

A sermon on the Final Perseverance of the Saints, by Elder J. A. Stradley.

TEXT.—The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.—Job xvii: 9.

A. Every intelligent human being feels more or less the importance of finding the way of eternal life.

B. I have no doubt of the fact that the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the saints, would be more readily understood and believed, if persons would seek to know and remember that there are many who seem to be righteous, but are not.

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The change that must be effected, and in this effected in the sinner's heart, in order to prepare him for this holy way, is so great that it is spoken of as a new birth, and when the sinner has been born again, he is called a "new creature in Christ."

3. By placing them in the way and going with them. When the redeemed of the Lord begin to inquire for the "High way of Holiness," then they hear the "small voice of God," saying to them: "This is the way, walk ye in it."

III. In numerous and positive declarations of Scripture. Dr. Gill says that the doctrine now under consideration, is taught as clearly in the Scriptures as if written with a sun-beam, and that to transcribe all the passages that teach it, would be to transcribe a very large portion of the Bible.

1. The Scriptures teaching this doctrine are not only numerous, but positive. They contain no "if," implying conditions or uncertainty; but they all contain the "shall" and the "will" of God. On the other hand all the passages of Scripture from which the doctrine of "Final Apostasy" is inferred, for such a doctrine is only inferred, and no where positively taught, contain "if" or some other word of condition, contingency or uncertainty, or "if" the righteous shall, &c.

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Christ, which is pure and holy. 4th. "This doctrine supercedes the use of means." Answer. It does not; for he, who has ordained the end, has also ordained the means to be used in securing that end.

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FINAL CONCLUSION. For the space of about two years I have been preaching the Kingdom of God as different from the church of God.

I was led to notice the difference between kingdom and church by finding in the Greek Testament that the original Greek words translated church and kingdom had no similarity of meaning and were never used synonymously as they are frequently used in Pedobaptist ecclesiastical history.

I was led to inquire why do some theologians use words contrary to their plain meaning in the New Testament? I wrote to some of our most competent ministers on the subject, and was convinced by their replies that there was a very grave error in using the word (kingdom) which in the original means "reign," "dominion," "power," in the sense of "church," which in the New Testament is never used in any sense that congregation or assembly (the people of God collectively).

My observation convinces me that some ministers preach a mere outward religion, and not the "Gospel of the kingdom of God" as did all the disciples of Christ.

Outward religion however important is only declaratory. Religion may be love, but love only proves our Christianity. It is regeneration, and not love, that makes us disciples. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another."

Love does not make us disciples, it only proves our discipleship. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. Love is the evidence that we are regenerated, passed from death unto life.

Hence, Christianity is one thing, and love, as the evidence thereof, is another. Many ministers make love, Christianity thereby ignoring regeneration (as the kingdom of God within you). They preach religion or the outward duties of Christianity, for Christianity itself, their theology rejects the "gospel of the kingdom of God," and teaches a gospel of a mere outward religion instead thereof.

Such teaching is peculiar to most Pedobaptist societies and is the excuse for teaching that the church of God includes infants as professed believers instead of true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Baptists ever have been distinguished from Pedobaptists by believing in a converted membership, Christ's people, the true meaning of the church.

Jesus. Their use was therefore probably already familiar to Loyola, and if he actually explained them as reported, it would seem that he was more able as a Romanist than as an antiquarian.

In view of the diverse interpretations which are given to this antiquated symbol, it is a question whether it would not be in good taste for those churches which reject a dead language in their worship to shape their Christmas pines into the letters JESUS, instead of I.H.S.

DEAR RECORDER.—Some of us are glad to see that the friends in Raleigh, and Dr. Wingate and others are all about to wake up to the importance, I may say, the necessity of endowing Wake Forest College. The plan proposed, we think a good one. The one on which the work can be the most speedily accomplished.

Let us have the Convention, as early as practicable. It is all important for our brethren to meet and deliberate on our educational interests separate from all other subjects. In our State Convention and district associations, there are so many subjects to be reported upon that education, which is perhaps the most important of all to the Baptists of N. C., fails to receive the proper attention.

Let the brethren meet and spend a few days in looking at our educational interests, and we believe that they will take the parting hand, feeling that Wake Forest College must and shall be richly endowed and will thus go home with such a zeal and such plans as will arouse our whole people to the importance of educating the young. Pardon this lengthy scribbling, for I only intended to say a word or two when I began.

Who and What was Elihu? Dr. Conant, in his translation of the book of Job, tells us that there need be no doubt that Job was a veritable historical person; and in support of this view, he adduces, of course, the well known passages in Ezekiel XIV: 14-20; and in James V: 11. He seems rather to assume, than to touch for, the historical existence of Job's three friends, and of Elihu; but it seems to me that the unhistorical, or mythical, or dramatic character of these personages would be very difficult, nay impossible, to prove, and that such a view is compassed with insuperable objections.

I believe that Dr. Conant is in the main right, though not in taking the following positions, namely, that the discourses of the book of Job "all proceed from the inspired writer; that the supposition; that we have before us the very words of Job and his friends; that uninspired men expressed themselves thus and thus, and that they only reported their language, is too assured to be entertained for a moment; that the whole is the production of the inspired writer; and that the mode selected by Divine Wisdom, for giving us the discussion of the various topics of the book."

The only objection which I feel disposed to urge, is that the assumption that Job's three friends (and I may add Elihu, and why not Job himself?) were uninspired men, is only an assumption, though probably a correct one; and that, that the authority of the view opposed to his own, is, perhaps, somewhat overstated. I do not believe that it is easy to settle the extent (if any) to which we are to regard Job, and the other characters of the book as inspired, names, and while I am not sure that they were inspired, and indeed, am inclined to adopt Dr. Conant's view as correct; still when I find Paul (I Cor. III: 19) quoting Elihu's (in Job V: 13) and introducing the quotations with the formula, "as it is written," I confess that my view is not quite so satisfactory, nor so free from difficulties as one could wish.

We may make out a pretty satisfactory proof of the reality of Elihu's existence as a historical character, however, whatever may be thought of his inspiration. Our proof rests on much the same basis as that of the reality of Job, though it varies somewhat in its form. True, we can point to no passage (outside of the book of Job) in which the historical character of Elihu himself is assumed; but we are informed that he was a Danite; and in Gen. XXII: 20-21, we learn that Buz was a son of Nahor, Abraham's brother. The historical

character of Job's three friends can be made out upon of the same sort of evidence. The character of Elihu has been very variously estimated. Some have regarded him as the mouth-piece of Jehovah. This view seems to rest upon the fact that Elihu condemns both Job and his friends, and upon the further fact that Jehovah does not condemn Elihu (as he does Job and his three friends) in the closing chapters of the book.

To my mind this is exceedingly strange reasoning. If wholesale condemnation of our associates be evidence of special inspiration from the Almighty, then the days of inspiration are certainly not passed; for no one of us need go very far to find some querulous critic, who could do wonders in this direction. I confess that I have no special reason for believing that scolding is any proof of inspiration.

If Jehovah's silence as to Elihu is to be regarded as proof of the Divine endorsement of the views expressed by him, then we have the same endorsement of the Devil; for he, too, is a character in the drama, and Jehovah does not condemn him at the close.

On the other hand, I cannot agree with those who go to the other extreme, as some have done, and say that Elihu was a conceited upstart, and that Jehovah does not notice him because he had said nothing that was worth noticing. He said some things that were true; and, upon the whole, I am not sure that he does not speak about as well as the others. It is very certain that all the characters of the book (Jehovah, of course, excepted) had partial, imperfect and unsatisfactory views of the character and course of Divine Providence; but I can not notice that this was more conspicuously true of Elihu than of the other interlocutors; nor, to tell the plain truth, do I see that it was more true of any of them, than it is now of nearly all the speakers who attempt to enter upon the same field of discussion. If a man nowadays can talk five minutes on "the interpretation of Providence," and not utter a good deal of nonsense, you may be sure that he is one man out of a thousand! How many of us heard sermons at the beginning of the war, proving that the Southern Confederacy must succeed because God was just! And how many men (after the war was over) were brought, by just this sort of reasoning, to adopt the maxim that Providence is on the side of the strongest battalions! The maxim has an infidel sound, it is true; but it has a great deal more sense, and a great deal more truth in it, than can be found in the reasoning from which it is a natural recoil.

How many of us, since the war, have been hearing and reading vast masses of nonsense about "the logic of events," proving that slavery was wrong, because "Providence had abolished it," when any man of sense ought to be able to see at a glance, that the same argument, before the war, would have shown that slavery was right because "Providence had established it." If the abolition of slavery under the permission of divine Providence shows that slavery was wrong, how can we escape the conclusion that kidnapping slaves was right? Was not this done under the same Providence?

The truth is that I know of no department of thought on which men—yes, good, wise, Christian men, talk so much nonsense, and impiety, and downright profanity, as they do talk, when they undertake to "interpret Providence." Now it was just precisely this, that Elihu, and the other interlocutors were attempting. The very point before them was "What has God done this?" But God had not told anybody why he had; and if he had told his reason, I do not believe that any living man could have understood it.

Further, when Jehovah is introduced at the close, He does not explain anything to anybody. He distinctly refuses to do anything of the sort. Nay, he does just the reverse of explaining. He adds problem to problem, and puzzle to puzzle, and mystery to mystery, and then explains—nothing.

It would seem that men are wonderfully slow to learn the very important lesson which the book of Job certainly does teach—namely that we are not to darken counsel by words without knowledge.

Indeed when we make the due allowance for oriental phraseology, and then call to mind some of the "interpretations of Providence," which we frequently hear from our pulpits, and read in our religious newspapers, I am not sure that Elihu was not at least as modest as are the majority of these speakers and writers who in our day, have ventured to treat of the subject which Elihu was discussing.