, and where there is no law there is no transgression; and the saints are no more under the law but under grace. The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Third. The church is the mystical body of him who is the Judge, by whom the world is to be judged in righteousness at the last day; and in that body, the church, Christ will preside in the final judgment, and all his members will perfectly acquiesce.

Fourth. Their sins are covered by the expiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God has made a solemn and everlasting covenant with them, that he will remember their sins and iniquities no more.

Fifth. Because as soon as Christ the Judge shall appear, they shall see him as he is, and shall be like him. He is himself their Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption. No examination will be required to demonstrate the perfection of their righteousness, for Christ as their righteousness cannot be impeached. Their maker is their Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his name, and their Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth shall he be called. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.

The judgment of the last day, therefore, so far as the saints are concerned, is but the execution of what we are assured in Paul's gospel shall be accomplished. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and the saints shall be caught up, shall meet their Savior in the air, and so shall they be forever with the Lord. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, for the Lord knoweth them that are his. Here, then, let your faith rest upon the promise which God, that cannot lie, made before the world began. The judgment of the ungodly, so far as we understand testimony, will not rest upon disclosures then and there made, but it will embrace the execution of the decision already made; for, as we have proved, they are already tried, found guilty, and they are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them.

We might greatly extend our remarks upon this subject, and shall, probably, at some future time, if spared, show how many portions of Scripture, which relate to the present organization and government of the church of God, have been misapplied, and used as though they had been spoken in reference to the final judgment of the last day. The Lord shall judge his people. He does now judge them. His judgment-seat is in Zion, and all his disciples are amenable to that judgment-seat for every idle word, and for every vain and foolish thought. But they are judged under the law of the kingdom of Christ, and not by that law which is the administration of death. If they forsake the law of Christ, under which they are brought, and keep not his commandments, he will visit their sins with a rod, and their transgressions with stripes; but his loving-kindness he will not take utterly away, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. The saints are dead to the law, by the body of Christ, and are quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to set together in heavenly places; and they are married unto him that is risen from the dead, that they may bring forth fruit unto God.

One great, though somewhat common mistake, which has tended to involve the subject, much to the depression of the children of God, has been in supposing that Christ will not occupy his judgment-seat until he shall come in the last day to raise the dead and judge the world. But divine revelation assures us that “The Lord is our Judge; the Lord is our Lawgiver; the Lord is our King; he will save us.” - Isaiah xxxiii. 22. As Judge, his decisions are as final now as they shall be when he shall present his spotless bride before the throne of his Father, and turn the wicked into hell, with all the nations that forget God.

Carnal professors, and graceless legalists, may require the terrors and thunder of Mt. Sinai, and the fearful apprehension of a judgment to come, to whip them into an unwilling subjection to what they call holiness, piety and religion; their highest motives being selfish, the hope of heaven and the fear of hell; but those whom the Son has made free, have received not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The mind and Spirit of Christ is in them, holiness is their element; they love God, love holiness, and hate sin.

“Immortal principles forbid
The sons of God to sin.”

They are born of God, and his seed abides within them, and they cannot sin, because they are born of God; and the sin which is in their flesh, they loathe and hate; for it is at war with the Spirit of life which is within them, and it makes them groan, being burdened, and long and sigh for the day when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and they delivered from the body of this death.

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