

BIBLICAL RECORDER.

March 22d, 1871.

NOTE.—If the BIBLICAL RECORDER... March 22d, 1871.

ELDER JOHN ROWE, Dear Sir,—Though your proposition was published in Zion's Landmarks in January, it was not seen by me till a few days since, when I found the paper at the house of a friend.

Having at last seen your proposition and supposing it to be made in good faith, I accept and to-day commence the publication of your article, to be continued from week to week, till concluded. I purpose to accompany the publication with respectful comments pointing out, as I may be able, those unhappy delusions which have obscured the faith, and corrupted the practice of your preachers and people.

Many comment of mine on your article shall seem unkind, I beg pardon in advance; because my only object is to place the truth before you. If I shall misrepresent your views, or fail to state them fairly, I promise a prompt and honorable reparation.

J. H. MILLS, Editor of the BIBLICAL RECORDER.

BUTLER, TAYLOR CO. GAZETTE, December 1st, 1870.

ELDER L. L. RODENHAMER—Dear Brother,—On perusing Dr. Hooper's first letter, published in Zion's Landmarks, Vol. 4, Oct. 15th, 1870, I perceive the following challenge to our whole body, clergy, laity and all: "If any of your body can get their finger on one sentence in all the ten thousands and even millions of pages poured forth by this (the American Tract Society) the organ and representative of the collected orthodoxy of America, can put their finger on a sentence teaching good works as earning or meriting salvation and to be done with that end, then I will shut my mouth and plead guilty to all your maledictions."

Truly this sounds loudly, and I hope it may not be altogether an empty sound, but that the Dr. will at least confess his guilt, if it be shown that he himself has written such a sentence. I have neither the opportunity nor inclination to refer to all the millions of pages poured forth by the American Tract Society, nor do I deem it necessary to do so, as the very sentiment which we are challenged to show is contained in the same letter in which the challenge appears, and this I expect that you, not however, to any who close their eyes lest they should see. And though I feel inclined to take part in this controversy, yet that impression is not from any disapproval of what brother Rodenhamer has written, but on the contrary, I very highly approve and appreciate the sentiments and style of his reply to Dr. Hooper, and would thank God for the healthy glow in his mind, yet I am aware that volume might be written upon the subject of discussion without exhausting the subject; and as our whole body is challenged, I therefore feel at liberty to say, as I do, as I hope, the more controversy sake, but that the truth of God may run and be glorified. I hope that Dr. Hooper himself is a man of God and would not be unwilling to know the truth, as he is an old man, and most soon to be in eternity. Only a few years more at most will end a strife with myself, Dr. Hooper, and many others. Why then should we discuss our differences with lightness or malice? I do not suppose if all the millions of pages poured forth by the American Tract Society was searched, that such a form of words as the following could be found: "We believe that salvation is by faith alone, and procure salvation by good works." And while Arminians do not say that, yet they say it plainly, and we know that the above name is not a new one.

And now I propose to show, first, that such a sentiment is utterly inconsistent with the idea of sovereign election, which Dr. Hooper affects to hold; second, that the idea that God strives by law and gospel to save such as finally perish, is a perversion of the doctrine of special reprobation; third, that it represents sinners as sovereigns and God as a dependent; fourth, that the theory supposes salvation to be by works and not of grace. Then to strive, what is it? It is to make efforts, to use exertions, to endeavor with earnestness, &c.

Now, of course as Dr. Hooper believes that God strives by law and gospel to overcome the opposition of some sinners, whose opposition he does not overcome, he must believe that such earnest efforts result from a choice of God to save such sinners; for even men, ignorant as they are, would not strive to do that they would not like should be done. And now, Dr. Hooper, suppose I should ask you the following questions: Did the Lord strive to overcome the opposition of Cain? I have your answer before me. Did he strive to overcome the opposition of Esau? I have your answer before me. Did the Lord strive in good earnest to overcome the opposition of Judas, to convert and save him? I have your answer before me. Do you believe that the Lord strives by law and gospel to overcome the opposition of sinners whom he finally leaves to perish in sin and unbelief? Your answer is in the affirmative. Oh, my dear sir, are you not afraid you will jeopardize your character as a man of learning by holding such conflicting sentiments? What is manifest to us by the Lord's effectually calling and converting some sinners? His choice to save such is clearly evident by such a work of his Spirit; and if, as you say, the Lord strives to convert others, though he fails as you imagine, yet that effort shows that he is just as much and in like manner concerned for the salvation of those that are lost as he is those that are saved. Where, then, is the election—or perhaps I should first ask what is election? Mr. Webster answers, the act of choosing—choice, the act of selecting one or more from others. Now, if God chooses to save all sinners, and that choice is manifested by his striving by law and gospel to overcome the opposition of all; as you say, then I ask from whom does the Lord choose his people? According to Dr. Hooper's theory, he does not choose them from among the children of Adam; for he says the Lord strives to save all. And suppose he was capable of doing so, Doctor, would you then hold for election? What would you mean by it? You could not mean what Webster says the term signifies. Do you not perceive that the idea that God strives by law and gospel to overcome the opposition of sinners, in which in many instances he fails, is a perversion of the import of the term election. Surely where all of things or persons would be accepted, there could be no choosing one or more from others; and yet you say in your article, "We think the doctrine of predestination and election is written in the Scriptures as with a sunbeam, and we wonder how John Wesley and his pious followers can fail to see it—how they can regard Paul as an inspired teacher, and not accept these doctrines as the revealed truth of God; much more do we wonder that they can call them as pernicious and abominable." Now, my dear sir, I can heartily adopt your expressions here, for often when I have failed to consider the dark and benighted state of man's mind the fall, as revealed in the Scriptures, I have felt astonished at their opposition to the doctrine of sovereign election, which has been the source of so much comfort to my poor soul. But then I am less astonished at your astonishment, as you hold election in precisely the same light that John Wesley and his pious followers do. I will venture the assertion that you cannot find an intelligent Methodist in America that will repudiate the idea of a conditional election, just such as you yourself hold for; or, if you would deny holding conditional election, then why would you represent the Lord as striving by law and gospel to save sinners on condition they would yield to that striving? By this theory you not only ignore sovereign election and identify yourselves with Arminians in common, but you represent God as a quack doctor, who must experiment with his patient, to see if he can affect a cure. Do you suppose the Lord does not know who will yield to his striving by law and gospel? Surely he knows this, if he knows all things. Why, then, would he strive with such as do not yield to his law? Will you answer, to leave them without excuse? I reply that their sins leave them without excuse; or, if they do not, then the Lord's striving with them by law and gospel will not, for the Lord should have employed better means. And so the Lord himself might need an excuse, and what excuse could he render since he possesses all wisdom and power?

Now, of course as Dr. Hooper believes that God strives by law and gospel to overcome the opposition of some sinners, whose opposition he does not overcome, he must believe that such earnest efforts result from a choice of God to save such sinners; for even men, ignorant as they are, would not strive to do that they would not like should be done. And now, Dr. Hooper, suppose I should ask you the following questions: Did the Lord strive to overcome the opposition of Cain? I have your answer before me. Did he strive to overcome the opposition of Esau? I have your answer before me. Did the Lord strive in good earnest to overcome the opposition of Judas, to convert and save him? I have your answer before me. Do you believe that the Lord strives by law and gospel to overcome the opposition of sinners whom he finally leaves to perish in sin and unbelief? Your answer is in the affirmative. Oh, my dear sir, are you not afraid you will jeopardize your character as a man of learning by holding such conflicting sentiments? What is manifest to us by the Lord's effectually calling and converting some sinners? His choice to save such is clearly evident by such a work of his Spirit; and if, as you say, the Lord strives to convert others, though he fails as you imagine, yet that effort shows that he is just as much and in like manner concerned for the salvation of those that are lost as he is those that are saved. Where, then, is the election—or perhaps I should first ask what is election? Mr. Webster answers, the act of choosing—choice, the act of selecting one or more from others. Now, if God chooses to save all sinners, and that choice is manifested by his striving by law and gospel to overcome the opposition of all; as you say, then I ask from whom does the Lord choose his people? According to Dr. Hooper's theory, he does not choose them from among the children of Adam; for he says the Lord strives to save all. And suppose he was capable of doing so, Doctor, would you then hold for election? What would you mean by it? You could not mean what Webster says the term signifies. Do you not perceive that the idea that God strives by law and gospel to overcome the opposition of sinners, in which in many instances he fails, is a perversion of the import of the term election. Surely where all of things or persons would be accepted, there could be no choosing one or more from others; and yet you say in your article, "We think the doctrine of predestination and election is written in the Scriptures as with a sunbeam, and we wonder how John Wesley and his pious followers can fail to see it—how they can regard Paul as an inspired teacher, and not accept these doctrines as the revealed truth of God; much more do we wonder that they can call them as pernicious and abominable." Now, my dear sir, I can heartily adopt your expressions here, for often when I have failed to consider the dark and benighted state of man's mind the fall, as revealed in the Scriptures, I have felt astonished at their opposition to the doctrine of sovereign election, which has been the source of so much comfort to my poor soul. But then I am less astonished at your astonishment, as you hold election in precisely the same light that John Wesley and his pious followers do. I will venture the assertion that you cannot find an intelligent Methodist in America that will repudiate the idea of a conditional election, just such as you yourself hold for; or, if you would deny holding conditional election, then why would you represent the Lord as striving by law and gospel to save sinners on condition they would yield to that striving? By this theory you not only ignore sovereign election and identify yourselves with Arminians in common, but you represent God as a quack doctor, who must experiment with his patient, to see if he can affect a cure. Do you suppose the Lord does not know who will yield to his striving by law and gospel? Surely he knows this, if he knows all things. Why, then, would he strive with such as do not yield to his law? Will you answer, to leave them without excuse? I reply that their sins leave them without excuse; or, if they do not, then the Lord's striving with them by law and gospel will not, for the Lord should have employed better means. And so the Lord himself might need an excuse, and what excuse could he render since he possesses all wisdom and power?

1. The Pharisees supposed themselves the chosen, peculiar people of God. "We be Abraham's seed." "Abraham is our father." They not only tithed all their crops even of mint, anise, and cummin, but they scorned to eat with those who put untithed food upon their tables, and they thanked God that they were not sinners like other men. But that being, who is yet to judge them, has already pronounced them "hypocrites." They would also "compass sea and land to make one proselyte," and made the word of God of none effect by their tradition.

2. Verily we marvel that some poor worms of the dust are so exercised concerning God's sovereign election. God is abundantly able, to take care of all his decrees. Paul expounded the doctrine of election for the consolation of converted church-members; but no inspired man ever preached it to an unconverted. The primitive Baptists preached repentance, faith and works, just as if they had never heard of predestination; they never told sinners to wait for God to draw them; but told them to repent. They did not oppose those who preached the gospel to the heathen; but rejoiced when it was announced to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

3. Elder Rowe does not seem to think the Lord was willing to bless such sinners as Esau, Judas and others. Esau sold his birth right liberally, and lost it forever. So some sinners sell their souls to the Devil; and the sale is allowed in heaven. Judas was a very wicked man; yet when he was invited to the gospel feast, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." "Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live, ye shall surely live, they will; why will ye say, that he will not live?"

4. Elder Rowe alludes (it seems to us without due reverence) to the Almighty "as a quack doctor" striving to cure the sick on the supposition that He strives with men. Well, God says: My spirit shall not always strive with man. "All day long I have stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." "I have called and ye have refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded." 5. Elder Rowe declares that "Grace and works will not stand together as copartners." "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." James ii:20-24.

6. Elder Rowe plants himself on the doctrine of election and becomes an absolute infidel in regard to other teachings of Holy Writ. Predestination instead of being one source of comfort, swallows all the gospel and becomes his Alpha and Omega, his first and his last, his all and in all. Why, Christians must not live by the bread of election only; but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. "The pastor of the Methodist church, in this city," edited (?) his congregation on Sunday before last, with an allusion on the Baptists generally, and made some allusions to the BIBLICAL RECORDER. Had we intended to criticise the Methodist, in a public address, we should certainly have given the Advocate due and timely notice; but as we knew nothing of this attack until several days after it was made, we now notice it as reported in the Advocate. The editor of that paper speaks of an "able and logical sermon, based on a text found in Acts I: 5." Here is the verse: "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." The burden of the text is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, foretelling the great event which occurred on the day of Pentecost; but the preacher used it to preface an untimely philippic on the "sect everywhere spoken against." We are not able to discover how the discussion, reported in the Advocate, could grow out of the text. We can not help suspecting that the sermon was made first, and the text was then stacked up before it.

The burden of proof rests upon the Baptists to demonstrate that the word, baptize, as used in the Bible, means to immerse only. Yes, and they have proved it a thousand times. You say it means to sprinkle. Here the burden of proof rests on you. "The Bible does not prescribe a specific mode for the performance of other important Christian duties. Prayer is a Christian duty, yet its mode is not prescribed. Christians are left free to pray, kneeling or standing, to use written form or not." "So the duty of communion was clearly stated, yet no mode as to the attitude of the body, or the quantity of bread and wine to be used, was prescribed."

Then, why does the Methodist Discipline prescribe an attitude of the body in receiving the communion? Here it is: "Then shall this general confession be made by the minister in the name of all those who are admitted to receive the holy communion, both he and all the people kneeling humbly upon their knees, and saying, Amen." The preacher also said: "As no mode was expressly prescribed, the Methodists allowed the liberty of choice to their members." How could he make such a statement, when every body knows that the poor little babes are carried to church and sprinkled without their consent, and then, when they are grown and converted, baptism is denied them if they desire it. Baptism is called "the door of the church," and the innocent babes are pushed in before they are old enough to choose. Where is the liberty of choice?

The preacher said: "We had baptized a large number of females in this way, all of whom showed great temptation during the ceremony." And no wonder. We have no doubt that Samson himself would have shown great trepidation during the ceremony, if he had been baptized by a man who had so often denounced the ordinance as disorderly and dangerous, who had made it mean so many different things, and who had attempted to nullify it by sprinkling all before they were old enough to decide for themselves. The preacher urged that immersion was sometimes unconvivial, and we truly admit that immersion in God is sometimes unconvivial; but we do not see how it can be so, when it is performed in the proper manner.

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