

OUTLINES  
OF  
THEOLOGY.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS.

1. *What is the Scriptural doctrine as to the perseverance of the saints?*

“They whom God hath accepted in his beloved, effectively called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”—Con. Faith, Chap. XVII.; L. Cat., question 79.

2. *By what arguments may the certainty of the final perseverance of the saints be established?*

1st. The direct assertions of Scripture, John x., 28, 29; Rom. xi., 29; Phil. i., 6; 1 Pet. i., 5.

2d. This certainty is a necessary inference, from the Scriptural doctrine (1.) of election, Jer. xxxi., 3; Matt. xxiv., 22–24; Acts xiii., 48; Rom. viii., 30; (2.) of the covenant of grace, wherein the Father gave his people to his Son as the reward of his obedience and suffering, Jer. xxxii., 40; John xvii., 2–6; (3.) of the union of Christians with Christ, in the federal aspect of which Christ is their surety, and they can not fail, (Rom. viii., 1,) and in the spiritual and vital aspect of which they abide in him, and because he lives they must live also, John xiv., 19; Rom. viii., 38, 39; Gal. ii., 20; (4.) of the atonement, wherein Christ discharged all the obligations of his people to the law as a covenant of life, and purchased for them all covenanted blessings; if one of them should fail, therefore, the sure foundation of all would be shaken, Is. liii., 6, 11; Matt. xx., 28; 1 Pet. ii., 24; (5.) of justification, which declares all the conditions of the cove-

nant of life satisfied, and sets its subject into a new relation to God for all future time, so that he can not fall under condemnation, since he is not under the law, but under grace, Rom. vi., 14; (6.) of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, *a* as a seal by which we are marked as belonging to God, *b* as an earnest, or first installment of the promised redemption, in pledge of complete fulfillment, John xiv., 16; 2 Cor. i., 21, 22; v., 5; Eph. i., 14; (7.) of the prevalency of Christ's intercession, John xi., 42; xvii., 11, 15, 20; Rom. viii., 34.

3. *What is the doctrine of the Romish Church on this subject?*

Council of Trent, Sess. VI., canon 23. "If any one maintain that a man once justified can not lose grace, and, therefore, that he who falls and sins never was truly justified, let him be accursed."

4. *What is the Arminian doctrine on this point?*

It is an inseparable part of the Arminian system, flowing necessarily from their views of election, of the design and effect of Christ's death, and of sufficient grace and free will, that those who were once justified and regenerated may, by neglecting grace and grieving the Holy Spirit, fall into such sins as are inconsistent with true justifying faith, and continuing and dying in the same, may consequently finally fall into perdition.—"Confession of the Remonstrants," xi., 7.

5. *What objection is urged against the orthodox doctrine on the ground of the free agency of man?*

Those who deny the certainty of the final perseverance of the saints hold the false theory that liberty of the will consists in indifference, or the power of contrary choice, and consequently that certainty is inconsistent with liberty. This fallacy is disproved above, Chapter XVIII, see especially question 9.

That God does govern the free acts of his creatures, as a matter of fact, is clear from history and prophecy, from universal Christian consciousness and experience, and from Scripture, Acts ii., 23; Eph. i., 11; Phil. ii., 13; Prov. xxi., 1.

That he does secure the final perseverance of his people in a

manner perfectly consistent with their free agency is also clear. He changes their affections and thus determines the will by its own free spontaneity. He brings them into the position of children by adoption, surrounding them with all of the sources and instruments of sanctifying influence, and when they sin he carefully chastises and restores them. Hence the doctrine of Scripture is *not* that a man who has once truly believed is secure of ultimate salvation, subsequently feel and act as he may; but, on the contrary, that God secures the ultimate salvation of every one who is once truly united to his Son by faith, by securing, through the power of the Holy Ghost, his most free perseverance in Christian feeling and obedience to the end.

6. *What objection is urged against the orthodox doctrine upon the ground of its supposed unfavorable influence upon morality?*

The objection charged is, that this doctrine, "once in grace always in grace," must naturally lead to carelessness, through a false sense of security in our present position, and of confidence that God will secure our final salvation independently of our own agency.

Although it is certain, on the part of God, that if we are elected and called, we shall be saved; yet it requires constant watchfulness, and diligence, and prayer to make that calling and election sure to us, 2 Pet. i., 10. That God powerfully works with us, and therefore secures for us success in our contest with sin, is in Scripture urged as a powerful reason not for sloth, but for diligence, Phil. ii., 13. The orthodox doctrine does not affirm certainty of *salvation* because we have *once* believed, but certainty of *perseverance in holiness* if we have *truly* believed, which perseverance in holiness, therefore, in opposition to all weaknesses and temptations, is the only sure evidence of the genuineness of past experience, or of the validity of confidence respecting future salvation, and surely such an assurance of certainty can not encourage either carelessness or immorality.

7. *What objection to this doctrine is founded on the exhortations to diligence; and on the warnings of danger in case of carelessness addressed to believers in the Scriptures?*

The objection alleged is, that these exhortations and warnings necessarily imply the contingency of the believer's salvation, as conditioned upon the believer's continued faithfulness, and consequently involving liability to apostasy.

We answer—

1st. The outward word necessarily comes to all men alike, addressing them in the classes in which they regard themselves as standing ; and as professors, or "those who think they stand," are many of them self-deceived, this outward word truly implies the uncertainty of their position, (as far as man's knowledge goes,) and their liability to fall.

2d. That God secures the perseverance in holiness of all his true people by the use of means adapted to their nature as rational moral and free agents. Viewed in themselves they are always, as God warns them, unstable, and therefore, as he exhorts them, they must diligently cleave to his grace. It is always true, also, that if they apostatize they shall be lost ; but by means of these very threatenings his Spirit graciously secures them from apostasy.

*8. What special texts are relied upon to rebut the arguments of the orthodox upon this subject ?*

Ezek. xviii., 24 ; Matt. xiii., 20, 21 ; 2 Pet. ii., 20, 21, and especially Heb. vi., 4-6 ; x., 26.

All of these passages may be naturally explained in perfect consistency with the orthodox doctrine which is supported upon that wide range of Scripture evidence we have set forth above, question 2. They present either, 1st, hypothetical warnings of the consequences of apostasy with the design of preventing it, by showing the natural consequences of indifference and of sin, and the necessity for earnest care and effort ; or, 2d, they indicate the dreadful consequences of misimproving or of abusing the influences of *common grace*, which, although involving great responsibility, nevertheless come short of a radical change of nature or genuine conversion.

*9. What argument do the opponents of this doctrine urge from Bible examples and from our own daily experience of apostatce ?*

They cite from the Scriptures such instances as that of David

and Peter, and they refer to the many examples of the apostasy of well-accredited professors, with which, alas! we are all familiar.

All these examples, however, fall evidently under one of two classes, either, 1st, they were from the beginning without the real power of godliness, although bearing so fair an appearance of life in the sight of their fellow-men, Rom. ii., 28 ; ix., 6 ; 1 John ii., 19 ; Rev. iii., 1 ; or, 2d, they are true believers who, because of the temporary withdrawal of restraining grace, have been allowed to backslide for a time, while in every such case they are graciously restored, and that generally by chastisement, Rev. iii., 19. Of this class were David and Peter. No true Christian is capable of deliberate apostasy ; his furthest departure from righteousness being occasioned by the sudden impulse of passion or fear, Matt. xxiv., 24 ; Luke xxii., 31.