

**EIGHT SERMONS ON THE NATURE OF
FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS, AS PROTECTIVE
AGAINST DOCTRINAL
ERROR; ON THE CLAIM TO AN
INFALLIBLE AUTHORITY IN THE CHURCH;
AND ON BAPTISMAL REGENERATION**

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BY THE

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PREFACE.

I HAVE to apologise for the delay in meeting the wish of my congregation for the publication of these Sermons. So far as I could judge, the reporter had been very accurate in the manuscript forwarded by him to me for revision. But the defects of my extempore sermons appeared so plain in a faithful transcript, that I determined to write out the entire course with the hope of rendering it more serviceable to those dear to me. I had not, however, when undertaking to do this, sufficiently estimated the difficulty of attempting such alterations as should consist with the obligation of preserving both the subject matter, and order of arrangement in their

original integrity. The only time I could appropriate to this employment consisted of a few occasional evening hours, when I was wearied greatly by extreme daily occupation of mind and body. I fear, therefore, I have not effected the improvements I had contemplated. I have, however, omitted some repetitions, and made, for the sake of clearness, some few insertions. I must now express my apprehension, for I cannot say my regret, least the judgment of the many dear friends who desired the publication of these Sermons has been, much influenced by the affection which I prize.

EIGHT SERMONS.

First Sermon.

GALATIANS III. 1.

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"

THE circumstances which occasioned this Epistle to be written were simply these:—The Galatian church had been among the first-fruits of the apostle's ministry; through his preaching its members had been turned from darkness unto the knowledge of truth and of God's dear Son. This, his relationship to them, is conveyed by a form of expression eminently significant of anxiety and affection—"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again, until Christ be formed in you." But these children of love were children of waywardness and disobedience. False teachers had crept in, who undermined his doctrines and unsettled his church. His teaching had been, that man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ—theirs, except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved. But such success had the falsehood against

the truth, that, in the serious disturbance to the faith of the Galatian converts which ensued, we find the motive to this effort of the apostle for their recovery.

St. Paul's doctrine had been, that the sole ground of justification is faith in the merits of a crucified Redeemer. This involved, of course, renunciation of all merit on the part of man. In fact, faith itself implicitly makes this confession, because, when rightly understood, it expresses affiance on the Lord, preceded by distinct and unreserved surrendery of all claim to acceptance with God on the ground of personal obedience; such surrendery itself resulting from a conviction of entire human inability to fulfil the requirements of God, because of the power of indwelling sin. The order of feeling seems very clear. Conviction of sin; the consequent renunciation of all individual competency to observe the law of God, and therefore of all personal merit for such obedience; faith in Christ. Now, the law was designed to teach the first of these—conviction of sin. It did so by revealing the extent and purity of God's requirements, and inducing a sense of human impotency to discharge them.

There is a noble passage (Rom. vii. 13) which powerfully brings out this truth—"But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful."

It was a truthful and great conception which pictured "The Fury," not as developing in her countenance the terrible expression of all bad and hateful passions, but as a young maiden of fair face, with a green and ghastly snake twined amid her hair, its head bent a little over her forehead, and imparting to her countenance a hue of inexpressible malignancy and horribleness. In the instinctive recoil of the startled spectator lay the sure evidence of the truth and terribleness of the painter's conception. The power of the effect was in the contrast. Thus sin worked death by that which was good, that sin might be revealed in its aspect of exceeding sinfulness. The dark stain is best shown on the clear surface. God designed, by the revelations of His law, which was holy, just, and good, to set sin side by side with it, and unveil its loathsomeness by force of the contrast itself. Nay, by more than this, for the true nature of sin is never known nor loathed until we take in its defacing and deforming character. All its hideousness and evilwill are not brought out and brought home, until we know and feel its insatiable craving for the degradation and destruction of man's soul and body. I think there is here a peculiar lesson. Sin is to be hated, but it must also be loathed. Hatred does not always spring from loathing—there are other sources of aversion. But sin must be loathed, and, to be so, must be considered in its defacing and