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# Select Writings of William Cunningham

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# Leaders of the Reformation

The Reformation from Popery in the sixteenth century was the greatest event, or series of events, that has occurred since the close of the Canon of Scripture; and the men who are really entitled to be called the "Leaders of the Reformation" have a claim to more respect and gratitude than any other body of uninspired men that have ever influenced or adorned the church. The Reformation was closely connected in various ways with the different influences which about that period were affecting for good the general condition of Europe, and, in combination with them, it aided largely in introducing and establishing great improvements in all matters affecting literature, civilisation, liberty, and social order. The movement, however, was primarily and fundamentally a religious one, and all the most important questions that may be started about its character and consequences, should be decided by tests and considerations properly applicable to the subject of true religion. The Reformers claimed to be regarded as being engaged in a religious work, which was in accordance with God's revealed will, and fitted to promote the spiritual welfare of men; and we are at once entitled and bound to judge of them and their work, by investigating and ascertaining the validity of this claim.

There are two leading aspects in which the Reformation, viewed as a whole, may be regarded; the one more external and negative, and the other more intrinsic and positive. In the first aspect it was a great revolt against the see of Rome, and against the authority of the church and of churchmen in religious matters, combined with an assertion of the exclusive authority of the Bible, and of the right of all men to examine and interpret it for themselves. In the second and more important positive aspect, the Reformation was the proclamation and inculcation, upon the alleged authority of Scripture, of certain views in regard to the substance of Christianity or the way of salvation, and in regard to the organization and

ordinances of the Christian church. Many men have approved and commended the Reformation, viewed merely as a repudiation of human authority in religion, and an assertion of the right of private judgment, and of the exclusive supremacy of the Scriptures as the rule of faith, who have not concurred in the leading views of the Reformers in regard to Christian theology and church organization. In this sense, rationalists and latitudinarians have generally professed to adopt and act upon what they call the principles of the Reformation, while they reject all the leading doctrines of the Reformers. Men of this class usually attempt to pay off the Reformers with the credit of having emancipated mankind from ecclesiastical thralldom, established the right of private judgment, and done something to encourage the practice of free enquiry. But while giving the Reformers credit for these things, they have often rejected the leading doctrines of the Reformation upon theological and ecclesiastical subjects, and have been in the habit of claiming to themselves the credit of having succeeded, by following out the principles of the Reformation, in educing, either from Scripture or from their own speculations, more accurate and enlightened doctrinal views than the Reformers ever attained to. There has been a great deal of this sort of thing put forth both by rationalists and latitudinarians who professed to admit the authority of the Christian revelation, and by infidels who denied it. Dr Robertson in his life of Charles V. spoke of some doctrinal discussions of that period in such terms as justly to lay himself open to the following rebuke of Scott, the son of the commentator, in his excellent continuation of Milner's "History of the Church of Christ."

*The Reformers; and the Theology of the Reformation (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 38 George Street, 1862), pp1-3.*

# The Reformers: Lessons from their History

Having spoken at length of the character of the Reformers, we mean to make a few general observations that may be fitted to suggest some useful practical lessons from the subject. It might afford materials for some interesting reflections to notice the variety of gifts which God conferred upon the different Reformers individually, bestowing upon one what another wanted [lacked], or did not possess in the same degree; and thus providing, notwithstanding the infirmities of human nature, for their cordial co-operation, to a large extent, among themselves, in their different spheres, and also for enabling them to advance most fully, by their united labours and efforts, the success of the common cause. This would afford an interesting illustration of the abundant goodness and manifold wisdom of God; but we must confine ourselves to some of those circumstances which were common to the Reformers in general, viewed as a class or body of men; and we remark:

1. That the Reformers in general were men eminently distinguished at once for the strength of their natural talents, and the extent of their acquired learning. That this was indeed the case, is too evident to admit of dispute, and has never been questioned even by their bitterest enemies. They were men possessed of such distinguished talents as would have raised them to eminence and influence in any department of study or occupation to which they might have turned their attention; and their writings and labours abundantly establish this position. This was, of course, no merit of theirs, and affords no ground whatever why either they or others should boast. Its importance and value lie only in this, that it is a matter of fact, that God selected, and qualified in other respects, for the work of restoring His truth and reforming His church, men whom He had gifted with very superior natural abilities. This was the Lord's doing,



this was the course which He pursued on that memorable occasion, and which He has ordinarily pursued in most important epochs, connected with the maintenance of His truth and the advancement of his cause. We are looking upon it as just what the Lord in His wisdom was pleased to do, as a thing effected, and of course intended, by Him in His actual administration of the affairs of the church and the world. We are to regard it in this light, as an undoubted reality, intended by Him, like all that He does, to make Himself known, and to unfold and impress the principles of His moral government; and, viewing the fact in this aspect, to consider what are the lessons which it is fitted to teach.

It should lead men, of course, to estimate aright mental power and vigour as a valuable gift of God, intended by Him to be used, and often employed by Him, in fact, in the advancement of His cause. This, however, is not a lesson which it is very necessary to inculcate; for although occasionally fanatical exceptions do appear, the general and ordinary tendency of men is to overestimate mere intellectual power, irrespective of the purposes to which it is applied, the objects to which it is directed. Still, it is right to remember that God, by selecting as instruments for the restoration of His truth and the reformation of His church, men whom He had gifted with very superior intellectual powers, has thereby borne testimony to their value and importance, has indicated the responsibility connected with the possession of them, and the purpose to which they ought to be chiefly applied; while He has, also, by the same fact, made it not only warrantable, but incumbent upon all, to aim at the cultivation and improvement of the intellectual powers which He may have conferred, as a distinct and definite object, in subordination to His glory, and as a means of fitting Christians more fully for doing something for the advancement of His cause.

The fact that the Reformers were, also, in general, men of extensive acquired learning, admits of a more direct and obvious practical observation; as it reminds us of our obligation to improve to the uttermost our opportunities of acquiring useful knowledge, and

encouraging us in the prosecution of this object by holding out the expectation, that the more knowledge we may be able to acquire, we may become the more useful in promoting His cause.

God, having, in His wisdom, selected for the work of the Reformation, men whom He had endowed, generally speaking, with very superior intellectual powers, and whom He had united, or resolved in His own good time to unite, to Jesus Christ, by a true and living faith, inspired them with a desire to acquire all the knowledge that might be useful in the prosecution of the work to which they were destined; and so arranged, in His own providence, the outward circumstances in which He placed them, that they had the means and opportunities of gratifying this desire. Thus He brought about the actual result; that they became, in point of fact, extensively learned in all matters connected with the work in which they were to be engaged; while we find, also, that He was graciously pleased to employ the learning which they had acquired, or rather which He had bestowed upon them, as instrumental, in its place, in contributing, in some measure, to the promotion of His cause. The success of that cause is to be ascribed wholly to His own agency, - the operation of His Spirit upon the minds and hearts of men; but the full recognition of the agency of the Spirit as the only real author of the whole success, does not preclude the propriety of attending to and marking the instrumentality employed, as exhibited in the men who were the instruments of bringing about the results, and in the various gifts as well as graces bestowed upon them and manifested in their work; and it is a fact, and one that ought certainly to be noticed and improved, that God, in selecting and preparing the instruments whom He was to employ in introducing and extending the Reformation, took care that they should be men who, speaking of them generally, had become possessed of a share of knowledge and learning, connected with all theological subjects, greatly superior to that of the great body of those by whom they were surrounded.

The circle of science, in every department, was greatly more limited then than it is now; and the amount of attainable knowledge, by

means of reading, greatly less. But the important consideration, - that which involves a principle and teaches a lesson, - is, that the Reformers were led to desire, and were furnished in providence with the means of acquiring, a very large amount of the then attainable knowledge which was fitted to increase their influence and to promote their success, in establishing truth and in organising the church. Some of them held a very distinguished place among the scholars of the age in some departments of literature that were not exclusively professional. Calvin derived most important advantages, with reference to the special work to which he was afterwards called, and the talents and habits which it required, from his having been led in providence, in early life, to go through a course of study in law and jurisprudence in two of the most eminent French Universities. Melancthon and Beza were acknowledged as ranking among the most eminent Greek scholars of the period; and brought at once that refinement of taste and elegance of style which an acquaintance with classical literature tends to produce, and at the same time great philosophical learning, to bear upon the interpretation of Scripture and the defence of divine truth. Almost all of them were well read in the works of the principal writers of Greece and Rome, - in the writings of the Fathers, and the history of the church, - and in the scholastic philosophers and theologians of the middle ages; and this comprehended nearly all the knowledge that was then generally accessible. All this knowledge they were enabled to acquire; they employed it in the work to which they were called; and they found that the possession and application of it contributed to promote the success of their labours. The lesson which this fact is fitted to teach, is, that we should estimate highly the value of learning, as a means of promoting the interests of truth and righteousness; and that we should feel it to be incumbent to acquire as much of knowledge and learning as opportunities will allow, - especially of that knowledge and learning which bears most directly and immediately upon the various departments of labour in which we may be called upon to engage for the advancement of Christ's cause.

In tracing the history of the lives of the leading Reformers, we find that there is scarcely one of them who had not opportunities afforded them in providence, at some period or other, of devoting a considerable portion of time to diligent and careful study. We find they faithfully improved these opportunities - that they were in consequence able ever thereafter to bring out of their treasure things new and old, and were thus fitted for wider and more extended usefulness. In one aspect, indeed, the truest and highest test of the usefulness of men who have honestly devoted themselves to the immediate service of God, may be said to be the number of souls whom they have directly been the instruments of converting. God has not unfrequently bestowed, in large measure, this highest usefulness upon men who were but slenderly furnished either with intellectual superiority or acquired knowledge; and any man, however great his talents and acquirements who has received many souls for his hire, may well be satisfied with his usefulness and the reward of it. But independently of the consideration, that in all probability God has never employed any man as an instrument of extensive good in His church whom He has not made the direct instrument of converting some from the error of their ways and thereby saving their souls, - it must be observed that there is a test of usefulness, which may be regarded as in some respects even higher than this, - when men are enabled to contribute to the wide diffusion of great scriptural principles or truths, - the maintenance and success of a great scriptural cause, -or the infusion of spiritual health and vigour into a dead or languid church. And in these high and diffusive departments of Christian usefulness, the Lord has usually been pleased to employ the services of men who had received from Him, not only the gift of renewed hearts, but also of superior intellectual powers, and of extensive and varied knowledge. So at least it certainly was of the era of the Reformation; and the fact that God then took care that those whom He meant chiefly to employ in this important work, did in fact, acquire extensive learning, which they employed in His service, should teach the obligation incumbent upon all, of improving to the uttermost the opportunities afforded in

providence of acquiring all useful knowledge, and the sinfulness of neglecting them.

2. But, in the second place, the history of the Reformers is fitted to teach a lesson, by exhibiting a striking example of unwearied activity and industry. They were not mere students and authors, they were diligent and laborious workers. As students, they acquired a large stock of learning; as writers they have transmitted to us a great mass of valuable authorship; while, at the same time, most of them had a great amount of ordinary practical work and business to attend to, and to discharge, in the different situations in which they were placed.

Most of them were voluminous authors, and have left behind them productions, the mere transcription of which we, with our low standard of industry and labour, are apt to think might be work for a lifetime. The works of the different Reformers exhibit, of course, in different degrees, evidence of care and elaboration in point of thought and diction, - but they have almost all bequeathed productions which must have occupied a great deal of time, and required a great deal of thought and pains. And they were none of them retired students, with leisure to devote their time unbroken to reading, reflection, and composition. They were all busily engaged in the discharge of important public duties, as professors and teachers, as pastors of congregations, and organizers of churches; and in the ordinary administration of ecclesiastical affairs. They had a great public cause in hand, in the defence and maintenance of which they were called upon to take a part; and this not only required of them the publication of works through the press, but must have entailed upon them a large amount of private correspondence and of personal dealing with men. They did not, in general (Beza was an exception), attain to a great age, but they lived while they lived; and amid much to distract and harass them, they performed an amount of labour, physical and intellectual, the contemplation of which is usefully fitted to humble us under a sense of our imbecility, inactivity, and laziness, and to stir up to more strenuous and persevering action.

Zwingle was cut off at the age of forty-seven; and yet, besides doing a great deal of work, not only as pastor and professor of theology in Zurich, but as the leading Reformer (of the German portion) of Switzerland, he has left us four folio volumes of well-digested, well-composed matter, upon all the great theological topics that then occupied the public mind.

And what a life was Calvin's! Though he lived only fifty-four years, and struggled during a large portion of it with a very infirm state of bodily health, and with much severe disease, half his life was well-nigh spent before the Lord brought him to Geneva, and called him to engage in the public service of His church. But how much was he enabled, during the remainder of his life, to do and to effect! Though engaged incessantly in the laborious duties of a pastor and professor of theology, he was called upon to give his counsel and advice, by personal applications and by written correspondence, upon almost every important question, speculative or practical, that affected the interests of the Reformed cause throughout Europe; and yet he has left many folio volumes (in one edition nine, and in another twelve) full of profound and admirably-digested thinking upon the most important and difficult of all subjects, - exhibiting much patient consideration and great practical wisdom, clothed in pure and classical Latin; forming also (for some of them were written in French, and several, as the "Institutions," both in Latin and French), in the estimation of eminent French critics, who had no liking to his theology or his ecclesiastical labours, an era in the improvement of the language of the country which had the honour to give him birth.

We are too apt to think, in these degenerate times, that a reasonable and not very exalted measure of diligence and activity in some one particular department, whether of study or of practical labour, is all that can be fairly expected; but the example of the Reformers should show that it is possible, through God's grace, to do much more, - should teach a lesson of the value of time, and of the obligation to husband and improve it, - and constrain all to labour, with

unwearied zeal and diligence, expecting no rest here, but looking, as they did, to the rest that remaineth for the people of God.

3. The third and last lesson suggested by the history and conduct of the Reformers is, the necessity and importance of giving much time and attention to the study of the Word of God. The Reformers were all led by God, at an early period in their history, to give careful attention to the study of the sacred Scriptures; and they were guided by His Spirit to form correct views of the great leading principles which are there unfolded. They were led to continue ever after to study them with care and diligence; and they persevered in applying them to comfort their hearts amid all their trials, and difficulties, and to guide them in the regulation of their conduct. It is very evident, from surveying the history and the writings of the Reformers, that their strength and success, - both as defenders of divine truth and maintainers of God's cause, - and also as men engaged, amid many difficulties in the practical business of the church, and the world, and in the administration of important affairs, - arose very much from their familiar and intimate acquaintance with the Word of God - the whole Word of God. They were familiar with the meaning and application of its statements, and they were deeply imbued with its spirit. The Word of God dwelt in them richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, and thus became "a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their path."

It is an interesting fact, and is one proof and manifestation of their deep and careful study of the Word of God, that many of the leading Reformers have left, amid their other voluminous productions and abundant labours, commentaries upon the whole, or a large portion of, the sacred Scriptures. We have eight or nine commentaries upon the whole, or large portions of, the Old and New Testaments, - the productions of as many of the most eminent and laborious of the Reformers; and this fact itself, proves the large amount of thought and attention which they were accustomed to devote to the study of them, and the great familiarity which they had acquired with them. To write a commentary upon the Scriptures, which should really

possess any value or utility, implies that they have been made the subject of much deep study and much careful meditation, as well as fervent prayer for divine direction.

The commentaries of the Reformers, upon the sacred Scriptures, are, of course, possessed of different degrees of value and excellence, - according to the different gifts and qualifications of the men, and the times and pains which they were able to bestow upon them; and here, as in everything else connected with the exposition and application of the whole truth of God, Calvin towers far above them all; yet, as a whole, they fully vindicate what we have said of their talents, learning, and general character; and fully prove that they were eminently qualified for discerning and opening up the mind of God in His Word, and that they devoted a large portion of time and attention to investigating the meaning of the sacred Scriptures, - to forming clear and definite conceptions of the import of their statements, - and to bringing them out for the instruction and improvement of others.

There is reason to fear, that, since the period of the Reformation, the careful study of the Word of God itself has not usually received the share of time and attention, comparatively, given to the perusal and study of other books connected with theological subjects, and too little to the study of the inspired volume. We know, in general, but little of the Word of God as it ought to be known, - and we are very much disposed to remain in contented ignorance of what God has written for our instruction. We are dependent for all true knowledge of the Word of God upon the agency of the divine Spirit, - but that Spirit we are little concerned to implore. We are dependent, also, for the attainment of this knowledge, upon our own personal study of the sacred Scriptures, - upon bringing all the powers of our minds to bear upon the investigation of their meaning, - and giving to this study no inconsiderable portion of our time and attention. But we almost all continue to be chiefly occupied with other pursuits, and with the perusal of other books, while but a fraction of our time is given to the study of the Bible; and this, too, often without much



sense of the solemnity and responsibility of the occupation, and without even our ordinary powers of attention and application being brought into full and vigorous exercise.

Now all this is, in the first place, a sin, - because it is the neglect and violation of a plain and undoubted duty; and then it has a powerful tendency to diminish the vigour and check the progress of the divine life in the soul, and to enfeeble and paralyse all efforts, in commending with efficacy and success, divine truth to others. The Lord was pleased to lead the Reformers to a careful study of His Word, and to guide them to correct views of its leading principles. He qualified them largely for opening up and expounding its statements to others, - He led them to give much time and attention to this occupation, and made their labours, in this department, orally and by writing, the great means of their usefulness and success; and we may be assured, that it will be, to a large extent, through our capacity to open up and understand the whole mind of God, as revealed in His Word, - a capacity to be acquired only by fervent prayer and by diligent and continued study of the inspired volume itself, - that we shall best grow in grace and in the power of Christian usefulness.

"The Reformers: Lessons From Their History" is from William Cunningham's *The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation, Banner of Truth*, 1967 edition, pp 600-608.

# The Reformers and the Regulative Principle

Of the views generally held by the Reformers on the subject of the organization of the Church, there are two which have been always very offensive to men of a loose and latitudinarian tendency — viz. the alleged unlawfulness of introducing into the worship and government of the Church anything which is not positively warranted by Scripture, and the permanent binding obligation of a particular form of Church government. The second of these principles may be regarded, in one aspect of it,” as comprehended in the first. But it may be proper to make a few observations upon them separately, in the order in which they have now been stated.

The Lutheran and Anglican sections of the Reformers held a somewhat looser view upon these subjects than was approved of by Calvin. They generally held that the Church might warrantably introduce innovations into its government and worship, which might seem fitted to be useful, provided it could not be shown that there was anything in Scripture which expressly prohibited or discountenanced them, thus laying the *onus probandi*, in so far as Scripture is concerned, upon those who opposed the introduction of innovations. The Calvinistic section of the Reformers, following their great master, adopted a stricter rule, and were of opinion that there are sufficiently plain indications in Scripture itself, that it was Christ’s mind and will that nothing should be introduced into the government and worship of the Church, unless a positive warrant for it could be found in Scripture. This principle was adopted and acted upon by the English Puritans and the Scottish Presbyterians; and we are persuaded that it is the only true and safe principle applicable to this matter.

The principle is in a sense a very wide and sweeping one. But it is purely prohibitory or exclusive; and the practical effect of it, if it were fully carried out, would just be to leave the Church in the condition in which it was left by the apostles, in so far as we have any means of information — a result, surely, which need not be very alarming, except to those who think that they themselves have very superior powers for improving and adorning the Church by their inventions. The principle ought to be understood in a common-sense way, and we ought to be satisfied with reasonable evidence of its truth. Those who dislike this principle, from whatever cause, usually try to run us into difficulties by putting a very stringent construction upon it, and thereby giving it an appearance of absurdity, or by demanding an unreasonable amount of evidence to establish it. The principle must be interpreted and explained in the exercise of common sense. One obvious modification of it is suggested in the first chapter of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* where it is acknowledged ‘that there are some circumstances, concerning the worship of God and government of the Church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature and Christian prudence, according to the general rules of the Word, which are always to be observed’. But even this distinction between things and circumstances cannot always be applied very certainly; that is, cases have occurred in which there might be room for a difference of opinion, whether a proposed regulation or arrangement was a *distinct thing* in the way of innovation, or merely a *circumstance* attaching to an authorized thing and requiring to be regulated. Difficulties and differences of opinions may arise about details, even when sound judgment and good sense are brought to bear upon the interpretation and application of the principle; but this affords no ground for denying or doubting the truth or soundness of the principle itself.

In regard to questions of this sort there are two opposite extremes, into which one-sided minds are apt to fall, and both of which ought to be guarded against. The one is to stick rigidly and doggedly to a general principle, refusing to admit that any limitations or

qualifications ought to be permitted in applying it; and the other is to reject the principle altogether, as if it had no truth or soundness about it, merely because it manifestly cannot be carried out without some exceptions and modifications, and because difficulties may be raised about some of the details of its application which cannot always be very easily solved. Both these extremes have been often exhibited in connection with this principle. Both of them are natural, but both are unreasonable, and both indicate a want of sound judgment. The right course is to ascertain, if possible, whether or not the principle be true; and if there seem to be sufficient evidence of its truth, then to seek to make a reasonable and judicious application of it.

With regard to the Scripture evidence of the truth of the principle, we do not allege that it is very direct, explicit, and overwhelming. It is not of a kind likely to satisfy the coarse, material literalists, who can see nothing in the Bible but what is asserted in express terms. But it is, we think, amply sufficient to convince those who, without any prejudice against it, are ready to submit their minds to the fair impression of what Scripture seems to have been intended to teach. The general principle of the unlawfulness of introducing into the government and worship of the Church anything which cannot be shown to have positive Scriptural sanction, can, we think, be deduced from the Word of God by good and necessary consequence. We do not mean at present to adduce the proof, but merely to indicate where it is to be found. The truth of this principle, as a general rule for the guidance of the Church, is plainly enough involved in what Scripture teaches concerning its own sufficiency and perfection as a rule of faith and practice, concerning God's exclusive right to determine in what way He ought to be worshipped, concerning Christ's exclusive right to settle the constitution, laws, and arrangements of His kingdom, concerning the unlawfulness of will-worship, and concerning the utter unfitness of men for the function which they have so often and so boldly usurped in this matter. The fair application of these various Scriptural views taken in combination, along with the utter want of any evidence on the other

side, seems to us quite sufficient to shut out the lawfulness of introducing the inventions of men into the government and worship of the Christian Church.

There is no force in the presumption, that, because so little in regard to the externals of the Church is fixed by Scriptural authority, therefore much was left to be regulated by human wisdom, as experience might suggest or as the varying condition of the Church might seem to require. For, on the contrary, every view suggested by Scripture of Christianity and the Church, indicates that Christ intended His Church to remain permanently in the condition of simplicity as to outward arrangements, in which His apostles were guided to leave it. And never certainly has there been a case in which it has been more fully established by experience, that the foolishness of God, as the apostle says, is wiser than men; that what seems to many men very plausible and very wise, is utter folly, and tends to frustrate the very objects which it was designed to serve. Of the innumerable inventions of men introduced into the government and worship of the Church, without any warrant from Scripture, but professedly as being indicated by the wisdom of experience, or by the Christian consciousness of a particular age or country, to be fitted to promote the great ends of the Church, not one can with any plausibility be shown to have had a tendency to contribute, or to have in fact contributed, to the end contemplated; while, taken in the mass — and of course no limitation can be put to them unless the principle we maintain be adopted — they have inflicted fearful injury upon the best interests of the Church. There is a remarkable statement of Dr. Owen's on this subject, which has been often quoted, but not more frequently than it deserves; it is this — 'The principle that the church hath power to institute any thing or ceremony belonging to the worship of God, either as to matter or manner, beyond the observance of such circumstances as necessarily attend such ordinances as Christ Himself hath instituted, lies at the bottom of all the horrible superstition and idolatry, of all the confusion, blood, persecution, and wars, that have for so long a season spread themselves over the face of the Christian world.' It is

no doubt very gratifying to the pride of men to think that they, in the exercise of their wisdom, brought to bear upon the experience of the past history of the Church, or (to accommodate our statement to the prevalent views and phraseology of the present day) in the exercise of their own Christian consciousness, their own spiritual tact and discernment, can introduce improvements upon the nakedness and simplicity of the Church as it was left by the apostles. Perhaps the best mode of dealing with such persons, is to call upon them to exemplify their own general principle, by producing specific instances from among the innumerable innovations that have been introduced into the Church in past ages, by which they are prepared to maintain that the interests of religion have been benefited; or, if they decline this, to call upon them for a specimen of the innovations, possessed of course of this beneficial character and tendency, which they themselves have devised and would wish to have introduced; and then to undertake to show, what would be no very difficult task, that these innovations, whether selected or invented, have produced, or would produce if tried, effects the very reverse of what they would ascribe to them.

There is a strange fallacy which seems to mislead men in forming an estimate of the soundness and importance of this principle. Because this principle has been often brought out in connection with the discussion of matters which, viewed in themselves, are very unimportant — such as rites and ceremonies, vestments and organs, crossings, kneelings, bowings, and other such *ineptiae* - some men seem to think that it partakes of the intrinsic littleness of these things, and that the men who defend and try to enforce it, find their most congenial occupation in fighting about these small matters, and exhibit great bigotry and narrow-mindedness in bringing the authority of God and the testimony of Scripture to bear upon such a number of paltry points. Many have been led to entertain such views as these of the English Puritans and of the Scottish Presbyterians, and very much upon the ground of their maintenance of this principle. Now, it should be quite sufficient to prevent or neutralize this impression, to show, as we think can be done, 1st, That the

principle is taught with sufficient plainness in Scripture, and that, therefore, it ought to be professed and applied to the regulation of ecclesiastical affairs. 2nd, That, viewed in itself, it is large, liberal, and comprehensive, such as seems in no way unbecoming its divine Author, and in no way unsuitable to the dignity of the Church as a divine institution, giving to God His rightful place of supremacy, and to the Church, as the body of Christ, its rightful position of elevated simplicity and purity. 3rd, That, when contemplated in connection with the ends of the Church, it is in full accordance with everything suggested by an enlightened and searching survey of the tendencies of human nature, and the testimony of all past experience. And with respect to the connection above referred to, on which the impression we are combating is chiefly based, it is surely plain that, in so far as it exists *de facto*, this is owing, not to anything in the tendencies of the principle itself or of its supporters, but to the conduct of the men who, in defiance of this principle, would obtrude human inventions into the government and worship of the Church, or who insist upon retaining them permanently after they have once got admittance. The principle suggests no rites or ceremonies, no schemes or arrangements; it is purely negative and prohibitory. Its supporters never devise innovations and press them upon the Church. The principle itself precludes this. It is the deniers of this principle, and they alone, who invent and obtrude innovations; and they are responsible for all the mischiefs that ensue from the discussions and contentions to which these things have given rise.

Men, under the pretence of curing the defects and shortcomings, the nakedness and bareness, attaching to ecclesiastical arrangements as set before us in the New Testament, have been constantly proposing innovations and improvements in government and worship. The question is, How ought these proposals to have been received? Our answer is, There is a great general Scriptural principle which shuts them all out. We refuse even to enter into the consideration of what is alleged in support of them. It is enough for us that they have no positive sanction from Scripture. On this ground we refuse to admit them, and, where they have crept in, we insist upon their being

turned out, although, upon this latter point, Calvin, with his usual magnanimity, was always willing to have a reasonable regard to times and circumstances, and to the weaknesses and infirmities of the parties concerned. This is really all that we have to do with the mass of trumpery that has been brought under discussion in connection with these subjects. We find plainly enough indicated in Scripture a great comprehensive principle, suited to the dignity and importance of the great subject to which it relates, the right administration of the Church of Christ — a principle ‘majestic in its own simplicity’. We apply this principle to the mass of paltry stuff that has been devised for the purpose of improving and adorning the Church, and thereby we sweep it all away. This is all that we have to do with these small matters. We have no desire to know or to do anything about them; and when they are obtruded upon us by our opponents, we take our stand upon a higher platform, and refuse to look at them. This is plainly the true state of the case; and yet attempts are constantly made, and not wholly without success, to represent these small matters, and the discussions to which they have given rise, as distinctively characteristic of English Puritans and Scottish Presbyterians; whereas, in all their intrinsic littleness and paltriness, they are really characteristic only of those who contend for introducing or retaining them.

It was a great service, then, that Calvin rendered to the Church when he brought out and established this principle, in correction of the looser views held by the Lutheran and Anglican Reformers. If all the Protestant churches had cordially adopted and faithfully followed this simple but comprehensive and commanding principle, this would certainly have prevented a fearful amount of mischief, and would, in all probability, have effected a vast amount of good. There is good ground to believe, that, in that case, the Protestant churches would have been all along far more cordially united together, and more active and successful in opposing their great common enemies, Popery and infidelity, and in advancing the cause of their common Lord and Master.



There is another principle that was generally held by the Reformers, though not peculiar to them, which is very offensive to Dr. Tulloch and other latitudinarians, — viz. the Scriptural authority or *jus divinum* of one particular form of Church government. This general principle has been held by most men who have felt any real honest interest in religious matters, whether they had adopted Popish, Prelatic, Presbyterian, or Congregational views of what the government of the Church should be. The first persons who gave prominence to a negation of this principle, were the original defenders of the Church of England in Queen Elizabeth's reign, Archbishop Whitgift and his associates, who scarcely ventured to claim a Scriptural sanction for the constitution of their Church. They have not been generally followed in this by the more modern defenders of the Church of England, who have commonly claimed a divine right for their government, and not a few of whom have gone the length of unchurching Presbyterians and Congregationalists. But they have been followed by some men in every age who seemed anxious to escape from the controlling authority of Scripture, that they might be more at liberty to gratify their own fancies, or to prosecute their own selfish interest.

From the time of Whitgift and Hooker down to the present day, it has been a common misrepresentation of the views *objure divino* anti-prelatists to allege that they claimed a divine right — a positive Scripture sanction — for the *details* of their system of government. Dr. Tulloch seems to have thought it impossible to dispense with this misrepresentation; and accordingly he tells us that Presbyterianism 'not merely asserted itself to be wise and conformable to Scripture, and therefore divine, but it claimed the direct impress of a divine right for all its details and applications'. This statement is untrue. There may be differences of opinion among Presbyterians as to the extent to which a divine right should be claimed for the subordinate features of the system, and some, no doubt, have gone to an extreme in the extent of their claims. But no Presbyterians of eminence have ever claimed 'the direct impress of a divine right for *all* the details and applications' of their system. They

have claimed a divine right, or scriptural sanction, only for its fundamental principles, its leading features. It is these only which they allege are indicated in Scripture in such a way as to be binding upon the Church in all ages. And it is just the same ground that is taken by all the more intelligent and judicious among *jure divino* Prelatists and Congregationalists.

Dr. Tulloch, in the last of the quotations we have given from his book, endeavours to prove that no form of Church government was or could have been laid down in Scripture, so as to be permanently binding upon the Church. His leading positions are embodied in this statement:

The Christian Scriptures are a revelation of divine truth, and not a revelation of church polity. They not only do not lay down the outline of such a polity, but they do not even give the adequate and conclusive hints of one. And for the best of all reasons, that it would have been entirely contrary to the spirit of Christianity to have done so; and because, in point of fact, the conditions of human progress do not admit of the imposition of any unvarying system of government, ecclesiastical or civil.

Dr. Tulloch admits that the Scriptures are ‘a revelation of divine truth’; and since the truth revealed in them is not the theology of the Reformation, we hope that some time or other he will enlighten the world as to what the ‘divine truth’ is which they do reveal. As to the position that ‘the Scriptures are not a revelation of church polity’, we venture to think, that it is possible that something may be taught in Scripture on the subject of Church polity for the permanent guidance of the Church; and if there be anything of that nature taught there, then it must be a portion of the ‘divine truth’ which the Scriptures reveal. Whether anything be taught in Scripture on the subject of Church polity, must be determined, not by such an oracular deliverance as Dr. Tulloch has given, but by an examination of Scripture itself, by an investigation into the validity of the Scriptural grounds which have been brought forward in support of the different

theories of Church government. Dr. Tulloch will scarcely allege, that there is nothing whatever taught in Scripture as to what should be the polity of the Church; and if there be anything taught there upon the subject, it must be received as a portion of divine truth. He is quite sure, however, that the sacred Scriptures ‘not only do not lay down the outline of such a polity, but they do not even give the adequate and conclusive hints of one’. Here we are directly at issue with him. We contend that not merely ‘hints’, but what may be fairly called an ‘outline’ of a particular Church polity, are set forth in Scripture in such a way as to be binding upon the Church in all ages.

We admit, indeed, that when this position is discussed in the abstract as a general thesis, a good deal of the argument often adduced in support of it is unsatisfactory and insufficient, as well as what is adduced against it. When the position we maintain is put in the shape of an abstract proposition, in which the advocates of all the different forms of Church government — Papists, Prelatists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists — may concur; in other words, when the general position is laid down, that a particular form of Church government, *without specifying what*, is sanctioned by Scripture, we admit that the materials which may be brought to bear in support of this position are somewhat vague and indefinite, and do not tell very directly and conclusively upon the point to be proved. The strength of the case is brought fully out only when it is alleged that some one particular form of Church government specified, as Prelacy or Presbyterianism, is sanctioned and imposed by Scripture. The best and most satisfactory way of establishing the general position, that the Scripture sanctions and imposes a particular form of Church government, is to bring out the particular principles, rules, and arrangements in regard to the government of the Church which are sanctioned by Scripture, and to show that these, when taken together, or viewed in combination, constitute what may be fairly and reasonably called a form of Church government. By this process not only is the general proposition most clearly and directly established, but, what is of much more importance, the particular form of Church government which Scripture sanctions, and which,

therefore, the Church is under a permanent obligation to have, is brought out and demonstrated.

Attempts, indeed, have been made to prove and to disprove the general thesis in the abstract by *a priori* reasonings, but most of these reasonings appear to us to possess but little force or relevancy. It is contended on *a priori* grounds, on the one hand, that there *must* have been a particular form of Church government laid down in Scripture; and it is contended on similar grounds, on the other hand, that this *could not* be done, or that it was impossible consistently with the general nature of the Christian Church, and the circumstances in which it was, and was to be, placed. But the truth is, that nothing which can be fairly regarded as very clear or cogent can be adduced in support of either of these abstract positions, unless the idea of a form of Church government be taken, in the first of them, in a very wide and lax, and in the second, in a very minute and restricted sense. On the one hand, while there is a large measure of *a priori* probability, that Christ, intending to found a Church as an organized, visible, permanent society, very different in character from the previously subsisting Church of God, especially in regard to all matters of external organization and arrangement, should give some general directions or indications of His mind and will as to its constitution and government, we have no certain materials for making any assertion as to the extent to which He was called upon to carry the rules He might prescribe as of permanent obligation, or for holding that He might be confidently expected to give rules so complete and minute as to constitute what might with any propriety be called a form of Church government. And, on the other hand, while it is evident that the Christian Church was intended to be wholly different in external organization from the Jewish one, and to have no such minute and detailed system of regulations, as being intended for all ages and countries; and while on these grounds, but little, as compared with the Jewish system, was to be subjected to precise and detailed regulations, and something might thus be left to the Church to be determined by the light of nature and providential circumstances — there is no antecedent improbability whatever,

arising from any source or any consideration, in the idea that Christ might give such general directions on this subject as, when combined together, might justly have the designation of a form of Church government applied to them. On these grounds we do not attach much weight to those general *a priori* considerations, by which many have undertaken to prove, on the one hand, that Christ *must* have established a particular form of government for His Church, or, on the other hand, that He *could not have* done so; and we regard the case upon this whole subject as left in a very defective and imperfect state, until the advocates of the principle of a scripturally sanctioned or *jure divino* form of Church government, have shown what the particular form of Church government is which the Scripture sanctions, and have produced the evidence that Scripture does sanction *that* form, and, of course, a form — which will be a sufficient answer to the allegation that He *could not have done so*.

We think we can prove from Scripture statement and apostolic practice, the binding obligation of certain laws or rules, and arrangements, which furnish not only ‘hints’, but even an ‘outline of church polity’, and which, when combined together, may be fairly said to constitute *a form of church government*. In this way, we think we can show that there is a particular form of church government which, in its fundamental principles and leading features, is sanctioned and imposed by Scripture, viz. the Presbyterian one.

If the general *a priori* considerations which have been frequently brought into the discussion of this subject are insufficient to establish the true position, that Scripture does sanction one particular form of church government, much less are they adequate to establish the false position that it does not. Dr. Tulloch, as we have seen, asserts that we have ‘the best of all reasons’ to show that the Scriptures do not lay down even an ‘outline’ of a Church polity. But his ‘best of all reasons’ are not likely to satisfy any but those who are determined beforehand to be convinced. His reasons are two: 1st, ‘It would have been entirely contrary to the spirit of Christianity to have

done so'; 2nd, 'The conditions of human progress do not admit of the imposition of any unvarying system of government, ecclesiastical or civil.' This is the whole proof which he adduces; and these he calls 'the best of all reasons'. This, forsooth, is to prove that it is impossible that even the 'outline' of a Church polity could have been set forth in Scripture as permanently binding. Even Divine Wisdom, it would seem, could not have devised an outline of a Church polity which would have been accordant with 'the spirit of Christianity and the conditions of human progress'. Our readers, we presume, will not expect us to say anything more for the purpose of refuting and exposing this. 'The spirit of Christianity and the conditions of human progress' might have had some bearing upon the question in hand, if there had been on the other side the maintenance of the position, that the Scriptures imposed upon the Church a full system of minute and detailed prescription of external arrangements, similar in character and general features to the Jewish economy. But when it is considered how entirely different from everything of this sort is all that is contended for by intelligent defenders of the divine right of a particular form of Church government, most men, we think, will see that Dr. Tulloch's appeal, for conclusive evidence against its possibility, to the spirit of Christianity and the conditions of human progress, is truly ridiculous.

The disproof of the position, which has been received so generally among professing Christians, that Scripture does sanction and prescribe the outline of a Church polity, cannot be effected by means of vague and ambiguous generalities, or by high-sounding declamation. It can be effected, if at all, only by the method of exhaustion; that is, by the detailed refutation of all the different attempts which have been made to establish from Scripture the divine right of a particular form of Church government. And this species of work is much more difficult, requires much more talent and learning, than declaiming about 'the spirit of Christianity and the conditions of human progress'.

At the same time, we must admit that it has become somewhat common and popular in modern times, to scout and ridicule the advancing of a claim to a divine right on behalf of any particular form of Church government. This has arisen partly, no doubt, from the ignorant and injudicious zeal with which the claim has been sometimes advocated, even by those whose views upon the subject of Church government were, in the main, sound and Scriptural; but principally, we are persuaded, from certain erroneous notions of the practical consequences that are supposed to follow necessarily from the establishment of this claim.

All Papists and many Prelatists, in putting forth a claim to a divine right on behalf of their respective systems of Church government, have openly, and without hesitation, deduced from their fancied success in establishing this claim, the conclusion that professedly Christian societies which had not *their* form of government were, for this reason, to be refused the designation and the ordinary rights of Christian Churches, or even to be placed beyond the pale within which salvation is ordinarily possible. This mode of procedure, in applying the claim to a divine right, universal among Papists, and by no means uncommon among a certain class of Prelatists, must appear to men who know anything of the general genius and spirit of the Christian system, and who are possessed of any measure of common sense and Christian charity, to be absurd and monstrous; and by many the disgust which has been reasonably excited by this conduct, has been transferred to the general principle of claiming a *jus divinum* on behalf of a particular form of Church government, from which it was supposed necessarily to flow. All this, however, is unwarranted and erroneous. Presbyterians and Congregationalists have as generally set up a claim to a divine right on behalf of their systems of Church government as Papists and Prelatists have done; but we do not remember that there has ever been a Presbyterian or a Congregationalist of any note who unchurched all other denominations except his own, or who refused to regard and treat them as Christian Churches merely on the ground that they had

adopted a form of government different from that which he believed to have, exclusively, the sanction of the Word of God.

But many seem to suppose that Presbyterians and Congregationalists, in not unchurching other denominations on the ground of rejecting what they believe respectively to be the only Scripturally sanctioned form of Church government, are guilty of an amiable weakness, and fall into inconsistency, by declining to follow out their assertion of a *jus divinum* in judging of others, to its natural and legitimate consequences. This notion is erroneous and unjust, as will appear by attending to the true state of the case. All that is implied in claiming a divine right for Presbyterianism, for instance, is that the person who does so believes, and thinks he can prove, that Christ has plainly enough indicated in His Word His mind and will, that the fundamental principles of Presbyterianism should always and everywhere regulate the government of His Church. Prelatists and Congregationalists, professing equally to follow the guidance of the sacred Scriptures and to submit to the authority of Christ, have formed a different and opposite judgment as to the true bearing and import of the materials which Scripture furnishes upon this subject, and have in consequence set up a different form of government in their Churches. This being the true state of the case, the sum and substance of what any candid and intelligent Presbyterian, even though holding the *jus divinum* of presbytery, has to charge against them is just this, — that they have mistaken the mind and will of Christ upon this point, that they have formed an erroneous judgment about the import of the indications He has given in His Word, as to how He would have the government of His Church to be regulated. And this, which is really the whole charge, does not, upon principles generally acknowledged, afford of itself any sufficient ground for unchurching them, or for refusing to recognize and treat them as Christian Churches. It is a serious matter to adopt and to act upon erroneous views in regard to any portion of divine truth, anything which God has made known to us in His Word, and we have no wish to palliate this in any instance. But let the case be fairly stated, and let the principles ordinarily and justly applied to *other errors* be



applied to this one. There can be no possible ground for holding, that the adoption and maintenance of an error on the subject of the government of the Church, by words or deeds, involves more guilt, or should be more severely condemned, than the adoption and maintenance of an error upon a matter of doctrine in the more limited sense of that word; and on the contrary, there is a great deal in the nature of the subject, viewed in connection with the general character, spirit, tendency, and objects of the Christian economy, and in the kind and amount of the materials of evidence which Scripture affords us for forming a judgment upon such questions, which indicates that errors in regard to government should be treated with less severity of condemnation, and should less materially affect the intercourse of churches with each other, than errors (within certain limits) with regard to doctrine, which are not usually considered to warrant the unchurching of other denominations, or to form an insuperable obstacle to the maintenance of friendly relations with them.

These grounds, on which we establish the unwarrantableness and unfairness of the common allegation, that claiming a divine right for one particular form of Church government, implies the unchurching of other denominations who may have come to a different conclusion as to the bearing of the Scripture testimony upon this subject, apply equally to the wider and more comprehensive principle, formerly explained, of the unlawfulness of introducing anything into the government and worship of the Church which is not positively sanctioned by Scripture. Lutherans and Anglicans generally contend that this principle is not taught in Scripture, and, on this ground, refuse to be so strictly tied up in regard to the introduction of ceremonies and regulations. We believe that, in denying this principle, they have fallen into an error in the interpretation and application of Scripture, and that the ceremonies and regulations which, in opposition to it, they may have introduced, are unlawful, and ought to be removed. But we never imagined, that because of this error in opinion, followed to some extent by error in practice, these denominations were to be unchurched, or to be shut out from

friendly intercourse, especially as the Scriptural evidence in favour of the principle, though quite sufficient and satisfactory to our minds, is of a somewhat constructive and inferential description, and as differences sometimes arise among those who concur in holding it about some of the details of its application.

If these views, which are in manifest accordance with the dictates of common sense, and with principles generally recognized in other departments of theological discussion, were admitted, there would be much less disinclination to yield to the force of the Scripture evidence in support of the two principles which we have explained, and which form, we are persuaded, the only effectual security for the purity of Church administration, and the authority of Church arrangements.

But there are, in every age, some men who seem anxious to have the reputation of being in advance of all around them in the enlightened knowledge of theological subjects, and who, with this view, are very desirous to escape from the trammels of implicit deference to the authority of Scripture. The great source of error in religious matters is that men do not fully and honestly take the Word of God as their rule and standard.

# Faith United us to Christ

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."—Ephesians 2:8

Let us now...shortly consider the effect of faith as uniting us to Christ, and thus saving the soul. There is a great deal spoken of in Scripture on the subject of faith—of its great importance and of its indispensable necessity to salvation. We read, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mar 16:16). It is faith that makes a man a Christian, that produces all those things that accompany salvation, that salvation which is the turning point of a man's existence, that salvation which delivers him from the authority of the devil and translates him into the kingdom of God's dear Son. Faith occupies this important place in our salvation because it unites us to Christ. We are expressly told this by the Apostle in Ephesians 3:17, where it is written, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." This union of believers to Christ, effected by faith, is indeed frequently spoken of in the New Testament. The nature of it is set before us by every mode of expression and description fitted to convey the strongest impression of its closeness and its importance.

It hath pleased the Father that in Christ "should all fulness dwell" (Col 1:19); and it is from Him alone that any portion of this "fulness" can be derived. The Covenant of Redemption<sup>37</sup> was made between the Father and the Son, for man was not directly and primarily a party to it. As Christ fulfilled the conditions of this covenant, so all the blessings that the covenant secured were bestowed upon Him and continue in His possession. In everything connected with this eternal covenant, He acted as the Head and the Surety of His people in their room and stead. He took their place, agreeing to suffer what they ought to have endured and to purchase for them what was necessary for their salvation, but what they never themselves could

have earned. He was accepted by God as the Surety and Substitute of all those who should afterwards believe in Him, and He was dealt with accordingly.

Now when a man believes in Christ, he is, according to God's appointment, united to Him. There is a union formed between them. God regards him as if he were Christ and treats him as if he had suffered the punishment for his sins that Christ endured in his room—as if he had in his own person performed that full and perfect obedience to the Divine Law that our Savior's conduct exhibited. It is this imputation of Christ's sufferings and of His righteousness, or, as it is often called, His active and passive obedience—it is this communion of suffering and of merit in which the union of believers with Christ mainly consists. This union and communion with Him is the foundation of their salvation in all its parts and in all its aspects. When they believe Him, God regards them as one with Him—as if they had offered what He has suffered, as if they had done what He has done, as if they had paid the penalty for their sins and had gained a title to His favor.

Viewing them thus as united to Christ—as one with Him—God bestows upon them the blessings that Christ purchased for all who should believe on His name. They obtain through faith the forgiveness of their sins, acceptance with God as righteous persons, the renovation<sup>38</sup> and sanctification of their natures, and, finally, an inheritance among them that are sanctified. Christ is the great Head of influence: all spiritual blessings are the fruits of His purchase. It is only by abiding in Him that we are enabled to bring forth fruits unto eternal life; as it is written, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit" (Joh 15:5).

You see now the great importance of faith in the salvation of sinners. It is the instrument by means of which we receive everything necessary to our peace. None can be saved without it, and everyone who has it will assuredly be saved. It is connected in the statements

of God's Word with almost every blessing that is mentioned as important and valuable, as the origin from which they are all derived, the instrument by which they are all received. It is the Holy Spirit that forms the union between Christ and believers, and faith wrought in their hearts by His almighty power is the tie that connects them together and forms the bond of union.

While salvation is thus through faith, it is, at the same time, "by grace" (Eph 2:5, 8). It is to be traced wholly to God's free and unmerited favor. There is nothing whatever in faith as a grace or virtue, as an act of ours, to merit anything at God's hands [or] to deserve anything for us...Faith, viewed as a work or act of ours, could not itself procure for us the pardon of sin any more than repentance, if that too were in our power. Far less—[even if] we could believe by our own strength—could it ever merit for us any reward at God's hands.

It is not indeed, then, as a work or a grace that faith saves: it is merely the instrument of uniting us to Christ. His work is the sole ground of our salvation and of all that is connected with it. We owe it all to Him. He purchased it for us by His own sufferings and obedience, and He bestows it upon us by His Spirit. Therefore, we must beware, friends, of giving to our own faith, in the work of salvation, the place that belongs only to Christ. When salvation is ascribed to faith, this is so far from attaching merit to faith that it is just expressly renouncing it. We are saved indeed by faith, but it is faith in Christ Jesus. Our faith is that which carries us out of ourselves to Christ, transferring our whole dependence, as it were, from our own doing to what He has done and suffered for us. And it is a constant act of trust, a confidence in Him for everything pertaining to another world. It bears at all times upon it a declaration of our utter inability to do anything for ourselves. Hence, not only is salvation by faith quite consistent with being by grace, but further, as the Apostle tells us, it is of faith that it might be by grace. Not only are they consistent with each other, but the one affords the most striking illustration of the other. Nothing could have more fully

established or more clearly illustrated the free grace of the Gospel than making our salvation depend upon faith; for faith, besides being originally God's gift, is a constant appeal to His agency: it is both in form and in substance a casting [of] ourselves entirely and unreservedly upon His mercy through Christ and resting upon Him alone. We believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and are saved.

# Heresies of the Apostolic Age

WE have very plain intimations given us in the sacred Scriptures, that even while the apostles lived, errors of various kinds were broached, and disturbed the purity and peace of the church; and we have predictions that these would continue and extend. We have not much explicit information given us in the New Testament as to what these errors or heresies were. But they engaged the attention, and they occupy a prominent place in the works, of the Christian authors who lived after the apostles, and the heresies fill a considerable department in the ecclesiastical history of these early ages. Irenæus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who flourished during the latter half of the second century, and who has many claims upon our respect, wrote a book against the heresies of the age, which has come down to us, though chiefly in a Latin translation; and this, with the remains of Hippolytus, is the main source of our information as to the doctrines of the earlier heretics. Irenæus was accustomed — and in this he was followed by the generality of the fathers who succeeded him, including both those who have written fully and formally upon heresies, such as Epiphanius and Augustine, and those who have adverted to the subject more incidentally — to use the word heresy, not as we do, to denote an important deviation from sound doctrine made by one who professed to believe in the divine mission of Jesus and the authority of the Scriptures, but any system of error into which any reference to Christ and Christianity was introduced, even though those who maintained it could not with propriety be called Christians, and could not have been members of any Christian church. We find that errors of this sort did, in point of fact, disturb the purity and the peace of the early church, that they are adverted to and condemned by the apostles in their addresses to the churches, and that they engaged much of the attention of the early fathers; and as *they* called them heresies, they continue to rank under that name in ecclesiastical history, though the word is now commonly used in a more limited sense, and though these early heresies might with more

propriety be called forms of infidelity. Many of the notions explained and discussed under the head of the heresies of the first and second centuries are very like the ravings of madmen who followed no definite standard, whether natural or supernatural, whether reason or Scripture, but who gave full scope to their imaginations in the formation of their systems. They did not exert a permanent or extensive direct influence, because they had no plausible foundation to rest upon. An investigation, therefore, into the history and precise tenets of the heretics of the first two centuries, — and this observation applies also in some measure to the third century, — is rather curious, than either very interesting or useful. The monstrous systems of these heretics did not take a very firm hold of men's minds, and cannot be said to have directly influenced to any considerable extent the views of the church in subsequent ages. They were, indeed, connected with some questions which have always occupied and still occupy the minds of reflecting men, such as the origin and cause of evil, and the creation of the world as connected with the subject of the origin of evil. But the early heretics, though they propounded a variety of theories upon these subjects, cannot be said to have thrown any light upon them, or to have materially influenced the views of men who have since investigated these topics, under the guidance either of a sounder philosophy, or of more implicit deference to God's revelation.

Gnosticism, indeed, which may be properly enough used as a general name for the heretical systems of the first two centuries, — and in some measure also of the third, although in the third century Manichæism obtained greater prominence, — forms a curious chapter in the history of the human mind, and may furnish some useful and instructive lessons to the observer of human nature, and to the philosophical expounder of its capacities and tendencies. It strikingly illustrates some of the more simple and obvious doctrines of Scripture about the natural darkness of men's understandings. It is a striking commentary upon the apostle's declaration that the world by wisdom knew not God, and that men professing to be wise became fools. But it is not of any great importance in a purely



theological point of view, inasmuch as it throws little light upon the real system of divine truth, and has had little direct influence upon the subsequent labours of men in investigating, under better auspices, the subjects which it professed to explain. Indeed, the principal practical use of a knowledge of the early heresies is, that an acquaintance with them does throw some light upon some portions of the word of God which refer to them. This is an object which, indeed, is of the highest value, and it may be said to be in some measure the standard by which we should estimate the real value of all knowledge. The highest object at which we can aim, so far as the mere exercise of the understanding is concerned, is to attain to an accurate and comprehensive knowledge of the revealed will of God; and whatever contributes to promote this, and just in proportion as it does so, is to be esteemed important and valuable. We should desire to ascertain, as far `as possible, the true meaning and application of every portion of God's word; and appropriate and apply aright everything that is fitted to contribute to this result. We can easily conceive that the writings of the apostolical fathers *might* have conveyed to us information which would have thrown much light upon some of the more obscure and difficult passages in the New Testament. They might, for example, have given us information which would have settled some of those chronological questions in the history of Paul, and of his journeys and epistles, which, from the want of any definite materials in Scripture to decide them, have given rise to much discussion. They might have given us information which would have rendered more obvious and certain the interpretation of some passages which are obscure and have been disputed, because we know little of the prevalent customs that may have been referred to, or of the condition and circumstances of the church in general, or of some particular church at the time. They might possibly have conveyed to us information upon many points which, without their so intending it, might have admitted of a useful application in this way, and to these objects. And we might have made this application of the information, and thus have *established* the true meaning of some portions of Scripture, without ascribing to those who conveyed the information to us any authority, or attaching

any weight to their opinion, as such. All this might have been; but we have had occasion to show that, in point of fact, God has not been pleased to convey to us, through the early ecclesiastical writers, much information that admits of a useful practical application in the interpretation of Scripture.

One exception, however, to this remark, — one case in which the information communicated to us by subsequent writers does give us *some* assistance in understanding the meaning and application of some passages of the New Testament, and the propriety and suitableness of the words in which they are expressed, — is to be found in this matter of the early heresies, while it is also the chief practical purpose to which a knowledge of the early heresies is to be applied. Of the persons mentioned by *name* in the New Testament, as having in some way set themselves in opposition to the apostles, or as having deserted them, viz., Hermogenes, Phygellus, Demas, Hymennæus, Philetus, Alexander, and Diotrephes, we have no certain or trustworthy information in early writers, in addition to the very brief notices given of them in Scripture; for we cannot regard the explanations given of the passages, when they are mentioned by commentators of the fourth and fifth centuries,<sup>1</sup> as of any value or weight, except in so far as they seem to be fairly suggested by the Scripture notices. The most specific indication given us in the New Testament of a heresy, combined with the mention of names, is Paul's statement regarding Hymenæus and Philetus, of whom he tells<sup>2</sup> that “concerning the truth,” — i.e., in a matter of doctrine, — “they have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some.” Of Hymenæus and Philetus personally we learn nothing from subsequent writers; we have no information throwing any direct light upon the specific statement of Paul as to the nature of the heresy held by them. But, in what we learn generally from subsequent writers as to the views of some of the Gnostic sects, we have materials for explaining it. We know that the Gnostic sects in general denied the doctrine of the resurrection of the body. The Docetæ, more especially, denying the reality of Christ's body, of course denied the reality of His death and resurrection; and

having thus taken out of the way the great pattern and proof of the resurrection, it was an easy step to deny it altogether. Still some explanation must, if possible, be given of statements that seemed to assert or imply a resurrection of the body. Paul tells us that these men said it was past already; and here the inquiry naturally arises. What past thing was it to which they pointed as being the resurrection? Now Irenæus informs us<sup>3</sup> that Menander, one of the leading Gnostics of the first century, taught that Gnostic baptism was the resurrection, and the only resurrection that was to be expected. And when we thus learn that there was a sect of Gnostics in the apostolic age who allegorized away the resurrection into baptism, we can have no difficulty in seeing what Hymenæus and Philetus meant when they said that it was past already.<sup>4</sup>

In regard to Simon Magus and the Nicolaitanes, who are mentioned in Scripture, we have a good deal of information given us by subsequent writers; but it is not of a kind fitted to throw any light upon the statements made in Scripture concerning them. It is new and additional information regarding them, which there is nothing in Scripture to lead us to expect. It is not inconsistent, indeed, with Scripture, and *may be* all true. As it throws no light upon the statements of Scripture concerning them, but is purely historical in its character and application, and as even historically it is attended with considerable difficulties and no small measure of uncertainty, I shall not further enlarge upon it.

The heresies, however, to which there seem to be the most frequent references in Scripture, and a knowledge of which throws most light upon time interpretation of its statements, are those of Cerinthus and time Docetæ.

As the first century advanced, and the apostles were most of them removed from this world, the Gnostic heresies seem to have become somewhat more prevalent, to have been brought to bear more upon some of the subjects comprehended in the Christian revelation, and to have affected more the state and condition of the church. The

Docetæ denied the reality of Christ's body, and of course of His sufferings; and maintained that these were mere phantoms or appearances; and we find that the apostle John repeatedly referred to this heresy, and that an acquaintance with its nature throws some light upon the true import of some of his statements. We find also, both in the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp, and in the Gospel of John, references to the doctrines of Cerinthus. We know that the doctrine of the crucifixion of the Saviour was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. And, accordingly, we find that very soon some who did not altogether deny Christ's divine mission, began to explain away His crucifixion. These attempts were made even in the apostolic age; and we have pretty full accounts of them as managed by some Gnostic heretics in the second century, such as Saturninus and Valentinus. Some have supposed that Paul referred to them when he spoke of *enemies of the cross of Christ*; but the expression in that passage seems rather to be taken in a wider and less specific sense. But there can be no reasonable doubt that John referred to them in his epistles. Indeed, the very first sentence of his first epistle may be fairly regarded as bearing a reference to the heresy of the Docetæ: "That which was from the beginning, which *we* have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon," or carefully inspected, "and our hands have handled of the Word of life." The apostle was not likely to have added the last clause, "which our hands have handled," but because he had a reference to some such error as that which we know was taught by the Docetæ, or Phantasiastæ, as they were also called, who held that Christ's body was such only in appearance, — that it was a mere phantasm, which appeared indeed a body to the eyes of men, but would not admit of being handled. This heresy of the Docetæ plainly implied a denial of the incarnation of Christ in any proper sense, — a denial that He had taken to Himself a true body; in short, a denial that He had come in the flesh. Hence the apostle says, in the beginning of the fourth chapter, "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it

should come; and even now already is it in the world,” — a statement illustrated by one of Jerome’s, viz., that even while the apostles were alive, and the blood of Christ still fresh in Judæa, men arose who maintained that His body was a mere phantasm or deceitful appearance. The statement that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh, is a plain assertion of His incarnation, and clearly implies that He existed previously to His coming, and that contemporaneously with His coming He took flesh, or assumed a true and real body. It is an assertion of His incarnation, in the sense in which we have explained it, against whoever may deny it, and upon whatever ground the denial may rest, and is equally conclusive against the modern Socinians and the ancient Docetæ; but the knowledge of what were the views of the ancient Docetæ throws light upon the import of the expression, and illustrates the propriety and exact bearing of the words employed.

It is true that, if John here intended more immediately to contradict the heresy of the Docetæ, the declaration that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, cannot be regarded as in itself equivalent to, or co-extensive with, the position that He assumed human nature. It would in that case merely assert that He, having previously existed, took, when He came, a true body, without asserting also that He took likewise a reasonable soul. And indeed the controversy as to the soul of Christ is one of later origin than the apostolic age, or the first century. But there is no difficulty in proving from other parts of Scripture, that Jesus Christ, when He came, took a reasonable human soul, as well as a true body. Incarnation, in the literal meaning of the *word* — *ensarkosis* — is here expressly asserted, implying a previous existence, and an assumption of a true and real body as contemporaneous and identical with His coming or with His appearance in this world. An assertion of the reality of Christ’s flesh or body, while He was on earth, was all that was necessary in condemning the Docetæ, and warning the church against them; but under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, it is expressed in words which plainly imply a previous existence, so that the statement is, as we

have said, just as conclusive against modern as against ancient heretics.

We have said also that the apostle John referred to the heresy of Cerinthus; and indeed Irenæus tells us that John wrote his gospel principally in order to oppose the doctrines which Cerinthus had been propagating; and we know of no ground, external or internal, for disbelieving this. We learn from the testimony of subsequent writers, that Cerinthus held — and in this he was followed by some other Gnostic heretics of the second century — that Jesus and Christ must be carefully distinguished from each other: that Jesus was a mere man; that Christ, one of the *aiones*, descended upon Him at His baptism, dwelt in Him till He was about to suffer death, and then left Him, and returned to the pleroma. Now, this whole theory is contradicted and exploded by the position, *that Jesus is Christ*. This position, *in terminis*, denies the distinction which the Cerinthians made between them, and it plainly *implies* that there never was a time when Jesus existed, and was not Christ, which is in direct opposition to what we know the Cerinthians held upon this point. Now John, in the next chapter of his epistle, the fifth, at the beginning lays down this position, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” We have, indeed, similar statements to this in the book of the Acts, in the recorded preaching of the apostles. They laboured to prove to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ; and the meaning of this manifestly is just this, that Jesus was the Messiah promised to the fathers and predicted by the prophets. But when we know, that before John wrote this epistle, men had arisen who were disturbing the purity and peace of the church by making a distinction or separation between Jesus and Christ; when we see that, in the context, John is warning the churches against another branch of the heresy *concerning Christ’s person*; and when we know that this heresy, which consisted substantially in a denial that Jesus is Christ, not only existed in John’s time, but continued to infest the church for several succeeding generations, we can scarcely refuse to admit that the statement is to be taken here in a more limited and specific sense than that in which it is employed in the book of the Acts, and was

intended to be, what it really is, a denial of the heresy of Cerinthus; and moreover, by plain implication, an assertion of the vital or fundamental importance of right views of the person of Christ, as intimately connected with those radical changes of character which bear so directly upon the salvation of men's souls.

I have no doubt that it has been often proved that the introduction of John's gospel is an exposure of the heresies of the Docetæ and the Cerinthians, of those who even at that time denied His incarnation and real humanity, and of those who, while admitting that Christ came down from heaven and was in some sense divine, separated Jesus from Christ, — held that Christ left Jesus before His final sufferings, and, of course, denied anything like the permanent union of the divine and human natures in His one person. But it would be to go out of our way to enter at any length into the illustration of this subject. I have made these observations, not so much for the purpose of explaining those portions of the New Testament which refer to the early heresies, — for I have merely glanced, and very hurriedly, at a few of them, — but rather for the purpose of showing that a knowledge of the ancient heresies is not so entirely destitute of all direct utility as at first sight it might appear to be; and that it has some bearing, though neither very extensive nor very influential, upon the great object of opening up the true and exact meaning of some portions of the word of God.

In asserting the comparative unimportance of a knowledge of the early heresies, I must be understood as referring rather to the detailed exposition of the particular views of individuals as formal categorical doctrines, than to the leading effects and results of the Gnostic system as a whole, or in its main features; for though the historical questions as to what were the precise doctrines held by this heretic and by the other in the first or second century, are not of much importance in themselves, besides being often involved in considerable doubt or uncertainty, I have no doubt that the Gnostic system did exert a considerable influence upon the views and condition of the church in early times, especially in regard to two

points, — viz., first, the Trinity and the person of Christ; and secondly, what has been called the ascetic institute or discipline, as including celibacy and monasticism, which soon began to prevail so widely in the church, and which exerted so injurious an influence. The earliest heretics upon the subject of the Trinity and the person of Christ were deeply involved in the principles of the Gnostic system; and even those who maintained sound and orthodox views upon these points, in opposition to the heretics, especially in the third century, gave many indications that they were too much entangled in rash and presumptuous speculations about matters connected with the Divine nature, above the comprehension of the human faculties, and not clearly revealed in Scripture. The great body of the church, indeed, preserved in the main a scriptural orthodoxy upon these important questions; and when, in the fourth and fifth centuries, they came to be fully discussed and decided on in the councils of the church, the creeds and decrees adopted were, on the whole, so accordant with Scripture, as to have secured the general concurrence of subsequent generations.

It was not so, however, with the ascetic institute. Upon this subject the leaven of the Gnostic system seems to have insinuated itself into the great body of the church itself, even when its formal doctrines were openly condemned; and to have gradually succeeded in exerting a most injurious influence upon the general tone of sentiment and practice. The indirect influence of the Gnostic system, absurd and ridiculous as that system was in its more formal and specific doctrines, has been developed with great ingenuity and sagacity, and in a very impressive way, in Mr. Isaac Taylor's very valuable and interesting work entitled "Ancient Christianity," written in opposition to Tractarianism, — a work which, though it contains some rather strong and extreme views, naturally enough arising from the zealous prosecution of one important object, ought to be carefully studied by all who wish to understand the true condition of the church, both in regard to doctrine and practice in that period — viz., the latter half of the fourth and the first half of the fifth centuries — which has been held up by the Tractarians as the great model



according to which the church should now be regulated.<sup>5</sup> Celibacy and monasticism were the cases in which Gnostic principles were most clearly and fully developed among those who adhered to the church; but those who are curious in tracing the progress and connection of doctrines profess to discover traces of its operation in other views and notions that prevailed in early times, and were afterwards fully developed in Popery.

Gnosticism, viewed as a general description of a system, and abstracted from the special absurdities and extravagances which particular individuals mixed up with it, is regarded by many, and apparently with justice, as being traceable to a sort of combination of the Oriental theosophy, the Jewish cabbala, and the Platonic philosophy. And in the course of the second century, and still more in the third, we see traces, on the one hand, of this system of philosophical speculation being modified by the influences of the Christian revelation and its contents; and, on the other hand, of the views that prevailed in the church among those who professed a greater respect for the sacred Scriptures being more and more influenced by the prevailing philosophy. The result was the formation of a class of men in regard to whom it remains to this day a subject for controversial discussion, whether or not they were Christians in any sense, — a question which, in the same sense, might be discussed in regard to many modern philosophers. The question practically assumes this form: Did they, or did they not, admit the authority of the Christian revelation as the ultimate standard in regard to every subject to which its statements apply? Now, there have been many, both in ancient and in modern times, calling themselves philosophers, who would not have liked to have given a categorical answer to this question, but whose conduct in prosecuting their speculations practically answered it in the negative. It is to be regarded as a mere difference in degree, and as not essentially affecting the rectitude of the relation in which men stood to God's revelation, — whether, first, they openly denied its authority; or, secondly, got rid of, or explained away its statements by processes which are manifestly unfair, and which practically

render it of no real utility; or, thirdly, just left it out of view altogether, and carried on their speculations about God, and man's relation to Him, and his duties and destiny, without any reference to what the word of God teaches, — without giving any opinion, or committing themselves upon the subject, of the authority of Scripture.

Each of these three modes of casting off the controlling authority of God's word, and leaving full scope for indulging in their own theories and speculations, — i.e., bringing all subjects, even the highest and most exalted, to be tried by the standard of their own understandings or feelings, their fancies and inclinations, — has prevailed at different times, and in different countries, according to diversities of circumstances and influences. The second mode, which consists substantially in arbitrarily rejecting some parts of Scripture, and in explaining away and perverting the rest, prevailed very generally in the early times of the church; and it has prevailed largely in the past and present generations. It was generally adopted by the Gnostics of the second and third, and by the Manichæans of the third and fourth, centuries. Origen, though remaining connected with the church, came very near to it; and it is just that which has been followed by modern rationalists and neologians upon the Continent. Mosheim<sup>6</sup> gives the following description of the way in which the Gnostics and Manichæans dealt with the books of Scripture, — and it is impossible to read it without being struck with the remarkable and thorough similarity of their views and conduct in this matter to those of modern German rationalists: —

Non negabant quidem in plerisque Novi Testamenti libris quædam esse divina et a Christo, ejusque apostolis profecta: verum his intertexta esse plurima falsa contendebant et prorsus impia: ex quo cogebant, ea tantum in libris N. T. fide digna esse, quæ Manichæi, magistri sui, . . . sententiis congruerent. . . Interdum enim dare videntur, immo dant, divinæ originis hæc esse Evangelia: sed quod dant, statim ipsi tollunt et evertunt. Addunt enim, ea misere a dolosis et mendacibus viris corrupta,

interpolata, Judaicis fabulis aucta et amplificata esse. Ex quo sequitur; en, uti nunc sese habent, nullius esse pretii et utilitatis. . . . Allis vero locis negant disertissime, ea Christi Apostolos auctores habere aut vel a Christo vel a Apostolis, quorum nomina præ se ferunt, scripta esse: contra pugnant auctores eorum homines fuisse semi-Judæos, credulos, mendaces.<sup>7</sup>

This is a most accurate full-length portrait of modern German rationalism, from the Manichæans of the fourth and fifth centuries.

The contemplation of the heresies of the early ages, viewed in connection with the heresies of modern times, is well fitted to remind us of the paramount necessity of our settling clearly and definitively, as the most important of all questions, whether God has really given us a positive supernatural revelation of His will; if so, where, or in what book, that revelation is to be found, and whether it was really intended to be understood by men in general through the ordinary natural processes of interpretation, and is fitted to be a standard of faith and practice; and after having settled this, and made our minds familiar with the grounds on which our judgment on these points rests, of making a constant, honest, and unshrinking application, to *every* subject of thought and practice, of the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.<sup>8</sup>

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## Notes

1. *Ittigius, de Hæres.*, pp. 84-86.
2. 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.
3. B. i., c. 23.
4. *Buddei Eccles. Apost.*, c. v.; *Moshemii Inst. Maj.*, p. 319. Burton's Bampton Lec., p. 135, and note 57.
5. *Ancient Christianity*, vol. i., p. 145, et seq.
6. *Commentarii*, pp. 748-9. Vide Neander, vol. ii., p. 163 of Rose's translation, and pp. 225-6 of Torrey's. *Norton's Evidence of the Genuineness of the Gospels*, vol. iii., pp. 183-213; Part III., c. x.:

“Of the manner in which the Gnostics reconciled their doctrines with Christianity.” 1st Ed.

7. “They did not deny that in most of the books of the New Testament there were some things that were divine, and that came from Christ and His apostles; but they contended that there were mixed up with these many things that were false and impious; whence they inferred that those things only in the N.T. were worthy of credit which agreed with the opinions of their master Manichæus;” and again, “Sometimes they seem to grant, nay, they do grant, that these gospels are of divine origin; but what they grant they immediately again withdraw and overturn. For the add that they have been miserably corrupted and interpolated by deceitful and mendacious men, and stuffed with Jewish fables; whence it follows that, as we now have them, they are of no value or utility . . . But in other passages they expressly deny that these books have the apostles of Christ for their authors, or that they were written either by Christ or by the apostles whose names they bear; and, on the contrary, maintain that their authors were half Jews, credulous and deceitful.”

Neander gives a similar account of their principles and conduct in this respect: — “In respect to the views of the Manichæans with regard to the *sources of religious knowledge*, they considered the revelations of the Paraclete, or Mani, as the highest and only infallible authority, whereby everything was to be judged. They went on the principle, that Mani’s doctrine embraced the absolute truths which enlighten the reason: — whatever did not accord with them was contrary to reason, wherever it might be found. They received in part, it is true, the Scriptures of the New Testament. But judging them by that standard principle which we have mentioned, they indulged in the most arbitrary criticism in applying them to points of doctrine or ethics. Sometimes they asserted that the original records of the religion had been falsified by various corruptions of the prince of darkness (tares among the wheat); had accommodated themselves to existing Jewish opinions, with a

view to prepare men gradually for the reception of the pure truth; sometimes, that the apostles themselves, when they first appeared in the character of teachers, were entangled in various Jewish errors. Hence they concluded that it was first by the teachings of the Paraclete, men were enabled to distinguish the true from the false matter in the New Testament.” — Torrey’s translation, vol. ii., pp. 225-6.

8. Consult Ittigius, Buddæus, Lardner, Mosheim, Burton, Neander.

# The Pelagian Controversy

The Pelagian controversy respects chiefly topics which are usually classed by continental writers under the head of Anthropology, or the doctrine of what man is, and of how he is influenced in those matters which concern his salvation. They stand connected with the views which Scripture unfolds to us of the actual state and condition of human nature, and, of course, of each man who possesses it, and of the kind and causes of those changes, if such there be, which are necessary to prepare men for the enjoyment of heaven. The discussion of these topics, indeed, runs up into the investigation of the divine sovereignty and fore-ordination; but still the basis and starting-point may be said to be in the questions, What is man? his character and capacities? and what the nature and the source of those changes which must be produced upon him in order to prepare him for the enjoyment of God's presence? The Pelagian controversy thus includes all those most important and difficult topics which are usually discussed in works on systematic theology, under the heads, De peccato, De gratia, De vocatione, and De predestinatione. No subjects can surpass in intrinsic importance those which treat directly of God and Christ; but those we have now to advert to are not inferior in importance, being just as intimately connected with the salvation of men's souls, and therefore as truly necessary to be known, and known correctly, and as fundamental in their character. The history of the church seems to indicate that somehow the prosperity of vital personal religion is more closely connected with correct views of the points involved in the Pelagian controversy, than even with correct views upon the subject of the Trinity and of the person of Christ. There never, indeed, has been much appearance of true personal religion where the divinity of the Son of God has been denied; but there has been often a profession of sound doctrine upon this subject, long maintained, where there has been little real religion. Whereas, not only has there never been much real religion where there was not a profession of substantially sound doctrine in

regard to the points involved in the Pelagian controversy, but also—and this is the point of contrast — the decay of true religion has always been accompanied by a large measure of error in doctrine upon these subjects; the action and reaction of the two upon each other being speedy and manifest. The apostate Church of Rome has preserved throughout an orthodox profession on the subject of the Trinity; but though precluded by her avowed principles from professing Pelagian doctrines, which have been frequently anathematized by popes and councils, she has always, in her practical teaching, exhibited a large amount of Pelagian error, and may be said to have become formally liable to the charge of teaching Pelagianism, in consequence of the general adoption by the church of the famous Bull Unigenitus, against the Jansenists, published in the early part of last century.

There is one consideration which makes the Pelagian controversy somewhat more intricate and perplexing than the Trinitarian; and that is, that there is room for a greater diversity of sentiment, and a greater indefiniteness or latitude of statement, even among those who may, perhaps, be regarded as agreeing in the main substance of the doctrine, in the one case than in the other. Few persons who have been classed under the general designation of Pelagians— except Pelagius himself, and his immediate followers, Coelestius, and Julian, and modern Socinians and Rationalists— have denied altogether that man's nature suffered some moral taint or corruption from the fall, or that the gracious agency of God is in some way necessary in preparing men for heaven. When men go so far as to deny these things, the grounds of controversy are abundantly clear and definite: but there have been many who, without going nearly so far, and without therefore having opened up nearly so clear and definite a field for controversial discussion, have yet been charged, and justly, with greatly underrating the effects of the fall upon man's moral nature; and with superseding, to some extent at least, the agency of the Spirit in his conversion and sanctification. Pelagianism, in its original historical sense, is thus a pretty definite heresy, striking at the root of almost all that is most peculiar and distinctive

in the system of revealed truth; but what has been called semi-Pelagianism — which may be regarded as describing, in general, views that make some approach to Pelagianism, but do not go quite so far— is of a much more vague and indefinite character. Pelagianism, and other words of a similar description, are often used in theological literature with a considerable measure of vagueness, — not to describe the precise sentiments of him from whom the name is derived, but rather as a convenient, though of course somewhat loose, mode of indicating a general class of opinions, of which there may be no one very definite standard, and which may not have been fully developed by the original broacher of the doctrines, who has given name to the system, but only by those who have afterwards followed in the same general track. There has been, perhaps, more indefiniteness in the use of the word Pelagianism than in that of almost any other word of a similar kind; for this, among other reasons, that there has never been any distinct and separate community of professing Christians to

which this designation has been generally attached as their ordinary distinctive appellation.

The Socinians, indeed, have fully adopted the views of the original Pelagians in regard to the character and capacities of man's moral nature, and the agency of divine grace; but these are not the features of Socinianism which have attracted the largest measure of public attention. Arminians have been commonly charged with holding Pelagian errors; and no doubt all Arminians hold some principles which were maintained by Pelagius and his followers, and opposed by Augustine and the church in general in his day; but then there have been some of the better class of Arminians, —especially Arminius and the Wesleyan Methodists, — who, however inconsistently, fully adopt Augustine's views upon what are usually regarded as the main distinctive features of the Pelagian system, — viz., the entire depravity of human nature, and the absolute necessity of the special gracious agency of God in the whole process of the conversion and sanctification of sinners, —and are thus much more



orthodox upon these points than even the semi-Pelagians were. In ordinary usage, Pelagianism is commonly employed as a general designation of defective and erroneous views in regard to the extent and consequences of human depravity, and of the necessity of special divine agency in conversion and sanctification; and it is obvious that there is room for considerable latitude in the extent to which the deviation from sound scriptural doctrine upon this point may be carried.

There are strong and powerful tendencies of various kinds that lead men to underrate the injurious effects of the fall upon their moral nature, and the consequent necessity of divine grace for their renovation; and on this account, Pelagian views, more or less fully developed, have prevailed very extensively in almost every age of the church. Generally, they have assumed somewhat of a philosophic dress, and have prevailed most among those who have thought themselves entitled to the character of rational Christians, and professed to be very zealous for the interests of morality and virtue. Sometimes, however, as we see in the Morisonianism of our own day, they have assumed a more apparently scriptural and sanctimonious garb, and have been accompanied with great professions of an eager desire for the conversion of sinners, and an anxious wish to remove every obstruction to men's coming to Christ, and laying hold of the offered blessings of the gospel. In this latter class of cases, there has usually been mixed up with the Pelagian error a larger amount of scriptural truth than has been maintained by the more rational and philosophical Pelagians, —so much of scriptural truth, indeed, as that God may have, to some extent, blessed the labours of these persons for the conversion of souls, —not of course because of the error they hold, but in spite of it, and because of the truth they hold along with it. But, in so far as this particular point is concerned, they, just as much as the other class, obscure the divine sovereignty in the salvation of sinners, and do what they can to rob God of the glory which He has declared that He will not give to another.

# I. Historical Statement

In formerly directing attention to the testimony of the primitive church, —i.e., the church of the three first centuries, —upon the subject of the doctrines of grace, we had occasion to show that it was of a somewhat dubious and uncertain kind; that these topics had not during that period been, at least in all their length and breadth, subjects of controversial discussion; and that in consequence, as is usually the case, there had been considerable vagueness and inaccuracy in the language sometimes employed regarding them. The discussions in which the early fathers were engaged had a tendency to lead them rather to magnify the power of man's free-will, since fatalism, or something like it, deeply pervaded the Oriental and Gnostic systems; and it is chiefly on what some of them have said in magnifying man's freewill, in opposition to fatalism, that those who have maintained that Pelagian views prevailed in the primitive church have taken their stand. Statements, however, upon this point do not afford the best or most certain test of men's views upon the subject of the doctrines of grace in general. Augustine certainly did not deny man's free-will altogether, and in every sense of the word; and the most zealous defenders of the doctrines of grace and of Calvinistic principles have admitted that there is a free-will, or free-agency, in some sense, which man has, and which is necessary to his being responsible for his transgressions of God's law. It is laid down in our own Confession, that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil and it would not be easy to prove, in regard to the generality of the fathers of the first three centuries, that they believed, or really intended to declare, more in regard to the free-will of man, even when they were contending against fatalism, than may be fairly regarded as involved in this position, especially as they have given us no reason to believe that they ever deliberately considered the distinctions which are of fundamental importance in regard

to this whole question, —viz., between man's liberty of will before and after the fall, and between his free-agency in regard to things spiritual, and things merely civil and moral. It is very certain that they were not in general Pelagians, since they almost all held in some sense the doctrine of original sin, —i.e., believed -that man's moral nature was to some extent corrupted in consequence of the fall, and that all that was truly good in man was to be ascribed to God's special agency, and not to the exercise of his own powers and capacities. At the same time, it is plain that they had no very distinct conception of what these truths involved, especially in their connection with each other and the other departments of Christian doctrine, and did not always speak regarding them in a very definite or consistent way.

There does not appear to have been any very material change in the general strain of the teaching of the church upon this subject in the fourth century, from what it had been during the three preceding centuries. Chrysostom's works contain many statements to which the Pelagians, or at least the semi-Pelagians, appealed, and not without reason, in support of these doctrines; while Augustine, in defending the doctrines of grace, appealed sometimes to Ambrose, who had been the chief instrument in the hand of God of leading him to the knowledge of the truth, though there is good reason to doubt whether Ambrose's teaching upon these subjects was perfectly uniform and consistent. It was in the early part of the fifth century that the doctrines of grace were, for the first time, subjected to a full investigation, error being then more openly and explicitly taught, and truth being more satisfactorily defended and illustrated, developed, and systematized than ever before. It is this which stamps so special an importance upon the Pelagian controversy. It is this which sheds so peculiar a glory around the name of Augustine, —a glory which attaches in the same degree to no man whom Christ gave to His church, from the age of the apostles till the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

We see in Augustine what has not unfrequently been noticed in men whom God has made signal blessings to His church, that even before

his conversion he was subjected to a course of discipline and training that was not without its use, in preparing him for the work to which he was afterwards to be called: I refer especially to his having been for a good many years involved in the heresy of Manichaeism, —a fact which I have no doubt was overruled by God for preserving him from the danger to which men who are called upon to engage in arduous controversy upon difficult and perplexed subjects are so very liable, —that, viz., of leaning to an extreme opposite to that against which they may feel it to be their duty at the time to contend. Manichaeism may be regarded as, in some respects, an opposite extreme to Pelagianism, as the former implied a sort of fatalism, and the latter exalted unwarrantably the natural powers of man. It has, indeed, been alleged by Pelagians, both in ancient and in modern times, that Augustinianism, or Calvinism, —for they are in substance the same, —is tainted by some infusion of Manichaeian error; and it has been asserted, that this is to be traced to Augustine retaining some leaven of his old Manichaeian principles: but the general experience of mankind shows that this theory is most improbable, and proves that it is much more likely that a man who had, deliberately and from full conviction, renounced a system of error, pervaded throughout by one uniform and peculiar character, should, in place of retaining and cherishing any of its distinctive principles, be rather apt to run into the opposite extreme. Augustine, assuredly, did not run into the opposite extreme to Manichaeism— else he would not have made such strenuous opposition to Pelagianism; but neither, in opposing Pelagianism, was he tempted to go to the opposite extreme of Manichaeism, as he might probably, —according to the tendencies which controversialists too often manifest, —have been led to do, had he not previously sounded the depths and subtleties of Manichaeism, and been led decidedly and deliberately to reject it. There would probably have been some better ground for the charge of Manichaeism, which has often, without foundation, been adduced against Augustine, had he not both embraced and renounced this heresy before he was called upon to engage in the Pelagian controversy; but as matters stand, it can be fully established that, in opposing the Pelagian heresy, he has avoided all tendency to

run into the Manichaeian extreme, and been enabled to keep, with wonderful accuracy, in regard to all the essential features of the controversy, the golden mean of scriptural truth.

The founders of Pelagianism— men who have had few followers in the extent to which they carried their views, except the Socinians and nationalists of modern times— were Pelagius, Coelestius, and Julian. The two former were monks, but, as was usually the case with monks at this period, they were laymen and not clergymen. Julian was Bishop of Eclanum, a small village in Italy, near Capua; for even in the fifth century many villages still had bishops. Pelagius was a native of Britain; and Coelestius, too, is supposed to have been a countryman of our own, though the evidence in regard to him is not very conclusive. Jerome, who was always remarkable for the virulence with which he assailed his opponents, never being able to see any good quality in them, speaks with the utmost contempt of Pelagius and Coelestius; but

Augustine, who was, after his conversion, as highly exalted above the generality of the fathers of his age in the personal excellence of his character, as he was in ability and knowledge of divine truth, speaks very respectfully both of their talent and of the general character which they had sustained. They seem to

have broached their errors at Rome about the year 411, and to have afterwards visited Africa and the East. They met with no countenance in Africa, where Augustine's influence was very powerful, and their doctrines were condemned in several African councils, which were held most of them at Carthage. Pelagius met with more favour in the East, chiefly in consequence of the prevalence of Origen's views, which were akin in some respects to his own; and at a council held to examine his doctrines at Diospolis, or Lydda, in Palestine, he was acquitted of the charge of heresy, though there is reason to believe that this result was brought about chiefly by his concealing and explaining away his opinions, and by his renouncing and anathematizing some statements which had been

made by Coelestius, and in which there is good ground to believe that Pelagius himself really concurred, though there was not at that time any evidence to bring them home to him. Innocent, Bishop of Rome, condemned the new doctrines; but Coelestius afterwards, by skill and cunning in explaining and glossing over his statements, managed to impose upon the ignorance and simplicity of his successor Zosimus, who publicly pronounced him orthodox, — a judgment, however, which he was afterwards induced to retract by the expostulations of Augustine and the African bishops. These different transactions have occasioned much difficulty to the defenders of Papal infallibility, who usually allege in cases of this sort, — as, for example, in that of Pope Liberius, who subscribed an Arian creed, and Pope Honorius, who advocated Monothelitism, and was anathematized in consequence as a heretic by the sixth oecumenical council, — that they never really believed the heresies which they taught, but only professed them, either from some misapprehension, or through the force of temptation, in order to avoid persecution, which, it seems, are not inconsistent with their being fully qualified to be infallible guides and rulers of the Church. The Pelagian controversy was conducted chiefly in Africa and the West, and did not attract much attention in the East, where the bishops generally were engaged in discussing the errors broached by Apollinaris, Nestorius, and Eutyches. The third general council, held at Ephesus in 431, which condemned Nestorius, condemned also Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, though writing the history of the period, do not even mention it.

Pelagius, Coelestius, and Julian; and thus the church in general at this time may be said to have condemned Pelagianism, and to have sanctioned the views of Augustine, though it is deserving of remark, that, in the proceedings of the Council of Ephesus, there is merely a general condemnation of the doctrines taught by Pelagius, Coelestius, and Julian, without any formal declaration of the orthodox doctrine upon the subject in opposition to their errors, or even a statement of what the specific errors were which they had taught. Augustine laboured for about twenty years, with all the

powers of his mind, and with unwearied zeal and assiduity, in opposition to the errors of Pelagius; writing many books upon the subject, most of which have come down to us, and exerting his influence in every other way to prevent the spread of heresy. The Lord was pleased to call him to his rest in the year 430, while he was engaged in writing a book against Julian, which has come down to us in an imperfect state, as he left it, and without affording him the satisfaction of witnessing the triumph of sound doctrine, and the condemnation of its opponents in the General Council of Ephesus.

Pelagius, and his immediate followers, Coelestius and Julian, taught openly and explicitly that man's moral character had received no injury from the fall, and that men were born now with as much ability to do the will of God, and to discharge all the obligations incumbent upon them, as Adam; and, in consequence, they denied the necessity of divine grace, or of any special divine agency or influence upon men, unless it might be for the purpose of enabling them to do more easily that which, however, they were able to do, though less easily, without it, and which, in their estimation, was nothing less than attaining to perfection in holiness in this life. These doctrines are so palpably inconsistent, not only with many particular statements, but with the whole scope and substance of Scripture, that they did not gain much support in the church; and after the decision of the Council of Ephesus, they seem to have almost wholly disappeared.

Pelagius and his immediate followers do not seem to have called in question the doctrine of the Trinity, or any of the scriptural doctrines more immediately connected with it; and yet it is very manifest that modern Socinians and Rationalists are the only consistent Pelagians. When men reject what Pelagius rejected, they are bound in consistency to reject everything that is peculiar and distinctive in the Christian system as a remedial scheme. Upon Pelagian principles, there is no occasion for, and really no meaning in, a Saviour, an atonement, a Holy

Spirit. No evil has befallen our race, and there is no occasion for a remedy, especially for such a remedy as the Bible has been generally regarded as unfolding. Augustine, through God's blessing, put down this unscriptural, inconsistent, and cowardly scheme of heresy; and it was not revived until after the Reformation, when it appeared in its bolder and more consistent form of Socinianism. There are, however, as we have said, powerful tendencies in human nature, leading men to over-estimate their own moral powers and capacities, and to think lightly of the necessity and importance of divine grace,—of God's special agency; and while, on the one hand, Pelagius' views met with little countenance, Augustine's, on the other, met with a good deal of opposition. An intermediate scheme was devised, which has passed under the name of semi-Pelagianism, and which, whether bearing that name or not, has almost always prevailed to a considerable extent in the professedly Christian church, especially when true piety was in a feeble or declining condition; and has comprehended men of very different characters, and been held in conjunction with other doctrines, approaching more or less nearly to the scriptural standard. Semi-Pelagianism, from its very nature, bears a character of great indefiniteness. It admits original sin in some sense; i.e., it admits that man's moral nature is more or less corrupted in consequence of the fall, and that special divine assistance was more or less necessary, in order to the attainment of those things which accompany salvation. These intermediate and indefinite views, resembling very much the doctrines which have been held generally by Arminians in modern times, were broached during Augustine's lifetime, and thus afforded him an opportunity of directing against them the same great definite scriptural doctrines which he had wielded with so much ability and success against Pelagianism. The contest was carried on after his death, on the side of truth, by Prosper and Fulgentius; but though semi-Pelagianism was never formally approved of by the church, and was very explicitly and formally condemned by a Provincial Council of France, the second Council of Orange, Concilium Arausicanum, in 529, it prevailed practically to a considerable extent till the period of the Reformation.



Augustine has had the peculiar honour assigned to him, by the great Head of the church, of having been the first to develop, in a systematic order, and in their right connection with each other, the great doctrines taught in the word of God concerning man's lost and ruined condition by nature; the gracious agency of God in the conversion and sanctification of sinners; and the true cause or source of all the effects thus produced, wherever they are produced, in His own sovereign good pleasure and eternal purpose, — having mercy on whom He would have mercy, and having compassion on whom He would have compassion; and he was thus enabled to render most important services to the cause of truth and righteousness in all succeeding generations. There is indeed much reason to believe that no inconsiderable portion of the piety that existed in the church from the time when he flourished till the Reformation, —a period of above one thousand years, —was instrumentally connected, more or less directly, with his influence and writings. We may apply the same statement to almost everything like piety that has ever been found in connection with the Church of Rome, including what is certainly to the eye of a Christian by far the brightest spot in the history of that apostate communion, —viz., the Port-Royalists, and the other Jansenists of France in the seventeenth century.

Augustine, indeed, eminently as he was furnished by the great Head of the Church both with gifts and graces for defending and promoting divine truth, is not by any means an infallible judge, to whom we can securely trust. God has never given to any uninspired man or body of men, to rise thoroughly and in all respects above the reach of the circumstances in which they have been placed, and the influences to which they have been subjected; and Augustine was certainly involved to a considerable extent in some of the corrupt and erroneous views and practices which in his time were already prevailing widely in the church. There are, it must be admitted, some of the corruptions of Popery, the germs of which at least, though not fully developed, are to be found in his writings. But the great defect with which he is chargeable is, that he seems to have had no very clear or accurate views of the great doctrine of justification by faith.

He did not accurately understand the meaning of justification as a forensic or judicial term, as distinguished from sanctification; and he seems to have to some extent confounded them together, as the Church of Rome still does. It could not be, indeed, that a man of Augustine's undoubted and eminent piety, and with so deep a sense as he had of human depravity and of God's sovereignty in determining man's character and condition, could have been resting upon any works or merits of his own for salvation, and therefore he must practically and in heart have been resting upon Christ alone; and this general statement must have been true of many others besides him in the early and middle ages, who had obscure or erroneous views upon this subject. But he had certainly not attained to any such knowledge of God's word in regard to this matter, as would have enabled him to give a very accurate or consistent exposition of the reason or ground of his hope. I formerly had occasion to explain, that at a very early period in the history of the church, the scriptural doctrine of justification became obscured and lost sight of, and was never again revived in

all its fulness and purity until the Lord raised up Luther as His instrument in effecting that important result. The early fathers soon began to talk in an unscriptural and mystical way about the objects and effects of the sacraments; and at length they came to talk of baptism as if it not only signified and represented, but actually conferred, and conferred invariably, both the forgiveness of sins and the renovation of men's moral natures. Augustine knew too much of the word of God, and of the scheme of divine truth, to go thoroughly into such views as these; but he certainly had such notions of the nature and effects of baptism, and of its connection with the forgiveness of sins, as to lead him to some extent to overlook and throw into the background, if not to pervert, the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone. The subject of baptism entered largely into his controversy with the Pelagians, —he adducing the baptism of infants for the remission of sins as a proof of original sin, and they regarding it, like the modern Socinians, merely as the appointed rite or ceremony of outward admission into the communion of the visible

church; and though he was right in the main in the use and application he made of baptism in opposition to the Pelagian denial of original sin, yet he showed very strikingly how much he was perverted by erroneous and exaggerated views of the nature, objects, and importance of external ordinances, by broadly and unequivocally laying down the doctrine that all infants dying unbaptized are consigned to everlasting misery, —a doctrine which is still generally taught in the Church of Rome. The Pelagian controversy, as conducted in Augustine's time, embraced a great variety of topics, —taking in, indeed, more or less fully nearly all the leading doctrines of Christianity, except the Trinity and the atonement; and these were not comprehended, just because the original Pelagians had not the boldness and consistency of modern Socinians in following out or developing their own principles. Forbes, in his *Instructiones Historiae-Theologicae*, has enumerated twenty-six topics which were controverted between Augustine and his opponents; but they are all reducible, as to their main features, to a few general heads, —such as Original Sin, and Free-will; Grace, or Divine Agency in the conversion and sanctification of sinners; Predestination, and the Perseverance of Saints, —and under these heads we propose very briefly to advert to them.

Let me again remark, before proceeding to advert to these topics, that the permanent value of the labours and writings of Augustine in the Pelagian controversy, lies not mainly or chiefly in his having exposed, and through God's blessing put down, Pelagianism in the gross form in which it was at first propounded, and in which it is now held by Socinians and Rationalists, but in his having brought out the clear and definite doctrines of God's word, so as at one and the same time to refute and exclude not only Pelagianism, but also what has been designated semi-Pelagianism; and thus to furnish an antidote to all the numerous attempts which have since been made to exalt unduly the power of man in spiritual things, without wholly superseding the necessity of divine grace, and in this way to share the glory of the salvation of sinners between the saved and the Saviour. This consideration obviously suggests, that in the brief and imperfect

notice which alone we can give of this important controversy, we must confine ourselves chiefly to the statement of those great scriptural truths which Augustine so fully unfolded and so ably defended, and which strike at the root of all the errors which have been held upon these subjects, either in ancient or in modern times, and whether in a grosser or in a more mitigated form.

## **II. Depravity— Original Sin**

That branch of Christian doctrine, which is now frequently called Anthropology, proposes to answer the question, What is man in his moral and spiritual character and capacities; in his relations to God and to eternity? So far as the question respects merely the actual features and constituent elements of man's moral nature, there is no incompetency or impropriety in men looking into their own hearts, and surveying their own lives, in order to obtain materials for answering it; but, as God knows what is in men better than they do themselves, it is also quite reasonable that they should receive with implicit submission whatever He may have been pleased to reveal to them in His word regarding it. The question then is, What does God in His word make known to us with respect to men's actual moral character, and spiritual relations and capacities? This, like every other question in Christian theology, taking the word in its widest sense, should be answered by an exact investigation of the true meaning of the various statements of God's word which bear upon it.

It is surely abundantly evident in general, that the representation given us in Scripture of the actual moral character and spiritual capacities of men, as they come into the world, and grow up in it, —of their relation to God, and of the tendency of all this, in its bearing upon their eternal destiny, —is not such as is fitted to lead us to entertain any very exalted conceptions of our own worth and our own powers. The word of

God surely represents men— all men— as not only actual transgressors of God's laws, and therefore justly liable to all the consequences of transgression, whatever these may be, but as having also a decided bias or proneness to transgress God's law as an actual feature of their moral nature, from which they cannot by their own strength emancipate themselves, and which renders necessary some special interposition of God, if they are ever to be delivered from it. Those who are, from whatever cause, averse to receive this view of the actual moral character and condition of man, have been accustomed, besides attempting to explain away the statements of Scripture, in which it seems to be very plainly taught, to have recourse to the considerations universally conceded, that man did not possess this moral character when he came forth at first from the hand of his Creator— that this was not the character of our first parents when they were created; and then to assert that there is no evidence that man's character has been changed— that our moral character and capacities are different from what those of Adam were. Their opponents, though wishing to rest mainly, in the first instance, —as the proper ground of their cause, —upon the direct Scripture proof of universal native moral corruption, have no objection to follow them in that direction; being confident that the scriptural representation of the effects of Adam's first sin upon himself and upon his posterity, —the scriptural evidence that in connection with Adam's first sin, and in some way as a consequence of it, an important moral deterioration has been introduced into the human race, —only corroborates and illustrates the views they have been led to take of the import of those scriptural statements which speak directly and immediately of the actual character of all men as they come into the world, and are found there. That Adam sinned against God— that thereby he not only incurred the guilt of transgression, but became deteriorated in his own moral character, and that, in consequence, all his posterity have also become to some extent deteriorated in their moral character and capacities, so that they do not now, in fact, bring with them into the world a moral character, a capacity of obeying God's law, equal to what Adam originally possessed, or to what, so far as we know, they would have had had he

not fallen— has been, as a general position, admitted by almost all who have professed to believe in the authority of the sacred Scriptures, except the original Pelagians and the modern Socinians. We need not dwell upon this, but proceed to advert to what is the whole truth upon this subject, as set forth in Scripture and maintained by Augustine.

In considering what is man's actual moral character and capacity, we are investigating a matter of fact; we are seeking, directly and primarily, an answer to the question, What man, in these respects, is? And we are not called upon, in the first instance, to take into account any questions that may be raised as to the origin or source, the cause or rationale, of what may be found to attach to men, or to be truly predicable of them all in their present actual condition. We might be able to ascertain, with accuracy and precision, what is the actual moral condition and capacity of men, even though we were unable to give any very definite account or explanation of how this state of things had been brought about; and it is desirable that, in seeking to understand this whole subject, and to estimate the amount and validity of the evidence bearing upon it, we should distinguish between these two questions. The difficulties attaching to an investigation of the origin and the reason of the actual ungodliness and depravity of human nature, have been perhaps too much allowed to affect the proof and the impression of its actual existence as a feature of men's moral condition.

There is distinct and abundant scriptural evidence, bearing directly and immediately upon the question of what man is, and is capable of doing in a moral point of view, independently of any information given us in Scripture concerning the origin or cause of the sad realities of the case. Were men really convinced, upon scriptural grounds, that they do all, in point of fact, bring with them to the world hearts which, when estimated in the light of God's law and of our obligations, are indeed deceitful above all things and desperately wicked— that in us, i.e., in our flesh or natural character, there dwelleth no good thing— that until men become the subjects of

renewing and sanctifying grace, the imaginations of the thoughts of their hearts are only evil and that continually, —they would feel that they are not called upon in right reason to attach, in the first instance, so much weight, as is often done, to the determination of the questions that may be started as to the manner and circumstances in which this condition of things may have been brought about, and the way in which it is to be explained and vindicated. It would then stand very much upon the same footing as many other things, the existence and reality of which are established by competent and satisfactory evidence appropriate to the case, but the causes or reasons of which are involved in darkness and difficulty; whereas it is too much the practice, in discussing this subject, to burden the consideration of the great primary question, What is the true character of man's moral nature, as a matter of fact, or an actual feature of what man is? with all the additional difficulties attaching to the questions of how he came to be so ungodly and depraved as he appears to be, and of how the fact that he comes into the world possessed of such a moral character, can be vindicated from the charge of making God the author of sin, and destroying man's responsibility. The

questions as to the original moral character of our first parents, —the effects of their first sin upon their own moral character, —the identity of the moral character which all men now have, with that which became theirs after they had sinned, —and the connection between their moral character, as fallen, and that of their posterity;— all these questions stand to the question, of what is now the actual moral character of men, merely in the position of explanations of the actual fact or state of the case, —accounts of the way in which it originated, and may be defended. And it is of some importance, in order to rightly appreciating the evidence— the *rationes decidendi*— that this distinction should be kept in view.

With respect to the subject of guilt, as distinguished from depravity, the bearing of the first sin of Adam has a somewhat closer and more direct connection with the actual condition of man; for, according to

the general doctrine of orthodox Calvinistic divines, the guilt of Adam's first sin, imputed to his posterity, is directly a part of the guilt which actually attaches to them, and forms a constituent element of one important feature of their actual condition, —viz., their guilt, their reatus, their just liability to punishment, including of course, from the nature of the case, the grounds on which that liability rests. But, as we have already explained, neither guilt, in its proper sense (reatus), on the one hand, nor justification in its proper sense, as simply deliverance from guilt or liability to punishment, and acceptance, on the other, entered directly into the original Pelagian controversy, as it was managed in the time of Augustine. It was ungodliness or depravity, and its bearing upon men's actual capacity to do the will of God, and to discharge their obligations, that was then mainly discussed; and it is with that, therefore, at present that we have chiefly to do. The bearing of the first sin of Adam upon his posterity, and generally the connection subsisting between him and his descendants, was indeed discussed between Augustine and his opponents; but, in accordance with the distinction which we have just explained, it was not directly, as if the guilt of his first sin was a portion of the guilt actually attaching to them, but only indirectly, in so far as his first sin and its immediate consequences afforded some explanation of the origin or ground of the deep-seated and pervading depravity or ungodliness, which Scripture and experience unite in proclaiming to be an actual feature of the moral character of all men.

Augustine was enabled to see and unfold, with a very considerable measure of clearness and accuracy, the great truth which has since been more fully developed and illustrated in defence of Calvinistic principles, —viz., that Adam was constituted by God the representative and federal head of his posterity, so that his trial or probation was virtually and in God's estimation, according to the wise and just constitution or arrangement which He had made, —and which certainly, to say the least, cannot be proved to have been unjust or unfavourable to his posterity, —the trial or probation of the human race; and that thus the transgression of Adam became, in a legal and judicial sense, and without any injustice to them, theirs, so



that they were justly involved in its proper consequences. If it be indeed the actual fact that men come into the world with ungodly and depraved natures, which certainly and invariably, until they are changed, produce transgressions and shortcomings of God's law—actual violations of moral obligations— then, assuredly, the principle that Adam was constituted, and thereafter was held and regarded by God, as the representative and federal head of his posterity, so that they sinned in him and fell with him in his first transgression, is the only one that has ever been propounded which makes even an approach towards affording an explanation of this important fact, — viz., that men do come into the world with their whole moral nature corrupted, and thoroughly perverted, so far as God and His law are concerned. If men are not satisfied with this explanation, so far as it goes, it is their business to devise or suggest a better. But, in place of impartially considering this explanation, which the statements of Scripture plainly enough indicate, and in place of attempting to give any other more satisfactory explanation of a fact which appears in itself to be well established, the more common process is to deny the fact altogether, or to explain it away, —i.e., either to deny that men bring with them into the world an ungodly and depraved moral nature, or to represent the ungodliness and depravity, which may be admitted in some sense to attach to it, to be insufficient to affect materially their relation to God, and, without divine interposition, their future destiny; and to be thus scarcely important enough to stand much in need of explanation, as not presenting any very serious difficulty either in speculation or in reality.

All this contributes to illustrate the observation we have made, as to the propriety and importance of first of all ascertaining, if possible, how the actual matter of fact stands, that men who are opposed to orthodox views may be deprived of the unfair advantage of shuffling between the fact and its cause, —the thing itself, and its origin or reason. Let the question be distinctly put, and let it be fairly investigated, until, if possible, a deliberate and decided conclusion is come to: Do men, or do they not, bring with them into the world ungodly and depraved

natures? And if they do, have we any practical test or standard of the strength, efficacy, and consequences of this ungodliness or depravity, which actually, and in fact, attaches to them as a feature of their moral character? When the matter of fact is once ascertained, it will then be proper to consider, if it seem necessary, both, on the one hand, how it originated and how it may be explained; and, on the other, to what conclusions, theoretical and practical, it may lead. When the matter is viewed in this light— when the question is thus considered by itself, and in the light of its direct and appropriate evidence— there seems to be no very great difficulty in coming to a decided determination regarding it.

There are surely many sufficiently plain statements in Scripture which assure us that men have all by nature, —i.e., as they actually come into the world, and until some important change is effected upon them, —a bias, proneness, or tendency to disregard God, to neglect the duties which He has imposed upon them, and to break His laws. Experience, or an actual survey of the history and condition of the human race, fully confirms this doctrine of Scripture, and shows that this tendency is universal, —extending to all men, —and is so strong and powerful as never in any instance to be overcome by the unaided efforts of men themselves, or by any combination of external circumstances; or, to adopt the language of Jonathan Edwards, in his great work on Original Sin, "that all mankind constantly in all ages, without fail in any one instance, run into moral evil" and "that, consequently, all mankind are under the influence of a prevailing effectual tendency in their nature to sin and wickedness." There are, indeed, many men who do not seem to be at all aware of this tendency to sin as a feature in their character, and not a few even who openly deny it, and appeal to their own consciousness to disprove it. This, however, is no sufficient argument against the reality and universality of the alleged tendency; for it may be, and the Scripture plainly enough indicates that it is, one feature or result of this very tendency itself, and of its immediate consequences, to render men blind and insensible to its own existence. Many men, who once disbelieved and opposed this

doctrine, have come to be firmly persuaded of its truth; while none who ever really and intelligently believed it, have ever been brought to reject it; and there are few men whose consciousness, if allowed full and fair scope, and subjected to a skilful cross-examination upon some materials which the word of God furnishes, would not be brought to render some testimony, more or less explicit, to its truth. In the very nature of this doctrine, or rather of the fact which it announces, it is very manifest that men are imperatively called upon to ascertain whether it be true, and to be familiar with the grounds on which their conviction of its truth is based. And when this conviction is once reached, then is the proper time to investigate both its origin and its results— its causes and its consequences—taking care, however, that neither the difficulties and perplexities that may attend an investigation of its origin or cause, nor the alarming consequences that may flow from it, when practically applied and followed out, shall be allowed to shake the conviction in regard to the actual matter of fact, —this feature of man's moral character, which has been satisfactorily established by competent and appropriate evidence.

Now the Scripture, as we have mentioned, does give us some explanation concerning its origin and source, though certainly not such as to remove every difficulty, and to render the subject in its principles perfectly level to our comprehension; and the substance of what the Scripture makes known to us upon this point was much more fully and accurately brought out by Augustine in his controversy with the Pelagians, than ever it had been before, and has been already briefly explained. No other reasonable explanation of the fact has ever been given, —we might say, has ever been attempted. Men have attempted to explain the fact of the universal prevalence of actual sin among mankind, without referring it to a proneness or tendency to sin, which men now bring with them into the world, and which constitutes an actual feature in their moral character; but for this proneness or tendency itself operating universally and certainly, when once admitted or found to be an actual reality, no other explanation has ever been proposed. Some

men, indeed, have stopped short with the fact itself, received upon scriptural authority, without seeking, or even admitting, any explanation of its origin or cause; in other words, they have held the fact of the actual and entire corruption and depravity of human nature, without receiving or taking into account the federal headship of our first parent—the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity—or its derivation in any proper sense from Adam and his first transgression. This raises the question, whether or not the Scripture gives any countenance to the doctrine of the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity; and whether, if it does, this principle does anything towards explaining the fact of the universal corruption and depravity of human nature. Augustine maintained and proved that Adam's sin involved all his posterity in this moral corruption and depravity, and did so, because it was held or reckoned as theirs; although, as has been already explained, he did not apply the imputation of Adam's first sin in the twofold aspect in which it has been commonly presented by Calvinistic divines, —as the ground at once of a portion of the guilt or reatus which

attaches to them, and as, at the same time, affording some explanation of their universal actual moral depravity, —but only in the latter of these aspects. God did not create man with this prevailing proneness or tendency to sin. It must have been in some way the result of transgression or disobedience. The only act of disobedience or transgression to which it can be ascribed, or with which it can be supposed to be penally connected— and the connection must have been of a penal character— is that of our first parents; and the only way in which that transgression could operate upon us, so as to affect our moral character, is by its being imputed to us, or held and accounted as ours. This, again, receives its explanation from the principle that God constituted Adam the representative or federal head of mankind, so that his trial was actually, and in a judicial sense, the trial of the human race, —and his fall and sin the fall and sin of all his posterity.

Had nothing further been revealed to us in Scripture than the mere fact that all men have, and bring with them into the world, ungodly and depraved natures, it would have been our duty to have received this upon God's authority, though He might have given us no explanation whatever of it, and though we might have been utterly unable to devise any; and even as matters stand, our first and most important duty in regard to this subject is just to ascertain whether this be so, in point of fact, or not. But the Scripture does plainly trace the fact which it asserts of the universal corruption and depravity of man's nature, to our connection with Adam, and to the first sin of our first parent, and does contain plain enough indications that this connection is based upon a constitution, arrangement, or covenant, which God made, —which is in itself perfectly equitable, —and in virtue of which Adam's trial or probation was to be the trial or probation of the whole human race. This is information given us in Scripture, in addition to the making known the mere fact of the universal prevalence of actual ungodliness and depravity as a feature of human nature, and is to be received and submitted to simply as being revealed; while, at the same time, there is no great difficulty in seeing that this additional information does throw some light upon the important fact with which it is connected, or does contribute something towards explaining it. The subject is, indeed, still a mysterious one, and we have no right to expect that we should fully comprehend it; but the statements which we have briefly explained, can, we think, be all established, with more or less clearness or certainty, from the word of God. They exhaust the information which is given us there upon the different points involved in this matter, and they form a compact and intelligible scheme, which unfolds the whole subject in such a way that each part corroborates and illustrates the other.

The difficulties connected with what seems to be taught in Scripture, as to the bearing of Adam's first sin upon his own moral character, and that of all his descendants, and with the alleged imputation of that sin to his posterity, should not in reason affect our investigation of the question, as to what the actual moral character of mankind is,

or the decision to which we may come regarding it. The view of the origin and cause of the moral depravity of man's nature, which is plainly intimated in Scripture, does assuredly not make the great fact itself more incredible or improbable, or weaken the force of the evidence on which it rests. And it is only when the fact is fully established, that men are warranted to investigate into its origin or cause. It is then only that they will be likely to enter upon this investigation with a due measure of impartiality and diligence; and when due impartiality and diligence are employed, men not only will not find, in difficulties that may be connected with the scriptural representation of the origin and cause of this great fact, any ground for doubting the reality of the fact itself, established upon its own proper evidence; but they will see that the scriptural explanation of the fact, though it may not remove every difficulty, does tend in no inconsiderable degree to throw light upon it, —that, when the whole of what the Scripture teaches upon the subject is viewed in combination, it is all fitly framed together, and that the different branches of the great general doctrine upon this point afford mutual strength and support to each other.

So much for the retrospect, or looking back from the fact established, or assumed to be so, of the moral corruption or depravity of human nature, to its source or cause. Let us now briefly advert to the prospect, or looking forward to the consequences that result from it. In the Pelagian controversy, as understood in Augustine's time, the consequences of the fall were viewed chiefly, not in their connection with guilt, as rendering necessary, if men were to be saved, some provision for securing pardon and acceptance; but in their connection with depravity, as rendering necessary some provision for changing men's natures, and as in some measure determining the nature and character of the provision that was needful. And here the principal and primary question amounts in substance to this: Is this corruption or depravity, attaching to all men as an actual feature of the moral nature which they bring with them into this world, total or partial?

If it be only partial, then man still has by nature something about him that is really good, in the proper sense of the word, —something that is really in accordance with the requirements of God's law, that enables him to do something in the way of really discharging the obligations which he upon him as a creature of God, and of effecting, or at least aiding to effect, by his own strength and efforts, his own entire deliverance from its influence. If, on ' the other hand, the corruption or depravity which attaches to man's moral nature be total, then it follows that the positions now referred to are wholly unfounded, and that statements directly the reverse may justly be made with regard to men's qualities and capacities, so far as concerns their relation to God and His laws, their fitness to discharge the obligations which he upon them, and their ability to exert themselves any real influence upon their deliverance from depravity, and their meetness for heaven.

Our Confession of Faith says, —and the word of God fully proves it, —that in virtue of this corruption or depravity, which attaches to all men by nature, they are "dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body," and that they are "thereby utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." This, and nothing less, Scripture and experience concur in showing to be the real import and amount of the corruption which, in fact, attaches to man's moral nature; and while the direct and immediate result of this truth, proved or admitted, is, that men should, in the belief of it, be fully aware of, and should constantly realize, their own utter worthlessness and helplessness in regard to all spiritual and eternal things, and cherish a frame of mind and heart corresponding to this awful reality, which either now attaches, or did once attach, to every one of them, —its more general and extended importance, both theoretically and practically, is to be seen in its bearing upon the question of what is the nature, character, and source of the provision that may be adequate and needful for removing it. It is here, of course, that the subject of original sin and human depravity connects with that of divine grace, or the special gracious agency of God, in converting and

sanctifying men, —a subject which formed, perhaps, the most prominent topic of discussion in the controversy between Augustine and the Pelagians. Here, too, comes in the important and difficult subject of free-will; about the precise mode of stating, defending, and applying which, there has been considerable diversity of sentiment, even among those who in the main agreed in the whole substance of what they believed regarding the moral nature and spiritual capacity of fallen man. Indeed, the subject of the freedom or bondage, the liberty or servitude, of the human will, — i.e., of the will of men as they are, as they come into the world, with a corrupt and depraved moral nature, —may be regarded as forming, in some sense, the connecting link between the doctrine of original sin, and that of God's grace in the conversion of sinners. The doctrine of man's total depravity implies, or immediately leads to, that of the actual servitude or bondage of the human will. And this, again, when once proved, would be sufficient of itself to establish the doctrine of God's special gracious agency as the ultimate source, and only real cause of, all that is truly good in man, even although this latter doctrine had not been so clearly and fully established by the express declarations of Scripture. It is in this connection, and in this connection alone, that the servitude or bondage of the human will was asserted by Augustine, and what is much more important, is asserted in our Confession of Faith. The Confession, after laying down the general principle about the natural liberty of the will of man already quoted, and asserting that " man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God, but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it," proceeds in these words: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

I cannot enter upon any detailed discussion of this subject, though I will afterwards return to it; but I would just remark, that I am by no means satisfied that any other doctrine of necessity— any other view



of the bondage or servitude of the human will— than that which represents it as implied in, or deduced from, the moral depravity which attaches to all men, as an actual feature of their character, can be fully established, either from Scripture or reason. The actual inability of men to will or to do what is really good, —and this is the only necessity under which they are that is of any material practical importance, —seems in Scripture to be always connected with, or deduced from, not their mere position as the creatures of God's hand, and the subjects of His moral government, —although, of course, they are in these characters wholly subject at all times, and in all circumstances, to His guidance and control, —not any general laws which He has impressed upon His intelligent creatures, or upon the human mind as such, or on its power of volition, or other faculties or operations; but it seems to be connected with, or deduced from, that thorough ungodliness, or entire moral corruption, which attaches to the nature of man, as fallen. That the ungodliness or corruption which attaches to man's nature, as fallen, does produce or imply a bondage or servitude of the will, by which men are, in fact, "unable by their own strength to convert themselves, or to prepare themselves thereunto," is evident in the nature of the case, and is clearly taught in Scripture. That any other kind or species of servitude, or necessity, attaches to the human will, is not by any means so certain. The only ground on which it can be alleged to rest is a metaphysical speculation, which, whether true or false, ought to be carefully distinguished from truths actually taught in Scripture; and which, while not itself positively sanctioned by Scripture, cannot, I think, be shown to be indispensably necessary for the exposition, illustration, or defence of any of those great doctrines, the belief of which is required in the word of God, and the knowledge of which is necessary in order to an accurate acquaintance with the way of salvation.

### **III. Conversion— Sovereign and Efficacious Grace**

The controversy between Augustine and his opponents turned, as we have said, to a large extent, upon the nature and import, the necessity, grounds, and results of that grace of God, which, in some sense, was universally admitted to be manifested in preparing men for heaven. That a certain character, and a certain mode of acting, in obedience to God's law, were in fact necessary, in order to men's attaining final happiness, and that men were in some sense indebted to God's grace or favour for realizing this, was universally conceded. It was conceded by Pelagius and his immediate followers, and it is conceded by modern Socinians; but then the explanation which these parties gave of this grace of God, which they professed to admit, made grace to be no grace, and practically made men, and not God, the authors of their own salvation, which the Socinians, consistently enough, guarantee at length to all men. With the original Pelagians and the modern Socinians, the grace of God, by which men are, in this life, led to that mode of acting which, in fact, stands connected with their welfare in the next, —(for even Socinians commonly admit some punishment of wicked men in the future world, though they regard it as only temporary), —consists in these two things: First, the powers and capacities with which He has endowed man's nature, and which are possessed by all men as they come into the world, along with that general assistance which He gives in His ordinary providence, in upholding and aiding them in their own exercise and improvement of these powers and capacities; and, secondly, in the revelation which He has given them to guide and direct them, and in the providential circumstances in which He may have placed them. This view of the grace of God, of course, assumes the non-existence of any such moral corruption attaching to men, as implies any inability on their part, in any sense, to obey the will of God, or to do what He requires of them; and, in accordance with this view of what

man is and can do, ascribes to him a power of doing by his own strength, and without any special, supernatural, divine assistance, all that is necessary for his ultimate welfare. This view is too flatly contradictory to the plain statements of Scripture, and especially to what we are told there concerning the agency of the Holy Ghost, to have been ever very generally admitted by men who professed to receive the Bible as the word of God; and, accordingly, there has been a pretty general recognition of the necessity, in addition to whatever powers or capacities God may have given to men, and whatever aids or facilities of an external or objective kind He may have afforded them, of a subjective work upon them through special supernatural agency; and the question, whether particular individuals or bodies of men were involved more or less in the errors of semi-Pelagianism, or taught the true doctrine of Scripture, is, in part, to be determined by the views which they have maintained concerning the nature, character, and results of this special supernatural agency of God, in fitting men for the enjoyment of His own presence.

Even the original Pelagians admitted the existence of supernatural gracious influences exerted by God upon men; but then they denied that they were necessary in order to the production of any of those things which accompany salvation, and held that when bestowed they merely enabled men to attain them more easily than they could have done without them; while they also explicitly taught that men merited them, or received them as the meritorious reward of their previous improvement of their own natural powers. An assertion of the necessity of a supernatural gracious work of God upon men's moral nature, in order to the production of what is, in point of fact, indispensable to their salvation, has been usually regarded as necessary to entitle men to the designation of semi-Pelagians, — a designation which comprehends all who, while admitting the necessity of a supernatural work of God, come short of the full scriptural views of the grounds of this necessity, and of the source, character, and results of the work itself. The original Pelagian system upon this point is intelligible and definite, and so is the scriptural

system of Augustine; while any intermediate view, whether it may or may not be what can, with historical correctness, be called semi-Pelagianism, is marked by obscurity and confusion. Leaving out of view the proper Pelagian or Socinian doctrine upon this subject, and confining our attention to the scriptural system of Augustine on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to those confused and indefinite notions which fall short of it, though not to such an extent as the doctrines of the Pelagians and the Socinians, we would remark that it is conceded upon both sides: First, that before men are admitted into heaven they must repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and lead thereafter a life of new obedience; and, secondly, that men have a moral nature so far tainted by depravity, that this indispensable process cannot in any instance be carried through without a supernatural gracious work of God's Spirit upon them.

These two propositions embody most important and fundamental truths, clearly and fully taught in Scripture, and essential to a right comprehension of the way of salvation. Men who deny them may be justly regarded as refusing to submit to the authority of God's word, and as rejecting the counsel of God against themselves; while, on the other hand, men who honestly and intelligently receive them, though coming short of the whole scriptural truth in expounding and applying them, may be regarded as maintaining all that is fundamental upon this subject; by which I mean, —in accordance with the common Protestant doctrine of fundamentals as brought out in the controversy with the Church of Rome, —that some men who have held nothing more than this have afforded satisfactory evidence that they themselves were born again of the word of God, and have been honoured as the instruments of converting others through the preaching of the gospel. But while this is true, and ought not to be forgotten, it is of at least equal importance to observe, that many who have professed to receive these two propositions in the general terms in which we have stated them, have given too good ground to believe that this professed reception of them was decidedly defective either in integrity or in intelligence, —have so explained them, or rather explained them away, as to deprive them of all real

meaning and efficacy, and practically to establish the power of man to save himself, and to prepare for heaven, upon the ruins of the free grace of God, which is manifested just as fully in the sanctification as in the justification of sinners. And hence the importance and necessity of clearly and definitely understanding what is the scriptural truth upon these subjects, lest we should be deceived by vague and indefinite plausibilities, which seem to establish the grace of God, while they in fact destroy it. Defective and erroneous views upon this subject are usually connected with defective and erroneous views in regard to the totality of the moral corruption which attaches to men by nature, and of their consequent inability to do anything that is really spiritually good. It is manifest that any error or defect in men's views upon this subject will naturally and necessarily lead to erroneous and defective views of the nature, character, and results of that gracious work of God, by which man is led to will and to do what is good and well-pleasing in His sight.

When those who admit in general the necessity of a gracious work of God's Spirit upon men, in order to their repenting and believing the gospel, have yet erroneous and defective views upon the subject of divine grace, they usually manifest this by magnifying the power or influence of the truth or word of God, —by underrating the difficulty of repenting and believing, —by ascribing to men some remains of moral power for effecting these results, and some real and proper activity in the work of turning to God, —and by representing the work of God's Spirit as consisting chiefly, if not exclusively, in helping to impress the truth upon men's minds, or, more generally, rendering some aid or assistance to the original powers of man, and to the efforts which he makes. It is by such notions as these, though often very obscurely developed, insinuated rather than asserted, and sometimes mixed up with much that seems sound and scriptural, that the true doctrine of the gracious work of God in the conversion of sinners has been often undermined and altogether overthrown. These men have, more or less distinctly, confounded the word or the truth— which is merely the dead instrument— with the Spirit, who is the real agent, or efficient cause of the whole process. They have

restricted the gracious work of the Spirit to the illumination of men's understandings through the instrumentality of the truth, as if their will did not require to be renewed, and as if all that was needful was that men should be aided intellectually to perceive what was their true state and condition by nature, and what provision had been made for their salvation in Christ, and then they would certainly repent and believe as a matter of course, without needing specially to have the enmity of their hearts to God and His truth subdued. They have represented the gracious work of the Spirit chiefly, if not exclusively, as co-operating with men, and aiding them in the work for which they have some natural capacity, though not enough to produce of themselves the necessary result, as if there was little or no need of preventing or prevenient grace, or grace going before, in order that man may work or act at all in believing and turning to God. These men are usually very anxious to represent faith in Jesus Christ as to some extent the work of men's own powers, the result of their own principles; and Augustine admits that he had some difficulty in satisfying himself for a time that faith was really and properly the gift of God, and was wrought in men by the operation of His Spirit, though this doctrine is very plainly and explicitly taught in Scripture. Much pains have been taken to explain how natural and easy saving faith is, to reduce it to great simplicity, to bring it down as it were to the level of the lowest capacity, —sometimes with better and more worthy motives, but sometimes also, we fear, in order to diminish, if not to exclude, the necessity of a supernatural preventing work of God's Spirit in producing it. And then, as repentance and conversion, as well as the whole process of sanctification, are beyond all doubt inseparably connected with the belief of the gospel, the way is thus paved for ascribing to man himself some share in the work of his deliverance from depravity, and his preparation for heaven.

One of the most subtle forms of the various attempts which have been made to obscure the work of God's Spirit in this matter, is that which represents faith as being antecedent— in the order of nature at least, though not of time— to the introduction or implantation of spiritual life into the soul of man, dead in sins and trespasses. This

notion is founded upon these two grounds: first, upon a misapprehension of the full import of the scriptural doctrine, that man is dead in sin, —as if this death in sin, while implying a moral inability directly to love God, and to give true spiritual obedience to His law, did not equally imply a moral inability to apprehend aright divine truth, and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and, secondly, upon a misapplication or perversion of the scriptural principle, that men are born again of the word of God through the belief of the truth, —as if this, while no doubt implying that the truth has been effectually brought to bear upon the mind before the process of being born again has been completed, so that the man is in the full exercise of new spiritual life, implied, moreover, that this efficacious operation of the truth must precede, in the order of nature, the whole work by which the Spirit originates the process of vivification; and the object and tendency of this notion, based upon these two grounds, are to produce the impression that men, through believing, are able to do something towards making themselves, or at least towards becoming, spiritually alive, and thereby superseding to some extent the necessity of a supernatural work of God's Spirit in a point of primary and vital importance, intimately connected with the salvation of men. Man is dead in sin; the making him alive, the restoring him to life, is represented in Scripture as, in every part of the process, from its commencement to its conclusion, the work of God's Spirit. The instrumentality of the truth or the word is, indeed, employed in the process; but in the nature of the case, and in accordance with what is clearly taught in Scripture, there must, antecedently— at least in the order of nature, though not of time— to the truth being so brought to bear upon men's minds as to produce instrumentally any of its appropriate effects, be a work of God's Spirit, whereby spiritual life is implanted, and a capacity of perceiving and submitting to the truth, which had been hitherto rejected, is communicated, —a capacity which, indeed, previously existed, so far as concerns the mere intellectual framework of man's mental constitution— the mere psychological faculties which he possesses as being still a man, though fallen— but which was practically useless because of the entire bondage or servitude of his

will, which required to be renewed, and could be renewed only by the immediate agency of God's Spirit. The doctrine of God's word upon this subject is fully maintained only when man is really regarded as being in his natural condition, morally dead to all that is really good, and when the first implantation of spiritual life, and all that results from it, including faith as well as repentance, turning to God and embracing the Lord Jesus Christ, is honestly, and without reserve or equivocation, traced to the supernatural agency of God's Spirit as its only efficient cause.

One other important point connected with this subject, which, from the time of Augustine till the present day, has been largely discussed, is what has been called the efficacy, or invincibility, or irresistibility of grace. Pelagians and semi-Pelagians have all united in denying the irresistibility of grace, and have virtually maintained— for it really comes to this in substance— that whatever power the Holy Spirit may put forth upon men in order to convert and renew them, it is in their power to resist it all, and to escape, so to speak, unconverted and unrenewed; while Augustine maintained that the grace of God, the power of the Spirit in the Elect, always prevailed or overcame, and certainly took effect, whatever resistance men might make to it. This doctrine has been held in substance ever since by orthodox divines, though there has been some difference of opinion among them as to what were the terms in which the substance of the scriptural views upon the subject could be most fitly and accurately expressed.

Augustine, in asserting the invincibility or irresistibility of grace, did not mean, —and those who in subsequent times have embraced his general system of doctrine as scriptural, did not intend to convey the idea, —that man was compelled to do that which was good, or that he was forced to repent and believe against his will, whether he would or not, as the doctrine is commonly misrepresented; but merely that he was certainly and effectually made willing, by the renovation of his will through the power of God, whenever that power was put forth in a measure sufficient or adequate to produce the result.



Augustine, and those who have adopted his system, did not mean to deny that men may, in some sense and to some extent, resist the Spirit, the possibility of which is clearly indicated in Scripture; inasmuch as they have most commonly held that, to use the language of our Confession, "persons who are not elected, and who finally perish, may have some common operations of the Spirit," which, of course, they resist and throw off. The truth is, that this doctrine of the certain efficacy or irresistibility of grace is closely and necessarily connected with the doctrine of God's purposes or decrees, —the great doctrine of predestination or election, which constitutes an essential part of the Pelagian controversy; and, indeed, it may be regarded as forming the connecting link between the doctrine of converting and renewing grace, as the true cause of all that is good in man, and that of personal election to everlasting life, as the source to which God's effectual operation in working faith in men, and thereby uniting them to Christ, is to be traced. It is the Spirit of God whose supernatural agency restores men to life, and effects in them all that is indeed spiritually good. Whenever this agency is put forth in strength sufficient to effect the object of converting a sinner and uniting him to Christ by faith, it certainly does effect it, just because God had resolved to effect it, and has in consequence put forth the power necessary for doing so. What God does in time, He from eternity decreed to do, because in the Infinite Mind there is no succession of time, —all things are at once and eternally present to it. When God exercises power, He is carrying into effect an eternal purpose; when He converts a sinner, He is executing a decree which He formed before the world began— before all ages.

The main questions connected with this important subject are these — First, Is God, when He sends forth His almighty Spirit, — when He converts a sinner and unites him to Christ, —influenced, in doing so, by a regard to anything existing in the man, by which He is distinguished from others, or by anything present in him? or is He influenced solely by His own purpose, previously formed, — formed from eternity, —of converting and saving that man? And, secondly, Does this general principle of an eternal purpose to save some men

and to pass by the others, or to leave them in their natural condition of guilt and depravity, apply to and regulate God's dealings with all the individuals of the human race? It is admitted by most of the opponents of predestination, properly so called, that God foresees from eternity whatsoever comes to pass; and that since He has foreseen all events, even those which embody the eternal fate of His intelligent creatures, and thus had them present to His mind, He may be said in a certain sense to have foreordained or foreappointed them; so that the question virtually and practically comes to this— Does God predestinate men to eternal life because He foresees that they will exercise faith and repentance? or does He foresee this because He has, of His own good pleasure, chosen them to faith and repentance, and resolved to bestow these gifts upon them in order that they may be saved in the way which He has appointed? If faith and repentance are men's acts, in such a sense that they can exercise them by their own unaided efforts, without God's agency, and can abstain from exercising them, whatever influence He may exert upon them; in other words, if the preventing and invincible grace of God be not the real source and efficient cause of all that is good in men, then the former view may be true, and election to life may rest upon the ground of faith and repentance foreseen; but if not, then the latter view must be true, and it must be certain that God has, of His own good pleasure, of His own sovereign purpose, elected some men to everlasting life, and in the mere execution of this purpose, has, in His own good time, given them, or wrought in them, faith and repentance.

It is not disputed that God usually gives men spiritual blessings—taking that expression in its widest sense— in a certain order, one being in some sense determined by what has preceded it; but the question is, whether the commencement of spiritual life wrought by God, and the whole series of spiritual blessings conferred by Him, viewed collectively and in the mass, can be really traced to any other cause or source than just this eternal purpose, founded on the counsel of His own will, to save some men, and His actually executing this purpose in time, in accordance with the provisions of

the scheme which He has established for the salvation of sinners. There is really no medium between an election to life, resting as its foundation upon the faith, repentance, and holiness of individuals foreseen, —which is really no election, but a mere act of recognition, —and a choice or selection of individuals originating in the good pleasure of God, without any other cause known to, or knowable by, us, —a choice or selection followed up in due time, as its certain and necessary result, by the actual bestowal by God upon the individuals elected of all that is necessary for securing their salvation. The latter of these views, we think, it can be proved, is clearly taught in Scripture; and though it no doubt involves much that is mysterious and inexplicable— much that may either call forth presumptuous objections, or profitably exercise men's faith and humility, —yet it certainly accords most fully with the actual phenomena of the moral and spiritual world, and it surely presents -God in His true character and real position as the rightful and omnipotent governor of the world, the arbiter of the eternal destinies of His intelligent creatures. The former view— the only one which can be taken if that of unconditional election be rejected, —besides that it is inconsistent with the statements of Scripture, which plainly supports the opposite doctrine, is liable to the fatal and unanswerable objection, that it leaves everything bearing upon the character and eternal condition of all the individuals of our race undetermined, and, indeed, uninfluenced, by their Creator and Governor, and virtually beyond His control; and degrades Him to the condition of a mere spectator, who only sees what is going on among His creatures, or foresees what is to take place without Himself determining it, or exerting any real efficiency in the production of it, and who must be guided by what He thus sees or foresees in all His dealings with them. There is really no medium between these two positions. God either really governs the world, and determines the character and destinies of His intelligent creatures; or else these creatures are practically independent of Him, the absolute regulators of their own conduct, and the omnipotent arbiters of their own destinies. And it is surely much more becoming our condition and capacities, even though there was less clear scriptural evidence upon the subject than there

is, to lean to the side of maintaining fully the divine supremacy, —of relying implicitly upon the divine justice, holiness, and faithfulness, —and resolving all difficulties, which we cannot solve, into our own ignorance and incapacity; than to that of replying against God, —arraigning the principles of His moral administration, —and practically excluding Him from the government of the most important department of the world which He has created, and ever sustains.

## **IV. Perseverance of the Saints**

Another topic of primary importance, which was treated of fully and formally by Augustine in his controversy with the Pelagians, is what is commonly called the perseverance of the saints;— or the doctrine that men who have once been really enabled to believe in Jesus Christ, and have been born again of the word of God, do never totally and finally fall away from a state of grace, but are certainly enabled to persevere, and are preserved unto eternal salvation.

This doctrine of perseverance is manifestly a necessary part of the general scheme of Christian doctrine, which Augustine did so much to expound and defend; and what is still more important, — for it is not very safe for men to place much reliance upon their own mere perception of the logical connection of doctrines in regard to divine things, —it is, we are persuaded, clearly taught in the statements of Scripture. If the doctrines to which we have already adverted are, indeed, contained in the word of God, the men of whom it is asserted that they will certainly persevere and be saved, are placed in this condition, —viz., that God has from eternity chosen them to everlasting life; and that in the execution of this purpose or decree, He has given them faith and repentance, He has united them to Christ, and renewed their natures. All this, which could be effected by no power but His own, He has done, and done for the express purpose of saving them with an eternal salvation. Of men so placed—treated by God in such a way for such a purpose— it may surely be

asserted with perfect confidence, that He will certainly enable them to persevere, and will thereby secure their eternal welfare. Had God formed no definite purpose of mercy in regard to individuals of our fallen race, we could not have been certain that any would have been saved. Were men able to convert themselves, and to prepare for heaven, in the exercise of their own natural powers and capacities, while it is possible that they might succeed, it is equally possible of any of them, apart from God's electing purpose, that they might fall off and ultimately fail. Were divine grace exerted in such away and in such a measure, that it was still in the power of any man, in the exercise of his own natural and inherent capacities, to resist it, or to remain unaffected by it, then neither God nor man could speak with anything like certainty in any case of the ultimate result; whereas the very different and opposite state of things, in regard to all these important subjects, which the word of God unfolds to us, and which we have already explained in treating of the subjects of efficacious grace and predestination, makes the final perseverance of all who are thus placed and treated, not only practicable, but ascertainable and certain.

The connection which subsists among these different doctrines, — original and total depravity; converting, efficacious, or invincible grace; eternal election, and final perseverance, —the relation in which they all stand to each other, —the full, compact, and comprehensive view which, in combination, they exhibit of the leading departments and whole substance of divine revelation, of what God has unfolded to us concerning Himself and concerning our race, concerning His plans and operations, and our capacities and destinies, —all this greatly confirms their truth and reality, as it exhibits them all as affording to each other mutual strength and support.

It is right, however, to mention, that in regard to the subject of perseverance there is a certain amount of error and apparent inconsistency to be found in Augustine's works. He held, decidedly and consistently, that all who are predestinated, or elected to

everlasting life, are certainly and infallibly enabled to persevere, and do all in fact attain to salvation; but he sometimes writes, as if he thought that men who had been the subjects of converting and renewing grace might fall away and finally perish.

He held, indeed, that this falling away was of itself a conclusive proof that they had not been elected, and so far he was perfectly orthodox and consistent; but he does not seem to have been quite so certain that, though not elected, and therefore finally perishing, some men might not have been brought for a time by God's grace under the influence of sanctified principles or real holiness, — and yet totally and finally fall away. This notion was inconsistent with the general principles of his system, and is certainly not sanctioned or required by anything contained in Scripture. The Scripture, by what it tells us of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of sin, of the impossibility of men knowing with anything like absolute certainty the true state of the 'character of other', —by reserving the power of searching the heart to God alone, —and by sanctioning the principle obviously involved in the declaration of the apostle, "They went out from us, because they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us,"— affords us abundant materials for explaining or accounting for all anomalous cases, all apparent instances of apostasy. And it is not, after all, quite certain that Augustine's statements upon this subject necessarily imply more than that cases of apostasy occurred in individuals who, so far as man can judge, had fairly entered upon the path that leads to heaven, —a position which no one disputes.

If his error really was more serious than this, it is not very difficult to see what tempted him to adopt it: it was the notion which was held in a gross and utterly anti-evangelical form by many of the fathers, and from the taint of which Augustine was not altogether free, of making baptism stand in some measure both for justification and regeneration. A man who rightly understands the nature of justification as a judicial or forensic act, and the true connection both of justification and regeneration with faith in Jesus Christ, by which

we are united to Him, and who along with this believes in personal election to life, will not easily fall into the error which Augustine seems in some measure to have imbibed. The man who has thoroughly clear and scriptural views of what is involved in the change that takes place, both as respects men's state and character, when they are united by faith to Christ, will not readily believe that any in whom this change has been effected by God, will be allowed to fall away and to perish, even though he should not have very clear and distinct views— which, however, Augustine had— upon the subject of personal election. Augustine's error and inconsistency, or rather perhaps his obscurity and confusion, upon this point, is thus clearly enough traceable to what has been called the sacramental principle, as implying an exaggerated sense of the necessity and efficacy of outward ordinances, —from which scarcely any of the fathers, except those who had personally associated with the apostles, are altogether free, and which still continues to be one of Satan's chief contrivances for perverting the gospel of the grace of God, and ruining the souls of men.

We may mention, as a sort of set-off to this defect or error of Augustine's, that Arminius and his immediate followers before the Synod of Dort, while rejecting the other leading doctrines of the Augustinian or Calvinistic system, did not venture at first to deny the doctrine of perseverance, but professed for a time that they had not fully made up their mind regarding it. In the Conference at the Hague— *Collatio Hagiensis*— held in the year 1611, after the death of Arminius, the Remonstrants, or Arminians, after stating fully the provisions made in the gospel for enabling believers to grow in knowledge and in grace, proceed to say: "*Sed an illi ipsi negligentia sua, principium illud, quo sustentantur in Christo, deserere non possint, et presentem mundum iterum amplecti, a sancta doctrina ipsis semel tradita deficere, conscientiae naufragium facere, a gratia excidere; penitius ex sacra Scriptura esset expendendum, antequam illud cum plena animi tranquillitate et plerophoria docere possimus.* Before the Synod of Dort in 1618, however, they had made up their mind on this question, and decidedly rejected the doctrine of

perseverance. Something similar to this occurred in the case of John Wesley, whose theological views were almost wholly identical with those of Arminius. In the earlier part of his life, in 1743, he was, he says, "inclined to believe that there is a state attainable in this life from which a man cannot finally fall." But this doctrine he was afterwards led to renounce.

## **THE SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY.**

Source: Chapter 23 in the *The Works of William Cunningham, D.D.* Vol. 3; *Historical Theology*, Vol 2. pages 155-236.

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In the rationalistic perversion of the true principles of the Reformation, as to the investigation of divine truth and the interpretation of Scripture, we have the foundation on which Socinianism is based,—namely, the making human reason, or rather men's whole natural faculties and capacities, virtually the test or standard of truth; as if the mind of man was able fully to take in all existences and all their relations, and as if men, on this ground, were entitled to exclude, from what is admitted to be a revelation from God, everything which could not be shown to be altogether accordant with the conclusions of their own understandings, or thoroughly comprehensible by them. In regard to this principle, and the general views of theology, properly so called, which have resulted from its application, it is not always easy to determine whether the application of this peculiar principium theologiæ produced the peculiar theology, or the peculiar theology, previously adopted from some other cause, or on some other ground, led to the maintenance



of the peculiar principium, as the only way by which the theology could be defended. If men had adopted rationalistic principles as their rule or standard in the investigation of divine truth and the interpretation of Scripture, they would certainly bring out, in the application of them, the Socinian system of theology, and yet did not think it altogether safe or expedient to deny the divine origin of the Christian revelation, they must, as a matter of course, be forced to adopt, as their only means of defence, the rationalistic principle of interpretation. These two things must, from the very nature of the case, have always gone hand in hand. They could scarcely, in any case, be separated in the order of time; and it is of no great importance to determine, in particular cases, which may have come first in the order of nature,—which was the cause, and which the effect. Papists allege that Socinianism was one of the consequences of the Reformation,—of the unrestrained and licentious speculations upon religious matters which they ascribe to that important event. The principles on which the Reformers acted, and on which the Reformation was based, were not the causes of, and are not responsible for, the errors and heresies which have sprung up in the Reformed churches. At the same time, it cannot be disputed that the Reformation tended to introduce a state of society, and a general condition of things, which led to a fuller and more prominent development of error, as well as of truth, by giving freedom of thought, and freedom in the expression of opinion. In the Church of Rom, and in countries that are fully under its control, the maintenance of any other errors and heresies than those which that church sanctions, is attended with imminent danger, and leads to sacrifices which few men are disposed to make, even for what they may regard as true.

This was the condition of Christendom before the Reformation. It lay wholly under the domination of a dark and relentless despotism, the tendency and effect of which were, to prevent men from exercising their minds freely upon religious subjects, or at least from giving publicity to any views they might have been led to adopt, different from those which had the civil and ecclesiastical authorities on their

side. Wherever the Reformation prevailed, this state of matters gradually changed. Despotism gave place to liberty. Liberty was sometimes abused, and this led to licentiousness. But it is not the less true that liberty is preferable to despotism, both as being in itself a more just and righteous condition of things, and as being attended with far greater advantages, and with fewer and smaller evils.

#### Sec. 1.—Origin of Socinianism.

With respect to Socinianism in particular, there is much in the history of its origin that not only disproves the Popish allegation of its being traceable to the principles of the Reformation, but which tends to throw back upon the Church of Rome a share, at least, of the responsibility of producing this most pernicious heresy.<sup>1</sup> The founders of this sect were chiefly Italians, who had been originally trained and formed under the full influence of the Church of Rome. They may be fairly regarded as specimens of the infidelity—or free-thinking, as they themselves call it—which the Popish system, in certain circumstances, and in minds of a certain class, has a strong tendency in the way of reaction to produce. They were men who had come, in the exercise of their natural reason, to see the folly and absurdity of much of the Popish system, without having been brought under the influence of truly religious impressions, or having been led to adopt a right method of investigating divine truth. They seem to have been men who were full of self-confidence, proud of their own powers of speculation and argument, and puffed up by a sense of their own elevation above the mass of follies and absurdities which they saw prevailing around them in the Church of Rome; and this natural tendency of the men, and the sinful state of mind which it implied or produced, were the true and proper causes of the errors and heresies into which they fell. Still it was the Church of Rome, in which they were trained, and the influences which it brought to bear upon them, that, in point of fact, furnished the occasions of developing this tendency, and determining the direction it took in regulating their opinions. The irrational and offensive despotism which the Church of Rome exercised in all matters of opinion, even

on purely scientific subjects, tended to lead men who had become, mentally at least, emancipated from its thralldom, first and generally, to carry freedom of thought to the extreme of licentiousness; and then, more particularly, to throw off the whole system of doctrine which the Church of Rome imposed upon men, without being at much pains to discriminate between what was false in that system, and what might be true. This is indeed the true history of Socinianism,—the correct account of the causes that in fact produced it.

Lælius Socinus, who is usually regarded as the true founder of the system,—though his nephew, Faustus, was the chief defender and promulgator of it,—seems to have formed his opinions upon theological subjects before he was constrained to leave Italy, and take refuge among the Protestants, where somewhat greater freedom of opinion was tolerated. He did not certainly find among the Reformers, with whom he came into contact, anything to encourage him in the theological views which he had imbibed; but neither was he brought, by his association with them, under any of those more wholesome influences, which would have led him to abandon them, and to embrace the great doctrines of the Reformation. He continued to manifest the same tendency and the same disposition which he had exhibited in Italy; and he retained the theological views which, in substance, he seems to have formed there. So that, though he published little or nothing, and did not always very fully or openly avow his peculiar opinions, even in private intercourse, yet, as there is reason to believe that he was really and substantially the author of the system afterwards developed and defended by his nephew, his history is truly the history of the origin of the system; and that history is at least sufficient to show that Popery is much more deeply involved in the guilt of producing Socinianism than Protestantism is.

It may be worth while, both as confirming the views now given of the character and tendencies of Lælius Socinus, and also as illustrating the method often adopted by such men in first broaching their novel and erroneous opinions, to give one or two specimens of what the

Reformers with whom he came into contact have said regarding him. He carried on for a time a correspondence with Calvin; in which, while he does not seem to have brought out distinctly the theological views afterwards called by his name, he had so fully manifested his strong tendency to indulge in all sorts of useless and pernicious speculations, as at length to draw from that great man the following noble rebuke: "You need not expect me to reply to all the monstrous questions (*portenta quæstionum*) you propose to me. If you choose to indulge in such aerial speculations, I pray you suffer me, a humble disciple of Christ, to meditate on those things which tend to the edification of my faith. And I indeed by my silence will effect what I wish,—viz., that you no longer annoy me in this way. I am greatly grieved that the fine talents which the Lord has given you, should not only be wasted on things of no importance, but spoiled by pernicious speculations. I must again seriously admonish you, as I have done before, that unless you speedily correct this *quærendi pruritum* it may bring upon you much mischief. If I were to encourage, under the appearance of indulgence, this vice, which I believe to be injurious, I would be acting a perfidious and cruel part to you; and therefore I prefer that you should now be somewhat offended by my asperity, than that I should abstain from attempting to draw you away from the sweet allurements of the curiosity (or love of curious speculation) in which you are entangled. The time, I hope, will come, when you will rejoice that you were awakened from it, even by a rude shock."2

Zanchius, too, was an Italian, and, like Socinus, had fled from that country, because it was not safe for him to remain there, in consequence of the anti-Papal views which he had adopted. But then, unlike Socinus, he was a sincere and honest inquirer after truth. He had sought and obtained the guidance of the Spirit of God. He had studied the Bible, with a single desire to know what God had there revealed, that he might receive and submit to it. And he had in this way been led to adopt the same system of theology as Calvin and the other Reformers, and proved himself an able and learned defender of it. In the preface to his work on the Trinity, or *De Tribus Elohim*, as he calls it,3 he thus describes Socinus: ' He was of a noble family,

well skilled in Greek and Hebrew, and irreproachable in his outward conduct; and on these accounts I was on friendly terms with him. But he was a man full of diverse heresies, which, however, he never proposed to me, except, as it were, for the purpose of disputation, and always putting questions as if he wished for information. And yet for many years he greatly promoted the Samosatanian heresy, and led many to adopt it."<sup>4</sup>

Such was the origin of Socinianism, and such, to a large extent, has been the kind of men by whom it has been advocated, although many of them have been fortunate enough to find themselves in circumstances that rendered it unnecessary to have recourse to the policy and management which its founder adopted, as to the mode of bringing out his opinions.

#### Sec. 2—Socinian Views as to Scripture.

The Socinians differ from the great body of Christians in regard to the subject of the inspiration of the sacred Scriptures. This was to be expected; for, as they had made up their minds not to regulate their views of doctrinal matters by the natural and obvious meaning of the statements contained in Scripture, it was quite probable that they would try to depreciate the value and authority of the Bible, so far as this was not plainly inconsistent with professing a belief, in any sense, in the truth of Christianity. The position, accordingly, which they maintain upon this point is, that the Bible contains indeed a revelation from God, but that it is not itself that revelation, or that it is not in any proper sense the word of God, though the word of God is found in it. They virtually discard the Old Testament altogether, as having now no value or importance but what is merely historical. And indeed they commonly teach that the promise of eternal life was not revealed, and was wholly unknown, under the Old Testament dispensation; but was conveyed to man, for the first time, by Christ Himself, when He appeared on earth: men, under the patriarchal and Mosaic economies, having been, according to this view, very much in the same situation as the mass of mankind in general,—that

is, being called upon to work out their own eternal happiness by their own good deeds, though having only a very imperfect knowledge of God, and of the worship and duty which He required, and having only a general confidence in His goodness and mercy, without any certainty or assurance as to their final destiny. Jesus Christ, according to Socinians, was a mere man, who was appointed by God to convey His will more fully to men; and the sole object of His mission was to communicate to men more correct and complete information concerning God and duty,—and especially to convey to them the assurance of a future state of blessedness, to be enjoyed by all who should do what they could in worshipping and serving God, according to the information He had communicated to them.

They profess, then, to receive as true, upon this ground, all that Christ Himself taught. They admit that the teaching of Christ is, in the main, and as to its substance, correctly enough set forth in the New Testament; and they do not allege that it can be learned from any other source. But then, as to the books which compose the New Testament, they maintain that they were the unaided compositions of the men whose names they bear; and deny that they, the authors, had any special supernatural assistance or superintendence from God in the production of them. They look on the evangelists simply as honest and faithful historians, who had good opportunities of knowing the subjects about which they wrote, and who intended to relate everything accurately, as far as their opportunities and memories served them; but who, having nothing but their own powers and faculties to guide them, may be supposed, like other historians, to have fallen sometimes into inadvertencies and errors. And as to the apostles of our Lord, whose writings form part of the canon of the New Testament, or the substance of whose teaching is there recorded, they commonly deny to them any infallible supernatural guidance, and admit that they were well acquainted with the views of their Master, and intended faithfully to report them, and to follow them in their own preaching. But they think that the apostles probably sometimes misunderstood or misapprehended them; and that they are not to be implicitly followed in the

reasonings or illustrations they employed to enforce their teaching,—an observation, of course, specially directed against the Apostle Paul.

With these views of the apostles and evangelists, and of the books of the New Testament, they think themselves warranted in using much greater liberty with its words and language, in the way of labouring to force them into an accordance with their system of theology, than can be regarded as at all warrantable by those who believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,—that holy men wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God. Socinians are also fond of dwelling upon all those topics which seem fitted to shake in men's minds a due sense of the reverence with which the sacred Scriptures ought, as being the word of God, to be regarded,—such as the obscurity attaching to some of their statements, and the difficulty of ascertaining their true meaning; the various readings, and the difficulty in some cases of ascertaining the true text; the apparent inconsistencies, and the difficulty occasionally of reconciling them. In discussing these and similar topics, they follow the example of the Papists,—treat them commonly in the same light or semi-infidel spirit; and their general object is the same,—namely, to insinuate the unfitness of the Bible, as it stands, to be a full and accurate directory of faith and practice, so as to leave it men's only business to ascertain the true and exact meaning of its statements, that they may implicitly submit to them. These topics they are fond of dwelling upon, and of setting forth with prominence, and even exaggeration. And the application they make of them is,—first, and more specifically, to disprove the inspiration of the books of Scripture; and, secondly, and more generally, to warrant and encourage the use of considerable liberty in dealing with their statements, and to cherish a feeling of uncertainty as to the accuracy of the results that may be deduced from an examination of them. They thus make it sufficiently manifest, just as the Papists do, that they are rather disposed to shrink from a trial of their doctrines, by a direct and impartial examination of the exact sense and import of the whole statements of Scripture, as they stand. They are fond, indeed, of declaiming upon the supremacy of the Scriptures, as the only rule of faith, in

opposition to all human authorities, councils, creeds, confessions, etc., etc.; and though this general principle is unquestionably true and sound, yet it will commonly be found that there are, in Socinian and rationalistic declamations upon the subject, quite as plain indications of a feeling of soreness, that the creeds and confessions of human authority—that is, of almost all who have ever professed to draw their faith from the Bible—have been decidedly opposed to their theological views, as of reverence for the Scriptures. And there is ground for suspecting that the main reason of their preference for the Bible alone, is because they think they can show that the Scriptures are capable of being so dealt with as to countenance, or at least not to oppose, their system; while creeds and confessions commonly are not. Still Socinians have generally admitted, at least theoretically and in words, down till their recent adoption in our own day, both in America and in Britain, of the entire anti-supernaturalism of German neologians, that the true sense of Scripture, when correctly and clearly ascertained, was to be practically and substantially the rule or standard of men's faith; and have, in consequence, usually undertaken to show that their system of theology was countenanced by Scripture, or at least was not opposed to it, but might be held by men who professed to receive the Bible as the rule of faith.

The leading peculiarity of their system of scriptural interpretation is just the principle, that nothing which is contrary to reason can be contained in a revelation from God; and that, therefore, if any statements of Scripture seem to impute to Jesus or His apostles the teaching of doctrines which are contrary to reason, they must, if possible, be explained in such a way as to avoid this difficulty, and be made to appear to teach nothing but what is accordant with reason. I will not enter again into the consideration of the general principle, or of the way and manner in which it ought to be applied, in so far as it has a foundation in truth; but will rather advert now to the way in which the Socinians actually deal with Scripture, in order to exclude from it anything irrational; though this is a topic which I fear can scarcely be made useful or interesting, without producing more in



the way of examples than our space permits. It is very plain that, if it be admitted in general that our faith is to be determined by ascertaining the meaning of Scripture statements, then the first and most obvious step to be adopted is just to employ, with the utmost impartiality and diligence, all the means which are naturally fitted, as means, to effect this end. If it be true, as it is, that the special blessing of God, and the guidance and direction of His Spirit, are necessary to attain this end, let us abound in prayer that we may receive it. If the use of all the ordinary critical and philological means and appliances which are applicable to the interpretation of such a collection of documents as the Bible contains, is necessary to this end,—as it is,—then let all these be diligently and faithfully employed; and let the result be deliberately and impartially ascertained, in the exercise of sound reason and common sense. This should evidently be the way in which the work should be entered on; and then, in so far as the principle about alleged contrariety to reason is true and sound, and admits of being fairly applied, let it be applied fully and frankly to the actual result of the critical and philological investigation, whatever may be the legitimate consequences of the application. But the Socinians commonly reverse this natural and legitimate process. They first lay down the principle, that certain doctrines—such as the Trinity, the hypostatical union, the atonement, the eternity of punishment—are irrational, or inconsistent with what natural reason teaches about God; and then, under the influence of this conviction, already existing, they proceed to examine Scripture for the purpose, not of simply ascertaining what it teaches, but of showing that these doctrines are not taught there, or at least that this cannot be proved.

Now this condition of things, and the state of mind which it implies or produces, are manifestly unfavourable to a fair and impartial use of the means naturally fitted to enable men to ascertain correctly what Scripture teaches. Impartiality, in these circumstances, is not to be expected,—it would betray an ignorance of the known principles of human nature to look for it. Those who believe in these doctrines profess to have found them in Scripture, fairly interpreted, in the use of the ordinary appropriate means,—to base them upon no other

foundation,—to know nothing about them but what is stated there,—and to be willing to renounce them, whenever it can be proved that they are not taught in the Bible; while the Socinians are placed, by this principle of theirs, in this position,—as some of the bolder and more straightforward among them have not scrupled to avow,—that they would not believe these doctrines, even if it could be proved to their satisfaction that they were plainly taught by the apostles. Still they usually profess to undertake to show that they are not taught in Scripture, or at least that no sufficient evidence of a critical and philological kind has been produced to prove that they are taught there. The violent perversion of all the legitimate and recognised principles and rules of philology and criticism, to which they have been obliged to have recourse in following out this bold undertaking, can be illustrated only by examples taken from the discussions of particular doctrines, and the interpretation of particular texts; but we may advert briefly to one or two of the more general features of their ordinary mode of procedure in this matter.

In regard to the text of the New Testament, they are accustomed to catch eagerly at, and to try to set forth with something like plausibility, the most meagre and superficial critical evidence against the genuineness or integrity of particular passages,—as has been fully proved with respect to the attempts they have made to exclude, as spurious, the first two chapters both of Matthew and of Luke, because of their containing an account of the miraculous conception of Christ; and they sometimes even venture upon mere conjectural emendations of the text, which have not a shadow of critical authority to support them,—as, for instance, in their criticism upon Rom. ix. 5,—a practice condemned by all impartial critics.

In the interpretation of Scripture, one of the general presumptions which they are fond of using is this,—that the texts adduced in support of some doctrine which they reject, are brought only from one or two of the books of the New Testament,—that the alleged proofs of it are not by any means so clear, so frequent, or so widely diffused as might have been expected, if the doctrine in question had

been intended to be taught,—or that no apparent proofs of it occur in passages where they might have been looked for, if the doctrine were true. In dealing with such considerations, which Socinians frequently insist upon, the defenders of orthodox doctrine usually maintain,—first, that most of the doctrines which Socinians reject are clearly and frequently taught in Scripture, and that statements affording satisfactory evidence of their truth, more formal or more incidental, are found to pervade the word of God; and, secondly, that even if it were not so, yet a presumption based upon such considerations is unwarranted and unreasonable: for that we have no right, because no sure ground to proceed upon in attempting, to prescribe or determine beforehand, in what particular way, with what measure of clearness or frequency, or in what places of Scripture, a doctrine should be stated or indicated; but are bound to receive it, provided only God, in His word, has given us sufficient grounds for believing it to have been revealed by Him. If the doctrine can be shown to be really taught in Scripture, this should be sufficient to command our assent, even though it should not be so fully and so frequently stated or indicated there as we might perhaps have expected beforehand, on the supposition of its being true; especially as it is manifest that the word of God, in its whole character and complexion, has been deliberately constructed on purpose to call forth and require men's diligence and attention in the study of its meaning, and in the comparison of its statements; and to test also men's fairness, candour, and impartiality, as indicated by their being satisfied or not with reasonable and sufficient, though it maybe not overwhelming, evidence of the doctrines there revealed.

Another general consideration, often insisted on by Socinians, in order to help out the very meagre evidence they can produce that particular passages in Scripture do not teach the orthodox doctrine, is this,—that all that they need to prove is, that the passage in question does not necessarily sanction the orthodox doctrine, but may possibly be understood in a different sense; and then they contend that they have done this at least. They often admit that, upon critical and philological grounds, a particular passage may be

taken in the orthodox sense; but they contend that they have disproved the allegation that it must be taken in that sense, and that this is sufficient. Now, here again, orthodox divines maintain,— first, that in regard to many of the passages, the meaning of which is controverted between them and the Socinians, it can be shown, not only that they may, but that they must, bear the orthodox sense, and that no other sense is consistent with a fair application to them of the ordinary rules of philology, grammar, and criticism; and, secondly, that the Socinian demand that this must be proved in all cases, or indeed in any case, is unreasonable and overstrained. We may concede to the Socinians, that, in the controversy with them, the onus probandi lies properly upon us, and that we must produce sufficient and satisfactory evidence of the truth of our doctrines from Scripture, before we can reasonably expect them to be received. But we cannot admit that any such amount of antecedent improbability attaches to the doctrines we hold, as to impose upon us any obligation to do more than show that the Scripture, explained according to the ordinary legitimate principles and rules applicable to the matter, teaches, and was intended to teach, them,—that a man, examining fairly and impartially as to what the Scripture sets forth upon these points, would naturally, and as a matter of course, without straining or bias to either side, come to the conclusion that our doctrines are taught there,—and that these are the doctrines which the Scriptures were evidently intended, as they are fitted, to inculcate. We wish simply to know what the actual language of Scripture, when subjected to the ordinary legitimate processes of criticism, really gives out,—what it seems to have been really intended to convey. The resolution with which the Socinians set out, of labouring to establish a bare possibility that the words may not have the sense we ascribe to them,—that they may by possibility have a different meaning,—has no reasonable foundation to rest upon; and it produces a state of mind manifestly opposed to anything like a candid and impartial investigation of what it is that the Scripture truly means. Under the influence of this resolution, men will generally find no difficulty in getting up some plausible grounds for asserting that almost any conceivable statement does not necessarily

mean what appears plainly to be its real and intended meaning, and that it might by possibility mean something else; while they lose sight of, and wholly miss, the only question that legitimately ought to have been entertained,—namely, What is the true and real meaning which the words bear, and were intended to bear?

It is in entire accordance with these unreasonable and overstrained principles of interpretation, that Mr. Belsham—who held the most prominent place among the Socinians of this country at the conclusion of last century and the beginning of this—lays it down as one of his general exegetical rules,<sup>5</sup> that "impartial and sincere inquirers after truth must be particularly upon their guard against what is called the natural signification of words and phrases,"—a statement manifestly implying a consciousness that Socinianism requires to put a forced and unnatural construction upon scriptural expressions, such as would not readily commend itself to the common sense of upright men, unless they were prepared for it by something like a plausible generality, in the form of an antecedent rule. It is, however, just the natural signification of words and phrases that we are bound, by the obligations of candour and integrity, to seek: meaning thereby, that we are called upon to investigate, in the fair use of all legitimate means and appliances suitable to the case, what the words were really designed to express; and having ascertained this, either to receive it as resting upon the authority of God, or, should there seem to be adequate grounds for it, on account of the real and unquestionable contrariety to reason of the doctrine thus brought out, to reject the document containing it as resting upon no authority whatever.<sup>6</sup>

### Sec. 3.—Socinian System of Theology.

Having explained the origin and causes of Socinianism, and the principles and leading features of the plan on which its supporters proceed in the interpretation of Scripture, we have now to give some exposition of the system of theology which, by the application of these principles, the Socinians have deduced from Scripture; or, to

speak more correctly, which they consider themselves warranted in holding, notwithstanding their professed belief in the divine origin of the Christian revelation. We have been accustomed to speak of Socinianism as just implying a rejection or denial of all the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the Christian system, as revealed in the sacred Scriptures; and this is, so far as it goes, a correct, though but a negative and defective, description of it. Socinianism, however, is not a mere negation: it implies a system of positive opinions upon all the important topics of theology, in regard to the divine character and moral government,—the moral character, capacities, and obligations of mankind,—the person and the work of Jesus Christ,—the whole method of salvation,—and the ultimate destinies of men. It is common, indeed, to speak of the meagre or scanty creed of the Socinians; and in one sense the description is unquestionably correct, for it includes scarcely any of those doctrines which have been usually received by the great body of professing Christians as taught in Scripture. And when thus compared with the system of doctrine that has commonly been held in the Christian church, it may be regarded as being, to a large extent, of a negative character, and very scanty in its dimensions. At the same time, it should be observed, that while in one point of view the Socinian creed may be regarded as very meagre and scanty, inasmuch as it contains scarcely any of those doctrines which Christians in general have found in the word of God, yet it really contains a system of opinions, and positive opinions, upon all those topics to which these doctrines relate. The ideas most commonly associated with the name of Socinianism are just the denial or rejection of the doctrines of the Trinity, of the proper divinity of Christ and of His vicarious atonement, and of the personality of the Spirit. And without adverting at present to other features of the Socinian system, it ought to be observed, that while they deny or reject the doctrines that have been commonly held by the Christian church upon these points, they have their own doctrines regarding them, which are not mere negations, but may be, and are, embodied in positive propositions. They not only deny the doctrine of the Trinity, but they positively assert that the Godhead is one in person as well as in essence. They not only deny the proper

divinity of Jesus Christ, but they positively assert that He was a mere man,—that is, a man and nothing else, or more than a man. They not only deny the vicarious atonement of Christ, which most other professing Christians reckon the foundation of their hopes for eternity, but they assert that men, by their own repentance and good works, procure the forgiveness of their sins and the enjoyment of God's favour; and thus, while denying that, in any proper sense, Christ is their Saviour, they teach that men save themselves,—that is, in so far as they need salvation. While they deny that the Spirit is a person who possesses the divine nature, they teach that the Holy Ghost in Scripture describes or expresses merely a quality or attribute of God. They have their own positive doctrines upon all these points,—doctrines which their creed embraces, and which their writings inculcate. On all these topics their creed is really as wide and comprehensive as that of any other section of professing Christians, though it differs greatly from what has been generally received in the Christian church, and presents all these important subjects in a very different aspect.

Socinians, as Dr. Owen observes,<sup>7</sup> are fond of taking the place, and sustaining the part, of respondents merely in controversy; and it is no doubt true, that if they could succeed in showing that our doctrines receive no countenance from Scripture, we would not only be called upon to renounce these doctrines, but, in doing so, would at the same time, as a matter of course, embrace views substantially Socinian. Still it is right and useful that, during the controversy, we should have distinct and definite conceptions of what are the alternatives,—of what are their doctrines upon all points as well as our own, and of what are the positive opinions which we must be prepared to embrace and maintain, if we think we see ground to abandon the orthodox system of doctrine and to adopt the Socinian. We are not to imagine, then, that what is commonly called the scanty creed of Socinianism is a mere negation; and we are to regard it as virtually embodying positive doctrines upon those points on which we ourselves hold opinions,—though opinions very different from theirs.

There is another observation of a general kind which I think it important that we should remember,—namely, that Socinianism really includes a scheme of doctrines upon all the leading subjects of theology,—upon all the main topics usually discussed in theological systems. The common impression is, that Socinianism merely describes certain views upon the subjects of the Trinity and the atonement; and these topics, indeed, have always and necessarily had much prominence in the controversies that have been carried on with the Socinians or Unitarians. But right. or wrong views upon these points must, from the nature of the case, materially affect men's opinions upon all other important topics in theology; and, in point of fact, Socinianism, even in the writings of its founders, was a fully developed system of doctrine upon everything material that enters, or has been supposed to enter, into the scheme of revelation. Socinianism has its own Theology in the strictest and most limited sense of that word,—that is, its peculiar views about God, His attributes and moral government, as well as its negation of a personal distinction in the Godhead. It has its own Anthropology,—that is, its own peculiar views in regard to the moral character and capacities of mankind as we find them in this world, though here it has just adopted the old Pelagian system. It has its own Christology, or its peculiar views as to who or what Christ was,—though here it has followed very much what were called the Samosatanean and Photinian heresies of early times; names, indeed, by which it was often designated by the writers of the seventeenth century. It has its own Soteriology,—that is, its peculiar views of the plan of salvation,—of the way and manner in which men individually are saved, or actually attain to final happiness,—as comprehending the topics usually discussed under the heads of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ, justification, regeneration, and the work of the Holy Spirit; on the latter topic, indeed, adopting substantially the views of the Pelagians; but with respect to the first of them,—namely, the atonement,—they have discoveries and demerits which may be said to be almost wholly their own. They have their own Eschatology, as it is called,—that is, their peculiar views in regard to those topics which are usually discussed in theological systems under the general head



"De novissimis," or the last things,—and especially the resurrection and the final punishment, or the fate and destiny, of the wicked. And besides all this, they have views in a great measure peculiar to themselves, and in full harmony with the general character and tendency of their theological system, on the subjects of the Church, and especially of the Sacraments. We have a sounder view of what Socinianism is, and can form a juster apprehension of the estimate that ought to be made of it, when we regard it as a complete and well-digested system, extending over the whole field of theology, and professing to present a full account of all the leading topics which it most concerns men to know, of everything bearing upon their relation to God and their eternal welfare; a system, indeed, taking up and embodying some of the worst and most pernicious of the heresies which had previously distracted and injured the church, but likewise adding some important heretical contributions of its own, and presenting them, in combination, in a form much more fully developed, much better digested and compacted, and much more skilfully defended, than ever they had been before. It may tend to bring out this somewhat more fully, if we give a brief statement of what the views are which have been commonly held by Socinians on these different subjects, mainly for the purpose of illustrating the unity and harmony of their theological system, and showing that the controversy with the Socinians is not a mere dispute about some particular doctrines, however important these may be, but really involves a contest for everything that is peculiar and important in the Christian system.

It is true of all systems of theology,—taking that word in its wide and common sense, as implying a knowledge of all matters bearing upon our relation to God and our eternal destinies,—that they are materially influenced, in their general character and complexion, by the views which they embody about the divine attributes, character, and government,—that is, about theology in the restricted meaning of the word, or the doctrine concerning God. Hence we find that, in many systems of theology, there are introduced, under the head "De Deo," and in the exposition of the divine attributes, discussions more

or less complete, of many topics that are afterwards taken up and illustrated more fully under their own proper heads,—such as providence, predestination, and grace. Socinians have sought, like other theologians, to lay the foundation of their system of doctrine in certain peculiar views in regard to the divine attributes. Orthodox divines have commonly charged them with denying, or explaining away, certain attributes which reason and Scripture seem to unite in ascribing to God, with the view of diminishing the perfection of the divine glory and character, and thereby removing arguments in favour of orthodox doctrines, and bringing in presumptions in favour of their own. I cannot enter into details, but may briefly advert to two of the principal topics that are usually brought into the discussion of this subject.

Socinianism—and indeed this may be said of most other systems of false religion—represents God as a Being whose moral character is composed exclusively of goodness and mercy,—of a mere desire to promote the happiness of His creatures, and a perfect readiness at once to forgive and to bless all who have transgressed against Him. They thus virtually exclude from the divine character that immaculate holiness which is represented in Scripture as leading God to hate sin, and that inflexible justice which we are taught to regard as constraining Him to inflict on sinners the punishment which He has threatened, and which they have merited. The form in which this topic is commonly discussed in more immediate connection with Socinianism, is this: whether vindictive or punitive justice—that is, justice which constrains or obliges to give to sinners the punishment they have deserved—be an actual quality of God,—an attribute of the divine nature? The discussion of this question occupies a prominent place in many works on the atonement; the Socinians denying that there is any such quality in God,—anything in His nature or character which throws any obstacle or impediment in the way of His at once pardoning transgressors, without any satisfaction to His justice; while orthodox divines have generally contended for the existence of such a quality or attribute in God, and

for its rendering necessary a vicarious atonement or satisfaction, in order that sinners might be forgiven.

The other topic under this general head to which we propose to advert, is that of the divine omniscience. Orthodox divines have always contended that scriptural views of this attribute, and of its application, afforded powerful arguments in favour of that entire dependence of men upon God's will and purposes which may be said to be a characteristic of the Calvinistic scheme of theology; and, accordingly, the discussion of it, and of the inferences that may be legitimately deduced from it, has entered largely into the Arminian controversy. The Socinians agree in the main with the Arminians upon this subject,—that is, so far as concerns a denial of Calvinistic doctrines; but being somewhat bolder and more unscrupulous than the Arminians, they have adopted a somewhat different mode of arriving at the same conclusion. The Arminians generally admit that God certainly foresees all future contingent events, such as the future actions of men exercising, without constraint, their natural powers of volition; but how this can be reconciled with their doctrine, that He has not fore-ordained these events, they do not pretend to explain. They leave this unexplained, as the great difficulty admittedly attaching to their system, or rather, as the precise place where they are disposed to put the difficulty which attaches to all systems that embrace at once the foreknowledge of God and the responsibility of man. The Socinians, however, being less easily staggered by the conclusive Scripture evidence of God's foreseeing the future free actions of men, especially that arising from the undoubted fact that He has so often predicted what they would be, boldly deny that He foresees these actions, or knows anything about them, until they come to pass; except, it may be, in some special cases, in which, contrary to His usual practice. He has fore-ordained the event, and foresees it because He has fore-ordained it. That they may seem, indeed, not to derogate from God's omniscience, they admit indeed that God knows all things that are knowable; but then they contend that future contingent events, such as the future actions of responsible agents, are not knowable,—do not come within the scope

of what may be known, even by an infinite Being; and, upon this ground, they allege that it is no derogation from the omniscience of God, that He does not, and cannot, know what is not knowable. They think that in this way, by denying the divine foreknowledge of future contingencies, they most effectually overturn the Calvinistic doctrine of God's fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass; while they, at the same time, concede to the Calvinists, in opposition to the Arminian view, that God's certain foreknowledge of the actions of men lays an immovable foundation for the position that He has fore-ordained them.

It may be worth while to mention upon this point—for the fact is both very curious and very important—that, in what is probably the earliest summary ever given of the whole Socinian system of doctrine, after it was fully developed, in a little work, understood to have been written with the view of explaining and defending it, by Ostorodus and Voidovius, when in 1598 they were sent from Poland on a mission into the Low Countries, in order to propagate their doctrines there, it is expressly assigned as a reason why they denied God's foreknowledge of the future actions of men, that there was no other way of escaping from the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination.<sup>8</sup> We shall afterwards have an opportunity of showing that there is more truth and consistency in the Socinian than in the Arminian view upon this particular point, while they agree in the general conclusion, in opposition to Calvinists; but, in the meantime, the two instances we have given will show how wide and extensive are the Socinian heresies, and how thoroughly accordant it is with the general character and tendency of their system to indulge in presumptuous speculations about the incomprehensible God,—to obscure the glory of His adorable perfections,—and to bring Him nearer to the level of the creatures whom He has formed. As the Trinity must afterwards be more fully discussed, I say nothing more about it at present, except this,—that here, too, Socinians manifest the same qualities and tendencies, by presuming to claim such a thorough knowledge of what the divine unity is, and of what it consists in, as to be warranted in maintaining, as a first and certain

principle, that it is necessarily inconsistent with a personal distinction, or a plurality of persons, and generally by insisting on applying to the divine nature notions and conceptions derived wholly from what takes place and is exhibited among men.

I have said that the Socinian doctrine about the moral character and capacities of mankind is just a revival of the old Pelagian heresy. Of course it amounts in substance to a denial of the fall and of all original depravity, and to an assertion that men are now, as to all moral qualities, tendencies, and capacities, in the same condition as when the race was created. The image of God in which man was formed, consisted, according to them, merely in dominion over the creatures, and not in any moral perfection or excellence of nature. Adam had no original righteousness, or positive holy tendency of moral nature, any more than we have; and, of course, did not lose any quality of that sort by the sin into which he fell. He committed an act of sin, and thereby incurred the divine displeasure; but he retained the same moral nature and tendencies with which he was created, and transmitted these unimpaired to his posterity. He was created naturally mortal, and would have died whether he had sinned or not. Men are now, in moral nature and tendencies, just as pure and holy as Adam was when he came from the hand of his Creator,—without any proper holiness of nature, indeed, or positive tendency and inclination, in virtue of their moral constitution, to love and obey God, for that Adam never had; but also without any proneness or tendency to sin, although we are placed in somewhat more unfavourable circumstances than he was, in consequence of the many examples of sin which we see and hear of,—a position which somewhat increases the chances of our actually falling into sin. Still men may avoid sin altogether; and some do so, and obtain eternal blessedness as the reward of their perfect obedience. And in regard to those who do commit actual sin, and are guilty of transgression, this at least is plain in general,—that since men are weak or frail, though not sinful or depraved creatures, and since God is nothing but a kind and merciful Father, and has no punitive justice as a constituent element of His character, there can be no difficulty in

their obtaining His forgiveness, and being restored to His favour, and thus escaping all the consequences of their transgressions.

As it is true that men's whole theological system is usually connected intimately with the views or impressions they may have been led to form of God's character and government, so it is equally true that their whole views upon theological subjects are greatly affected by the opinions they may have been led to form of the fall of Adam, and its bearing upon his posterity. Sound and scriptural views upon this important subject are indispensably necessary to anything like a correct system of theology; and errors in regard to it spread darkness and confusion over the whole field of theological investigation. Nothing has been more fully brought out by the history of theological discussions than the truth of this position; and the case of Socinianism most strikingly confirms it. If man has not fallen and ruined himself, he has no need of a Saviour, or of any extraordinary interposition of God, in order to his salvation. Sin can be no very heinous matter, when committed by such frail creatures as men are; and when viewed in connection with the character of so gracious and benevolent a being as God is, cannot be supposed to occasion any very great difficulty, or to require any very extraordinary provision, in order to its being forgiven and removed. And, accordingly, the whole Socinian system is based upon these general notions and impressions. He whom most other persons that take the name of Christians regard as their Saviour, and whom they believe to be represented in Scripture as God over all,—a possessor of the divine nature,—and to be held up there as the sole author of their salvation, an object of unbounded confidence and reverence, affection and worship,—and whom all admit to have been sent into the world that He might do everything that was needful, whatever that might be, to secure the salvation of men,—is regarded by the Socinians as a mere man, who had no higher nature than the human, who had no existence till He was born in Bethlehem, who did nothing, and who had nothing to do, for the fulfilment of His mission, but to communicate fuller and more certain information about the divine character and government, the path of duty, and future blessedness,

and to set before them an example of obedience to God's law and will. What they say of Christ is true, so far as it goes. He was a man, and He did what they ascribe to Him. But it is not the whole truth, and He did much more for our salvation. Were the Socinian view of man's natural condition correct, a mere man, who came to communicate information and to exhibit an example, might have sufficed for all that was needed. No satisfaction required to be made to divine justice, no righteousness to be wrought out, no change needed to be effected upon men's moral nature. And of course there was no need of a Divine Saviour to expiate and intercede, or of a Divine Spirit to renew and sanctify. All this is superfluous, and therefore it is wholly discarded. The condition of man did not require it, and indeed did not admit of it; and therefore God did not provide it. Men needed only to be assured of God's readiness to pardon all their sins, without satisfaction to His justice, and to get clearer and more certain information than they could very readily procure themselves as to the course they ought to pursue, in order to share more abundantly in God's favour. This was not indeed altogether indispensable, but highly desirable. And God might have communicated it to men in many ways; but He has chosen to convey it by One who, though described in Scripture as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, was yet nothing more than a mere partaker of flesh and blood like ourselves. The sins of men are forgiven merely because God's nature leads Him to forgive, and does not lead Him to punish sin. They need no change upon their moral constitution; accordingly, no provision has been made for changing it. They need merely to be instructed how they can best improve what they have, and most successfully exercise their own natural powers. And this, accordingly, was the sole end of Christ's mission, and of the revelation which He gave.

Christ is undoubtedly spoken of in Scripture as a Prophet, a Priest, and a King; and it has been generally supposed that these different offices, ascribed to Him, express, or indicate, the three chief departments of the work which He was to execute, in order to promote the spiritual welfare of men. The old Socinians reduced

them to two,—virtually rejecting the priestly office altogether, or conjoining and confounding it with the kingly one; while modern Socinians have still further simplified the work by abolishing the kingly office of Christ, and resolving all into the prophetic. In the Racovian Catechism—which fills, in the complete edition of 1680, very nearly two hundred pages—four pages are devoted to the kingly office, six are assigned to the priestly or sacerdotal office; and these six are chiefly devoted to the object of proving that Christ was not a priest, and did not execute priestly functions upon earth, although it is admitted that He did so, in some vague and indefinite sense, after He ascended to heaven. The exposition of the prophetic office occupies nearly one hundred pages, or one-half of the whole work. And as this was really and substantially, upon Socinian principles, the only office Christ executed, they endeavour to make the most of it. A considerable space is occupied, in the Racovian Catechism,—and on this account, also, in many of the older works written against the Socinians,—in the discussion of this question, Whether Christ, in the execution of His prophetic office, revealed to, and imposed upon, men a new code of moral duty,—imposed upon them new and stricter moral precepts which were not previously binding, in virtue of anything which they would learn from the exercise of their own faculties, or from any revelation which God might have formerly given. The Socinians of course maintained the affirmative upon this question, in opposition to orthodox divines. And the reason is manifest,—namely, that since Christ had nothing else to do, in the fulfilment of His mission upon earth, but just to reveal, or make known, matters of doctrine and duty, the more of this work. He did, the more plausible will seem the Socinian account of His mission, viewed in connection with the exalted representations that seem to be given us of it in Scripture, even though that account omits everything about satisfying divine justice, and thereby reconciling us to God. But then it did not suit the tendency and genius of the Socinian system, to ascribe to Him much work in the way of revealing to men new truths or doctrines. According to their views of things, very little doctrine is needed, except what men can easily and readily acquire; for though, as I have explained, they have their own



positive opinions upon most theological points, there are very few doctrines which they reckon fundamental. Certain notions about the divine character, and some certainty about a future state of happiness for good men, constitute all, in the way of doctrine, that is necessary or very important. And hence the old Socinians laid the main stress, in expounding the prophetic office of Christ and unfolding the object of His mission, upon His making important additions to the precepts of the moral law, and imposing upon men moral obligations which were not previously binding. They were accustomed to draw out, in detail, the instances of the additions He made to the moral law, and the reasons on account of which they held that the particular cases alleged were instances of the general position they maintained upon this point; and the discussion of all this occupies one-fourth part of the Racovian Catechism. The general position, of course, can be proved only, if at all, by an induction of particulars; and these they ranked under two heads: first, the additions Christ made to precepts which had formerly been given in the Old Testament, but which in many instances, they allege, He rendered more strict and extensive; and, secondly, in the precepts He introduced which were wholly new. Under the first head they go over the ten commandments, and endeavour to show that, in regard to every one of them, the New Testament imposes some additional obligation which was not binding, and might have been disregarded or violated without sin, under the law as given by Moses from Mount Sinai,—making use for this purpose chiefly of some of the statements contained in our Saviour's sermon upon the Mount. And so, in like manner, under the second head, they select a number of New Testament precepts, and endeavour to show that they impose duties which were not binding under the Old Testament economy.

These views are utterly rejected by orthodox divines, who, in the discussion of this subject, have fully shown that Socinians need to employ as much straining and perverting of Scripture, in order to make out that Christ added new precepts to the moral law, as is required to show that He was not made under the law, being made a curse for us, that He might redeem those who were under the law. In

this way, however, Socinians make out a full and complete rule of moral duty, communicated to men by Christ; and as men have, in the exercise of their own natural capacities, full power to obey it, in all the length and breadth of its requirements, without needing renovation and sanctification from the Spirit, there is no difficulty in their securing their own eternal happiness.

The old Socinians inculcated—and, so far as outward conduct is concerned, usually acted upon—a high standard of morality, putting commonly the strictest interpretation upon the moral precepts of the New Testament. Their general system, upon the grounds already explained, naturally led to the adoption of these views, and zeal for the system naturally induced them to attempt to follow them out in practice; just as other false views in religion have often led men to submit to the severest hardships and mortifications. But experience abundantly proves that, constituted as human nature is, no attempt to carry out a high standard of morality will ever succeed, for any great length of time, or among any considerable number of men, which is not based upon the scriptural system of doctrine; upon right views of the moral nature of man, and of the provision made, under the Christian scheme, by the work of Christ and the operation of the Spirit, for renovating and sanctifying it. And, accordingly, modern Socinians have wholly abandoned the strict and austere morality of the founders of their system. They commonly exhibit the character and the conduct of mere irreligious and ungodly men of the world; and while they still profess to open up heaven to men as the reward of their own good deeds, wrought in their own unaided strength,—that is, without any aid except the ordinary assistance of God in providence, as He upholds and sustains all things,—they seem to have discovered, by some means with which the old Socinians were unacquainted, that a very scanty supply of good works, and especially very little of anything done from a regard to God, to the promotion of His glory and honour, is amply sufficient to accomplish the important end, and to secure men's everlasting happiness.<sup>9</sup>

Under this same general head of the prophetic office of Christ, the Racovian Catechism has a chapter<sup>10</sup> on the subject of His death,—the place which that great event occupies in the Christian scheme, and the purposes it was intended to serve. As it was a fundamental principle of the old Socinians, that Christ did not execute the office of a priest upon earth,—though they admitted that He did so, in some vague and indefinite sense, after His ascension to heaven,—His suffering of death, of course, did not belong to the execution of the priestly, but of the prophetic office; in other words, its sole object and design were confined within the general range of serving to declare and confirm to men the will of God,—that is, the revelation of an immortality beyond death, of which no certainty had been given to men before Christ's death, not even to the most highly favoured servants of God under the ancient economy. Accordingly, the exposition of the death of Christ in the Racovian Catechism is mainly devoted to the object,—first, of proving that it was not, as Christians have commonly believed, a satisfaction to divine justice for men's sins, though it is admitted that Christ might, in some vague and indefinite sense, be described as a sort of piacular victim; and, secondly, of showing how it served to declare and confirm the revelation which God thought proper then to make to men of immortality and a future life of blessedness for the righteous,—the special importance which seems to be assigned to it in Scripture, in its bearing upon the eternal welfare of men, being ascribed to, and explained by, not any peculiar or specific bearing it had upon the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, and the enjoyment of His favour; but simply this,—that it was a necessary preliminary to Christ's resurrection, by which chiefly He made known and established the doctrine of immortality, and thereby presented to men such views and motive as might induce them, in the exercise of their own natural powers, to lead such a life as that they would secure for themselves the forgiveness of any sins which they might have committed, and the enjoyment of eternal life. This, and this alone, according to the Socinians, is the place which the death of Christ holds in the Christian scheme; and this indirect and circuitous process is the only way in which it bears upon or affects men's

relation to God and their everlasting destinies. Some modern Socinians have seriously proposed that the established phraseology of Christ being the Saviour of sinners should be wholly abandoned, as being fitted only to delude and deceive men, by conveying to them the idea that Christ had done, for the promotion of their spiritual welfare, far more than He ever did, and far more than their natural condition required or admitted of.

With respect to eschatology, or the head "De novissimis,"—the last things,—the general spirit and tendency of Socinians are also manifested in some important deviations from the doctrines which have been generally received among Christians as being plainly taught in Scripture. They have always denied the scriptural doctrine of the resurrection—that is, of the resurrection of the same body—as a thing absurd and impossible; thus faithfully following their true progenitors, the infidel Sadducees, and erring, like them, because, as our Saviour said, they know not the Scriptures nor the power of God. They admitted, indeed, that there will be what they call a resurrection, at least of the righteous; for many of the old Socinians maintained that the wicked who had died before the end of the world would not be raised again, but would continue for ever in a state of insensibility or annihilation,—though this doctrine is repudiated in the later editions of the Racovian Catechism;[11](#)—but then it was not a resurrection of the same body, but the formation and the union to the soul—which they generally held to have been, during the intervening period, in a state of insensibility—of a different body. Eternal punishment, of course, was inconsistent with all their notions of the divine character and government, of the nature and demerit of sin, and the design and end of punishment. But they have been a good deal divided among themselves between the two theories of the entire destruction or final annihilation of the wicked, and the ultimate restoration of all men to the enjoyment of eternal blessedness after a period, more or less protracted, of penal suffering. The older Socinians generally adopted the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked, though they sought somewhat to conceal this, by confining themselves very much to the use of the scriptural

language, of their being subjected to eternal death;<sup>12</sup> while modern Socinians, with very few exceptions, advocate the doctrine of universal restoration, or the final and eternal happiness of all intelligent creatures, and hold this to be necessarily involved in, and certainly deducible from, right views of the divine perfections.

I need not dwell upon the views of Socinians in regard to the nature of the Christian church and the object and efficacy of the sacraments. As the sole object of the appearance of Christ upon earth, and of the whole Christian scheme, was merely to communicate to men instruction or information, and not to procure for them and bestow upon them the forgiveness of their sins,—the enjoyment of God's favour,—and the renovation of their natures,—of course the objects of the church and the sacraments, viewed as means or instruments, must be wholly restricted within the same narrow range. The church is not, in any proper sense, a divine institution; and does not consist of men called by the almighty grace of God out of the world, and formed by Him into a peculiar society, the constitution of which He has established, and which He specially governs and superintends. It is a mere voluntary association of men, who are naturally drawn together, because they happen to have adopted somewhat similar views upon religious subjects, and who seek to promote one another's welfare, in the way that may seem best to their own wisdom; while the sacraments are intended to teach men, and to impress divine truth upon their minds, and are in no way whatever connected with any act on God's part in the communication of spiritual blessings.

I have thus given a brief sketch of the Socinian system of theology, and I would now make one or two reflections obviously suggested by the survey of it. It is manifestly, as I formerly explained, a full scheme or system, extending over all the leading topics of theology. It is plainly characterized throughout by perfect unity and harmony, by the consistency of all its parts with each other, and by the pervading influence of certain leading features and objects. It might, we think, be shown that the Socinian system of theology is the only

consistent rival to the Calvinistic one; and that when men abandon the great features of the scriptural system of Calvinism, they have no firm and steady resting-place on which they can take their stand, until they sink down to Socinianism. It is very evident that the Socinian system presents a striking contrast, not only to the views of doctrine which have been generally professed and maintained by Christian churches, but to what seems *prima facie* to be plainly and palpably taught in Scripture. It must present itself to the minds of men, who have become at all familiar with scriptural statements, in the light of an opposition scheme, fitted and intended to counteract and neutralize all that Christianity seems calculated to teach and to effect; and a thorough investigation of the grounds of the attempts which Socinians have made to show that their system of theology is consistent with Scripture and sanctioned by it, will only confirm this impression. Socinianism has been openly and avowedly maintained only by an inconsiderable number of professing Christians,—many of those who held the leading principles of the Socinian scheme of theology having thought it more honest and straightforward to deny at once the truth of Christianity, than to pretend to receive it, and then to spend their time and waste their ingenuity in labouring to show that the scheme of scriptural doctrine was, in almost every important particular, the very reverse of what the first promulgators of the system plainly understood and intended it to be. The churches of Christ, in general, have held themselves fully warranted in denying to Socinians the name and character of Christians; and the ground of this denial is quite sufficient and satisfactory,—namely this, that Socinianism is a deliberate and determined rejection of the whole substance of the message which Christ and His apostles conveyed from God to men. The Racovian Catechism<sup>13</sup> asserts that those who refuse to invoke and worship Christ are not to be reckoned Christians, though they assume His name, and profess to adhere to His doctrine,—thus excluding from the pale of Christianity the great body of those who, in modern times, have adopted the leading features of that scheme of theology which the old Socinians advanced. And if the denial of worship to Christ was, as the old Socinians believed, a sufficient ground for denying to men the name

of Christians, it must surely be thoroughly warrantable to deny the name to men who refuse not only to pay religious worship to Christ, but to receive and submit to anything that is really important and vital in the revelations which He communicated to men.

Mr. Belsham, the leader of the English Socinians in the last generation, has distinctly stated that the only thing peculiar in Christianity, or the Christian revelation,—the only point in which it differs from, or goes beyond, the natural religion that may be discovered and established by men in the exercise of their own unaided powers,—is simply the fact of the resurrection of a dead man, and the confirmation thereby given to the doctrine of a future immortality. Now, perhaps, we are not entitled to deny that Socinians are really persuaded of the sufficiency of the evidence by which it is proved that Christ rose from the dead, and that they hold the doctrine of a future immortality more firmly and steadily than it was held by Plato or Cicero. But if, professing to receive Christ as a divine messenger on the ground of the proof of His resurrection, they yet reject the whole substance of the message which He professed to bring from God to men, we cannot concede to them the character or designation of disciples or followers of Christ. A Christian must, at least, mean one who believes Christ to have been a divine messenger, and who receives as true the substance of the message which He bore; and in whatever way we explain the entire dissolution and breaking up, in the case of the Socinians, of the right and legitimate connection that ought to subsist between the admission of the authority of the messenger and the reception of His message, we cannot recognise as Christians men who refuse to believe almost everything which Christ and His apostles taught, and whose whole system of theology,—whose leading views of the character and government of God, the condition and capacities of men, and the way in which they may attain to final happiness,—are just the same as they would be if they openly denied Christ's divine commission,—not only uninfluenced by the revelation He communicated, but directly opposed to it.

But while Socinianism has not been, to any very considerable extent, openly avowed and formally defended in the Christian church, and while those who have avowed and defended it have commonly and justly been regarded as not entitled to the designation of Christians, yet it is important to observe that there has always been a great deal of latent and undeveloped Socinianism among men who have professed to believe in the truth of Christianity; and the cause of this, of course, is, that Socinianism, in its germs or radical principles, is the system of theology that is natural to fallen and depraved man,—that which springs up spontaneously in the human heart, unenlightened by the Spirit of God, and unrenewed by divine grace. It has been often said that men are born Papists; and this is true in the sense that there are natural and spontaneous tendencies in men, out of which the Popish system readily grows, and which make it an easy matter to lead unrenewed men to embrace it. Still it does require some care and culture to make a natural man, who has not been subjected to the system from his infancy, a Papist, though the process in ordinary cases is not a very difficult or a very elaborate one. But it requires no care or culture whatever to make natural men Socinians,—nothing but the mere throwing off of the traditional or consuetudinary respect in which, in Christian countries, they may have been bred for the manifest sense of Scripture. The more intelligent and enlightened Pagans, and the followers of Mahomet, agree in substance with the whole leading features of the Socinian theology; and if we could bring out and estimate the notions that float in the minds of the great body of irreligious and ungodly men among professing Christians, who have never thought seriously upon religious subjects, we would find that they just constitute the germs, or radical principles, of Socinianism. Take any one of the mass of irreligious men, who abound in professedly Christian society around us,—a man, it may be, who has never entertained any doubts of the truth of Christianity, who has never thought seriously upon any religious subject, or attempted to form a clear and definite conception upon any theological topic,—try to probe a little the vague notions which lie undeveloped in his mind about the divine character, the natural state and condition of man, and the way of



attaining to ultimate happiness; and if you can get materials for forming any sort of estimate or conjecture as to the notions or impressions upon these points that may have spontaneously, and without effort, grown up in his mind, you will certainly find that, without being aware of it, he is practically and substantially a Socinian. The notions and impressions of such men upon all religious subjects are of course very vague and confused; but it will commonly be found that, in their inmost thoughts,—in the ordinary and spontaneous current of their impressions, in so far as they have any, in regard to religion,—Christ as the Saviour of sinners, and the atonement as the basis or ground of salvation, are virtually shut out, or reduced to mere names or unmeaning formula; that the Christian scheme, in so far as it is taken into account, is viewed merely as a revelation or communication of some information about God and duty; and that their hopes of ultimate happiness, in so far as they can be said to have any, are practically based upon what they themselves have done, or can do, viewed in connection with defective and erroneous conceptions of the character and moral government of God, while a definite conviction of the certainty of future punishment has no place in their minds. Now this is, in substance, just the Socinian system of theology; and if these men were drawn out, so as to be led to attempt to explain and defend the vague and confused notions upon these subjects which had hitherto lurked undeveloped in their minds, it would plainly appear—provided they had intelligence enough to trace somewhat the logical relation of ideas, and courage enough to disregard the vague deference for the obvious sense of Scripture, and for the general belief of Christian churches, to which they had become habituated—that they were obliged to have recourse to Socinian arguments as the only means of defence; unless, indeed, they should reach the higher intelligence, or the greater courage, of openly rejecting Christianity altogether, as teaching a system of doctrine irrational and absurd.

This is, I am persuaded, a correct account of the general state of feeling and impression, in regard to religious subjects, existing in the minds of the great body of the ignorant, unreflecting, and irreligious

men around us, in professedly Christian society; and if so, it goes far to prove that, while there is not a great deal of open and avowed Socinianism maintained and defended among us, yet that it exists to a large extent in a latent and undeveloped form, and that it is the natural and spontaneous product of the depraved, unrenewed heart of man, exhibiting its natural tendencies in the formation of notions and impressions about God and divine things, and the way of attaining to ultimate happiness, which are not only unsanctioned by the revelation which God Himself has given us in regard to these matters, but are flatly opposed to it.

In these circumstances, it is perhaps rather a subject for surprise that there should be so little of open and avowed Socinianism among us; and the explanation of it is probably to be found in these considerations:—that in the existing condition of society there are many strong influences and motives to restrain men from throwing off a profession of a belief in Christianity;—that there obtains a strong sense of the impossibility, or great difficulty, of effecting anything like an adjustment between the Socinian system of theology, and the obvious meaning and general tenor of Scripture;—and that an attempt of this sort, which should possess anything like plausibility, requires an amount of ingenuity and information, as well as courage, which few comparatively possess. It is in entire accordance with these general observations, that the strain of preaching which prevailed in the Established Churches of this country during the last century,—in the Church of England during the whole century, and in the Church of Scotland during the latter half of it,—was in its whole scope and tendency Socinian. It is admitted, indeed, that the great mass of the clergy of both churches, during the period referred to, were guiltless of any knowledge of theology, or of theological speculations and controversies; and that their preaching, in general, was marked rather by the entire omission, than by the formal and explicit denial, of the peculiar and fundamental doctrines of the Christian system. Still this is quite sufficient to entitle us to call their system of preaching Socinian, as it left out the doctrines of the natural guilt and depravity of man,—the

divinity and atonement of Christ,—justification by His righteousness, —and regeneration and sanctification by His Spirit; and addressed men as if they were quite able,—without any satisfaction for their sins,—without any renovation of their moral natures,—without any special supernatural assistance, to do all that was necessary for securing their eternal happiness, and needed only to be reminded of what their duty was, and of the considerations that should induce them to give some attention to the performance of it. And we find likewise, as we might have expected, if the preceding observations are well founded, that whenever any man arose among them who combined superior intelligence, information, and courage, and who was led to attempt to explain and defend his views upon religious subjects, he certainly, and as a matter of course, took Socinian ground, and employed Socinian arguments.

#### Sec. 4.—Original and Recent Socinianism.

Before concluding this brief sketch of the Socinian system in general, viewed as a whole, it may be proper to advert to the differences, in point of theological sentiment, between the original and the modern Socinians. Those who, in modern times, have adopted and maintained the great leading principles of the theological system taught by Socinus, commonly refuse to be called by his name, and assume and claim to themselves the designation of Unitarians,—a name which should no more be conceded to them, than that of Catholic should be conceded to Papists, as it implies, and is intended to imply, that they alone hold the doctrine of the unity of God; while, at the same time, it does not in the least characterize their peculiar opinions as distinguished from those of the Arians, and others who concur with them, in denying the doctrine of the Trinity. They hold all the leading characteristic principles of the system of theology originally developed and compacted by Socinus; and therefore there is nothing unfair, nothing inconsistent with the well-understood and reasonable enough practice that ordinarily regulates the application of such designations, in calling them Socinians. They are fond, however, of pointing out the differences, in some respects, between

their views and those of the original Socinians, that they may thus lay a plausible foundation for repudiating the name; and it may be useful briefly to notice the most important of these differences.

Socinus and his immediate followers displayed a great deal of ingenuity and courage in devising and publishing a series of plausible perversions of Scripture statements, for the purpose of excluding from the Bible the divinity and the satisfaction of Christ; but there were some of the views commonly entertained by the orthodox, connected with these matters, which—though tending rather to enhance our conceptions of the importance of Christ and His work, viewed in relation to the salvation of sinners—they had not sufficient ingenuity and courage to explain away and reject. These were chiefly His miraculous conception; His having been literally in heaven before He commenced His public ministry; His being invested after His resurrection with great power and dignity, for the government of the world,—for the accomplishment of the objects of His mission, and the final judgment of men; and His being entitled, on this ground, to adoration and worship. Socinus and his immediate followers, though certainly they were not lacking in ingenuity and boldness, and though they could not but feel the inconsistency, at least, of the adoration of Christ with the general scope and tendency of their system, were unable to devise any plausible contrivance for excluding these doctrines from Scripture. The miraculous conception of Christ they admitted, but contended, and truly enough, that this of itself did not necessarily imply either His pre-existence, or any properly superhuman dignity of nature. The texts which so plainly assert or imply that He had been in heaven before He entered upon His public ministry on earth, they could explain only by fabricating the supposition that He was taken up to heaven to receive instruction during the period of His forty days' fast in the wilderness. And they were unable to comprehend how man could profess to believe in the divine authority of the New Testament, and yet deny that Christ is now invested with the government of the world; that He is exercising His power and authority for promoting man's spiritual welfare; that

He is one day to determine and judge their final destiny; and that He is entitled to their homage and adoration.

But modern Socinians have found out pretences for evading or denying all these positions. They deny Christ's miraculous conception, and maintain that He was the son of Joseph as well as of Mary, mainly upon the ground of some frivolous pretences for doubting the genuineness of the first two chapters both of Matthew and Luke. Dr. Priestley admitted that he was not quite satisfied with any interpretation of the texts that seem to assert that Christ had been in heaven before He taught on earth; but he gravely assures us that, rather than admit His preexistence, he would adopt the exploded interpretation of the old Socinians, or make any other supposition that might be necessary, however absurd or offensive.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Belsham, while he admits that "Christ is now alive, and employed in offices the most honourable and benevolent," yet considers himself warranted in believing that "we are totally ignorant of the place where He resides, and of the occupations in which He is engaged;" and that, therefore, "there can be no proper foundation for religious addresses to Him, nor of gratitude for favours now received, nor yet of confidence in His future interposition in our behalf;"<sup>15</sup> while he contends that all that is implied in the scriptural account of His judging the world, is simply this,—that men's ultimate destiny is to be determined by the application of the instructions and precepts which He delivered when on earth. This was the state of completeness or perfection to which Socinianism had attained in the last generation, or in the early part of this century. There was but one step more which they could take in their descent, and this was the entire adoption of the infidel anti-supernaturalism of the German neologians; and this step most of them, within these few years, have taken, both in the United States and in this country. Professor Moses Stuart of Andover, in his Letters to Dr. Channing,<sup>16</sup>—a very valuable little work on the Trinity and the Divinity of Christ, though not to be implicitly followed,—expressed, in 1819, his apprehension that the Socinians, as soon as they became acquainted with the writings of the German neologians, would embrace their principles, would

abandon their elaborate efforts to pervert scriptural statements into an apparent accordance with their views, and adopt the bolder course of openly rejecting the doctrines taught by the apostles as erroneous, while still pretending, in some sense, to believe in the Christian revelation. This apprehension was speedily realized to a large extent in the United States, and is now being realized in this country; so that there seems to be ground to expect that Socinianism proper, as a public profession, will soon be wholly extinguished, and the pantheistic infidelity of Germany, though under a sort of profession of Christianity, be substituted in its place. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that this has already taken place; for we are not aware that any of those amongst us who used to assume the designation of Unitarians, now openly reject or oppose the pantheistic infidelity which is being so largely circulated in this country.

When this change began to show itself among the American Socinians, it was avowedly advocated by themselves on the ground of the necessity of having some system of religion more spiritual and transcendental—more suited to the temperament and the aspirings of an earnest age—than the dry, uninteresting intellectualism of the old Socinians. It was with this view that they had recourse to the pantheism and neology of Germany, which, combining easily with a sort of mystical supersensualism, was fitted to interest the feelings, and to bring into exercise the emotional department of our nature. This is the sort of religion that is now obtruded upon the more literary portion of our community instead of the old Socinianism, which was addressed exclusively to the understanding, and was fitted to exercise and gratify the pride of human reason. It is well to know something of the peculiar form and dress which error in religious matters assumes in our own age and country; but it may tend to guard us against the deluding influence of transcendentalism in religion, if we are satisfied—as a very little reflection may convince us—that, with a considerable difference in its dress and garnishing, with a larger infusion of Scripture phraseology, and with much more of an apparent sense and feeling of the unseen and the infinite, it is

just, in its substance, the old Socinianism, both with respect to the way and manner of knowing divine things, and with respect to the actual knowledge of them obtained in this way. It does not constitute an essential difference, that, instead of giving to reason, or the understanding, a supremacy over revelation, and making it the final immediate judge of all truth, the new system extends this controlling power to man's whole nature, to his susceptibilities as well as his faculties, and assigns a large influence in judging of divine things to his intuitions and emotions; and the vague and mystic style of contemplation in which it indulges about God, and Christ, and eternity, does not prevent its actual theological system from being fairly described as involving a denial of the guilt and depravity of man, the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, and an assertion of man's full capacity to work out for himself, without any satisfaction for his sins, or any renovation of his moral nature, the full enjoyment of God's favour, and the highest happiness of which he is capable; while the only point in which it does differ essentially from the old Socinianism—namely, the denial of a supernatural revelation, attested by real miracles, which are established by satisfactory historical evidence—should remove at once every feeling of doubt or difficulty about the propriety of denouncing it as a system of open infidelity.

*Sec. 5.—Distinction of Persons in the Godhead.*

Though I have thought it of some importance to give a brief sketch of Socinian theology in general, viewed as a system, and embodying positive doctrines and not mere negations, in regard to all the leading topics which are usually discussed in theological systems, yet I do not mean to enter into anything like a detailed examination and refutation of all the different doctrines of which it is composed, but to confine myself to those with which, in popular apprehension, the name of Socinianism is usually associated,—namely, the Trinity, and the person and atonement of Christ. Their doctrines upon these points may be said to form the chief peculiarities of the Socinians; and their whole system of doctrine is intimately connected with their

views upon these subjects. Besides, I have already had occasion to consider most of the other branches of the Socinian system of theology under other heads,—as in examining the Pelagian controversy, where we met with errors and heresies, substantially the same as those taught by modern Socinians, in regard to the natural character and capacities of man, and the operation and influence of divine grace in preparing men for the enjoyment of happiness;—and still more fully in examining the Popish system of doctrine as contrasted with the theology of the Reformation. The Church of Rome teaches defective and erroneous doctrines concerning the natural guilt and depravity of man, his natural power or ability to do the will of God, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and everything connected with his justification, or the way and manner in which men individually obtain or receive the forgiveness of sin and admission to the enjoyment of God's favour,—although the formal Popish doctrine upon most of these subjects is not so flatly and plainly opposed to the word of God as that held upon the same points by Socinians, and even by many who have passed under the name of Arminians. But as we then endeavoured not only to point out the errors of the Church of Rome upon these topics, but also to explain and illustrate the true doctrines of Scripture respecting them, as taught by the Reformers and laid down in our Confession of Faith, we have said as much as is necessary for the purpose of exposing Pelagian and Socinian errors regarding them. The subject of the Trinity and the person of Christ we have also had occasion to consider, in adverting to the Arian, Nestorian, and Eutychian controversies in the fourth and fifth centuries. We have not, however, discussed these doctrines so fully as their importance demands in some of their general aspects; and we propose now to devote some space to an explanation of the way and manner in which these important doctrines have been discussed in more modern times.

We proceed, then, to consider the doctrine of the distinction of persons in the Godhead. This is commonly discussed in systems of theology under the head "De Deo" as it is a portion of the



information given us in Scripture with respect to the Godhead, or the divine nature; and the knowledge of it is necessary, if the commonly received doctrine be true, in order to our being acquainted with the whole of what Scripture teaches us concerning God. If there be such a distinction in the Godhead or divine nature, as the received doctrine of the Trinity asserts, then this distinction, as a reality, ought to enter into our conceptions of God. We ought to be aware of its existence,—to understand it, as far as we have the capacity and the means of doing so; and we ought to take it into account in forming our conception of God, even independently of its connection with the arrangements of the scheme of redemption, though it is in these that it is most fully unfolded, and that its nature and importance most clearly appear.

There are one or two obvious reflections, suggested by the general nature and character of the subject, to which it may be proper to advert, though it is not necessary to enlarge upon them. The subject, from its very nature, not only relates immediately to the infinite and incomprehensible Godhead, but concerns what may be regarded as the penetralia or innermost recesses of the divine nature,—the most recondite and inaccessible department of all that we have ever learned or heard concerning God. It is a subject about which reason or natural theology—in other words, the works of nature and providence, with the exercise of our faculties upon them—give us no information, and about which we know, and can know, nothing, except in so far as God Himself may have been pleased to give us a direct and immediate revelation concerning it. These considerations are surely well fitted to repress any tendency to indulge in presumptuous speculations with respect to what may be true, or possible, or probable, in regard to this profoundly mysterious subject; and to constrain us to preserve an attitude of profound humility, while we give ourselves to the only process by which we can learn anything with certainty regarding it,—namely, the careful study of God's word,—anxious only to know what God has said about it, what conceptions He intended to convey to us regarding it,—and

ready to receive with implicit submission whatever it shall appear that He has declared or indicated upon the subject.

The way in which this question ought to be studied is by collecting together all the statements in Scripture that seem to be in any way connected with it,—that seem, or have been alleged, to assert or to indicate some distinction in the Godhead or divine nature,—to investigate carefully and accurately the precise meaning of all these statements by the diligent and faithful application of all the appropriate rules and materials,—to compare them with each other,—to collect their joint or aggregate results,—and to embody these results in propositions which may set forth accurately the substance of all that Scripture really makes known to us regarding it. It is only when we have gone through such a process as this, that we can be said to have done full justice to the question,—that we have really formed our views of it from the word of God, the only source of knowledge respecting it,—and that we can be regarded as fully qualified to defend the opinions we may profess to entertain upon it.

The first point which we are naturally called upon to advert to is the status questionis, or what it is precisely that is respectively asserted and maintained by the contending parties. And here we may, in the first instance, view it simply as a question between Trinitarians on the one side, and anti-Trinitarians on the other, without any reference to the differences subsisting among the various sections of the anti-Trinitarians, such as the Arians and the Socinians, about the person of Christ. The substance of what the supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity contend for is, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct persons, who all possess the divine nature or essence, and that these three persons are not three Gods, but are the one God; while the doctrine maintained on the other side is, that the Scripture does not reveal any such distinction in the divine nature, but that God is one in person as well as in essence or substance; and that the divine nature, or true and proper divinity, is really possessed by no person except by Him who is styled in Scripture the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now here, before going further, it is to be observed that there is brought out an intelligible difference of opinion, even though the subject treated of be in its nature and bearings incomprehensible, and though we may not be able to give a precise and exact definition of all the terms employed in the statement of the proposition,—such as the word person in the application here made of it. These two opposite propositions are at least intelligible thus far, that we can form a pretty definite conception of what is the general import of the affirmation and the negation respectively, and can intelligently bring them both into contact and comparison with the evidence adduced, so as to form a judgment as to whether the affirmation or the negation ought to be received as true. But the opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity are accustomed to press us with the question, What do you mean by persons, when you assert that there are three persons in the unity of the Godhead? Now the answer commonly given to this question by the most judicious divines is this: First, they maintain that they are not bound to give a precise and exact definition of the word persons as here employed,—namely, in its application to the divine nature,—since this is not necessary to make the proposition so far intelligible as to admit of its being made the subject of distinct argumentation, and having its truth or falsehood determined by the examination of the appropriate evidence,—a position this, which, though denied in words, is practically conceded by our opponents, when they assert that they can prove from Scripture that no such personal distinction as Trinitarians contend for attaches to the divine nature. Secondly, they admit that they cannot give a full and exact definition of the import of the word persons, or of the idea of distinct personality, as predicated of the divine nature; and can say little more about it than that it expresses a distinction not identical with, but in some respects analogous to, that subsisting among three different persons among men.

Many of the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, following the example of the schoolmen, have indulged to a very great and unwarrantable extent in definitions, explanations, and speculations upon this mysterious and incomprehensible subject; and these

attempts at definition and explanation have furnished great advantages to the opponents of the doctrine,—both because their mere variety and inconsistency with each other threw an air of uncertainty and insecurity around the whole doctrine with which they were connected, and because many of them, taken singly, afforded plausible, and sometimes even solid, grounds for objection. Anti-Trinitarians, in consequence, have usually manifested some annoyance and irritation when the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity took care to confine themselves, in their definitions and explanations upon the subject, within the limits of what strict logic required of them, and of what the Scriptures seemed to indicate as the real state of the case,—the whole amount of what was revealed regarding it. They have laboured to draw them out into explanations and speculations upon points not revealed; and with this view have not scrupled to ridicule their caution, and to ascribe it—as indeed Mr. Belsham<sup>17</sup> does expressly—to "an unworthy fear of the result of these inquiries, and a secret suspicion that the question will not bear examination." This allegation, however, is really an unfair and unworthy artifice on his part. It is indeed true, that one or two defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity, in their just disapprobation of the extent to which some friends of truth have carried their definitions and explanations upon the subject, have leant somewhat to the opposite extreme, and manifested an unnecessary and unreasonable shrinking even from the use of terms and statements commonly employed and generally sanctioned upon this point, as if afraid to speak about it in any other terms than the ipsissima verba of Scripture. But nothing of this sort applies to the great body of the more cautious defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity. They do not pretend to know anything upon this subject but what they find asserted or indicated in Scripture. They aim at no other or higher object than just to embody, in the most appropriate and accurate words which human language furnishes, the substance of what Scripture teaches; and they are under no obligation to explain or defend anything but what they themselves profess to have found in Scripture, and only in so far as they profess to find in Scripture materials for doing so. They find the doctrine of the divine unity

clearly taught in Scripture, and therefore they receive this as a great truth which they are bound and determined to maintain, resolved at the same time to admit no doctrine which can be clearly demonstrated to be necessarily contradictory to, or inconsistent with, the position that God, the Creator and Governor of the world, the object of religious worship, is one. But then they profess to find also in Scripture, evidence that Christ is truly and properly God, a possessor of the divine nature; and that the Holy Ghost is also God in the highest sense, and not a mere quality or attribute of God. These two positions about Jesus Christ the Son of God, and about the Holy Ghost, constitute the main and proper field of controversial discussion, in so far as the investigation of the precise meaning of scriptural statements is concerned; but at present, in considering the state of the question, we must assume that the Trinitarian doctrines upon these two points have been established from Scripture; for the discussion as to the state of the question really turns substantially on this: Supposing these positions about the Son and the Holy Ghost proved, as we believe them to be, in what way should the teaching of Scripture upon these points be expressed and embodied, so as, when conjoined with the Scripture doctrine of the divine unity (if they can be combined), to bring out the whole doctrine which the Scripture teaches concerning the Godhead, or the divine nature? God is one; and therefore, if Christ be God, and if the Holy Ghost be God, they must be, with the Father, in some sense the one God, and not separate or additional Gods.

This general consideration seems naturally to indicate or imply, and of course to warrant, the position that, while there is unity in the Godhead or divine nature, there is also in it, or attaching to it, some distinction. But Scripture, by affording materials for establishing these positions about the Son and the Holy Ghost, enables us to go somewhat further in explaining or developing this distinction. There is no indication in the Scriptures that proper divinity, or the divine nature or essence, belongs to, or is possessed by, any except the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and therefore we say, in setting forth the substance of what Scripture teaches, that the distinction in

the Godhead is a threefold distinction, or that there are three, and neither more nor fewer, who are represented to us as having the divine nature, or as possessed of proper divinity. Assuming it to be proved that Christ is God, and that the Holy Ghost is God, it seems necessary, and therefore warrantable, if any expression is to be given in human language to the doctrine thus revealed, to say that there are three which possess the divine nature, and are the one God.

It may indeed be contended that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, though divinity is ascribed to them, are merely three different names of one and the same object, and do not designate three realities which are in any respect different, except merely in name or in verbal representation. And this is the doctrine which commonly passes under the name of Sabellianism. But then it is contended, on the other hand, that this does not come up to, or correspond with, the representation which the Scripture gives us of the nature and amount of the distinction subsisting in the Godhead or divine nature. It seems very manifest that, if we are to submit our minds to the fair impressions of the scriptural representations upon this subject, the distinction subsisting among the three of whom proper divinity is predicated, is something more than a nominal or verbal distinction,—that it is a reality, and not a mere name,—and that it is set before us as analogous to the distinction subsisting among three men, or three human beings, to whom we usually ascribe distinct personality; and as there is nothing else within the sphere of our knowledge to which it is represented as analogous or similar, we are constrained to say —if we are to attempt to give any expression in language of the idea or impression which the scriptural representations upon the subject seem plainly intended to make upon our minds—that in the unity of the Godhead there is a personal distinction,—there are three persons. And this, accordingly, is the form in which the doctrine of the Trinity has been usually expressed. It is not intended by this form of expression to indicate that the distinction represented as subsisting among the three who are described as possessing the divine nature, is the same as that subsisting among three persons among men. On the contrary, the identity of the distinction in the

two cases is denied, as not being suitable to the divine nature, and more especially as this would be inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine unity; for as three distinct persons among men are three men, so, were the distinction in the Godhead held to be identical with this, the three persons in the Godhead must be three Gods. It is merely contended that the threefold distinction in the Godhead is analogous or similar in some respects to the distinction between three human persons; and the ground of this assertion is, that the scriptural representations upon the subject convey to us such an idea or impression of this distinction subsisting in the Godhead or divine nature,—that this language we cannot but regard as making the nearest approach to expressing it correctly,—that, in fact, from the nature and necessities of the case, we have not the capacity or the means of expressing or describing it in any other way.

We cannot define or describe positively or particularly the nature of the distinction subsisting among the three who are represented as all possessing the divine nature, because, from the necessity of the case, the nature of this distinction must be incomprehensible by us, and because God in His word has not given us any materials for doing so. We just embody in human language the substance of what the word of God indicates to us upon the subject,—we profess to do nothing more,—and we are not called upon to attempt more; to do so, would be unwarrantable and sinful presumption. We are called upon to conform our statements as much as possible to what Scripture indicates, neither asserting what Scripture does not teach, nor refusing to assert what it does teach,—though ready not only to admit, but to point out precisely, as far as Scripture affords us materials for doing so, the imperfection or defectiveness of the language which we may be obliged to employ because we have no other; and to apply, as far as our powers of thought and the capacities of the language, which we must employ in expressing our conceptions, admit of it, any limitations or qualifications which Scripture may suggest in the explanation of our statement. It is not from cowardice or timidity, then, or in order to secure an unfair advantage in argument, as our opponents allege, that we refuse to

attempt definitions or explanations in regard to the distinction which Scripture makes known to us as subsisting, in combination with unity, in the divine nature. We assert all that Scripture seems to us to sanction or to indicate; and we not only are not bound, but we are not warranted, to do more. We assert the unity of the Godhead. We assent the existence of a threefold distinction in the Godhead, or the possession of the divine nature and essence by three,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that these three are represented to us in Scripture as distinguished from each other in a manner analogous to the distinction subsisting among three different persons among men. We express all this, as it is expressed in our Confession of Faith, by saying that, "In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity,—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost." This is the whole of what our Confession sets forth as the doctrine of Scripture on the subject of the Trinity in general,—for I omit at present any reference to the personal properties by which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinguished from each other,—and this is all which any judicious supporter of the doctrine of the Trinity will consider himself called upon to maintain or defend. All that he has to do is just to show that Scripture, fairly and correctly interpreted, warrants and requires him to assent to these positions; and that there is nothing in the clear deductions of reason, or in the teaching of Scripture, either in its particular statements or in its general assertion of the divine unity, which requires him to reject any of them.

The reason why the opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity are so anxious to draw its defenders into definitions and explanations in regard to the precise nature of the distinction alleged to subsist in the Godhead, is because they hope in this way to get materials for involving them in difficulties and contradictions,—for showing that the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily leads either to Tritheism on the one hand, or to Sabellianism on the other,—or, more generally, that it necessarily involves a contradiction, or is inconsistent with the divine unity; while the unwarrantable and injudicious extent to



which the friends of the doctrine have often carried their attempts to define the nature of the distinction, and to propound theories for the purpose of explaining the consistency of the distinction with the unity, have afforded too good grounds for the expectations which its opponents have cherished. Anti-Trinitarians are fond of alleging that there is no intermediate position between Tritheism and Sabellianism,—that is, between the view which would introduce three Gods, and thereby flatly contradict the doctrine of the divine unity,—and that which, in order to preserve the unity unimpaired, would virtually explain away the distinction of persons, and make it merely nominal. And it cannot be disputed, that some who have propounded theories in explanation of the doctrine of the Trinity, have exhibited symptoms of leaning to one or other of these sides, —have afforded some plausible grounds for charging them with one or other of these errors.

Tritheism is of course a deadly and fundamental error, as it contradicts the doctrine of the divine unity, and accordingly it has scarcely ever been openly and formally taught; but there have been men who, entering into presumptuous speculations about the nature of the distinction subsisting in the Godhead, and being anxious to make this distinction clear and palpable, have been led to lay down positions which could scarcely be said to come short of asserting practically, to all intents and purposes, the existence of three Gods. And as the enemies of the doctrine of the Trinity usually allege that it involves or leads to Tritheism, they catch at such representations as confirm this allegation. And when other divines, leaning to the other extreme, and being more careful to preserve the unity than the distinction, have so explained and refined the distinction as to make it little if anything more than a merely verbal or nominal one,—a tendency observable in the present day in some of the best and soundest of the German divines, such as Neander and Tholuck,<sup>18</sup> and of which there are also to be found not obscure indications among ourselves,—then anti-Trinitarians allege, with some plausibility, that this is just abandoning the doctrine of the Trinity, because, as they say, it cannot be maintained. Indeed, Sabellianism,

when it is really held, is consistent enough both with Arianism and Socinianism; for neither the Arians, who believe Christ to be a superangelic creature, nor the Socinians, who believe Him to be a mere man, need contend much against an alleged nominal distinction in the divine nature, as this does not necessarily exclude anything which their peculiar opinions lead them to maintain; and, accordingly, Mr. Belsham says<sup>19</sup>, that Sabellianism "differs only in words from proper Unitarianism." Unitarians, indeed, are accustomed to distort and misrepresent the views of Trinitarian divines, in order to have more plausible grounds for charging them with a leaning either to Tritheism or Sabellianism; and Mr. Belsham formally classes the great body of the Trinitarians<sup>20</sup> under the two heads of Realists and Nominalists, insinuating that the doctrine of the first class is virtually Tritheistic, and that of the second virtually Sabellian; while it would be no difficult matter to show, in regard to some of the most eminent divines whom he has put into those opposite classes, that they did not really differ from each other substantially in the views which they held upon this subject.

A good deal of controversy took place in England, in the end of the seventeenth century, upon this particular aspect of the question,—Dr. Wallis, an eminent mathematician, having propounded a theory or mode of explanation upon the subject, which had somewhat the appearance of making the distinction of persons merely nominal; and Dean Sherlock, in opposing it, having appeared to countenance such a distinction or division in the Godhead, as seemed to infringe upon the divine unity, and having been, in consequence, censured by a decree of the University of Oxford. Unitarians have ever since continued to represent this decree as deciding in favour of Sabellianism, and thereby virtually sanctioning Unitarianism, or being a denial of a real personal distinction in the divine nature; while the truth is, that though both parties went into an extreme, by carrying their attempts at explanation much too far, in different directions,—and were thus led to make unwarrantable and dangerous statements,—they did not differ from each other nearly so much as Unitarians commonly allege, and did not afford any

sufficient ground for a charge either of Tritheism or of Sabellianism. Neither party, certainly, intended to assert anything different from, or inconsistent with, the scriptural doctrine laid down in the first of the Thirty-nine Articles, that "in the unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" though it would have been much better had they confined themselves to an exposition of the scriptural evidence in support of the specific positions which make up, or are involved in, this general statement, and restricted their more abstract speculations to the one precise and definite object of merely bringing out what was indispensable to show that none of the positions taught in Scripture, and embodied in this general statement, could be proved necessarily to involve a contradiction or a denial of the divine unity. The controversy to which I have referred, engaged the attention and called forth the energies of some very eminent men,—South supporting Wallis, and Bingham, the author of the great work on Christian Antiquities, defending Sherlock; while two greater men than any of these—namely, Stillingfleet and Howe—may be said to have moderated between the parties. This discussion afforded a handle to the enemies of the doctrine of the Trinity at the time, who made it the subject of a plausible pamphlet, entitled *Considerations on the different Explications of the Doctrine of the Trinity*<sup>22</sup> and it is still occasionally referred to by them with some triumph; but it seems, in its ultimate results, to have exerted a wholesome influence upon the mode of conducting this controversy, leading to more caution, wisdom, and judgment on the part of the defenders of the truth,—a more careful abstinence from baseless and presumptuous theories and explanations,—and a more uniform regard to the great principles and objects which have just been stated, as those that ought to regulate the exposition and investigation of this important subject.

#### Sec. 6.—Trinity and Unity.

The importance of attending carefully to the true and exact state of the question in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, is fully evinced

by this consideration, that the opponents of the doctrine base, directly and immediately upon the state of the question, a charge of its involving a contradiction, and of its being inconsistent with the admitted truth of the unity of God. The duty of Trinitarians, in regard to this subject of settling, so far as they are concerned, the state of the question, ought to be regulated by far higher considerations than those which originate in a regard to the advantages that may result from it in controversial discussion. The positions which we undertake to maintain and defend in the matter—and this, of course, settles the state of the question in so far as we are concerned—should be those only, and neither more nor less, which we believe to be truly contained in, or certainly deducible from, the statements of Scripture,—those only which the word of God seems to require us to maintain and defend, without any intermixture of mere human speculations or attempts, however ingenious and plausible, at definitions, explanations, or theories, beyond what the Scripture clearly sanctions or demands. The defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity have often neglected or violated this rule, by indulging in unwarranted explanations and theories upon the subject, and have thereby afforded great advantages to its opponents, of which they have not been slow to avail themselves. And when, warned of their error by the difficulties in which they found themselves involved, and the advantages which their opponents, who have generally been careful to act simply as defenders or respondents, seemed in consequence to enjoy, they curtailed their speculations within narrower limits, and adhered more closely to the maintenance of scriptural positions, their opponents have represented this as the effect of conscious weakness or of controversial artifice. The truth, however, is, that this mode of procedure is the intrinsically right course, which ought never to have been departed from,—which they were bound to return to, from a sense of imperative duty, and not merely from a regard to safety or advantage, whenever, by any means, their deviation from it was brought home to them,—and which it is not the less incumbent upon us to adhere to, because the errors and excesses of former defenders of the truth, and the advantages furnished by these means to opponents, may have been,

in some measure, the occasion of leading theologians to see more clearly, and to pursue more steadily, what was in itself, and on the ground of its own intrinsic excellence, the undoubted path of duty in the matter.

But though anti-Trinitarians are much fonder of dealing with the particular definitions, explanations, and theories of individual theologians upon this subject, than with those general and well-weighed statements which we have quoted both from the English Articles and our own Confession of Faith,—and which certainly contain the substance of all that Scripture teaches, and consequently of all that we should undertake to maintain and defend,—yet it must be acknowledged that they commonly allege that the doctrine of the Trinity, even when most cautiously and carefully stated, involves a contradiction in itself, and is inconsistent with the doctrine of the divine unity; and to this we would now advert.

It will be understood, from the exposition of principles formerly given, that we do not deny that such allegations are relevant, and that they must in some way or other be disposed of; and it will also be remembered that sufficient grounds have been adduced for maintaining the two following positions upon this point: First, that when the Scripture is admitted in any fair sense to be the rule of faith, the first step should be simply to ascertain, in the faithful and honest use of all appropriate means, what it teaches, or was intended to teach, upon the subject,—that this investigation should be prosecuted fairly to its conclusion, without being disturbed by the introduction of collateral considerations derived from other sources, until a clear result is reached,—that an allegation of intrinsic contradiction or of contrariety to known truth, if adduced against the result as brought out in this way, should be kept in its proper place as an objection, and dealt with as such,—that, if established, it should be fairly and honestly applied, not to the effect of reversing the judgment, already adopted upon competent and appropriate grounds, as to what it is that Scripture teaches (for that is irrational and illogical), but to the effect of rejecting the divine authority of the

Scriptures. Secondly, that in conducting the latter part of the process of investigation above described, we are entitled to argue upon the assumption that the doctrine of the Trinity has been really established by scriptural authority,—we are under no obligation to do more than simply to show that the allegation of contradiction, or of inconsistency, with other truths, has not been proved; and we should attempt nothing more than what is thus logically incumbent upon us. As we are not called upon to enter into an exposition of the scriptural evidence, we have no opportunity of applying the principles laid down under the former of these two heads, though it is very important that they should be remembered. It is chiefly by the positions laid down in the second head that we must be guided in considering this allegation of our opponents.

We assume, then,—as we are entitled, upon the principles explained, to do, in discussing this point,—that it has been established, by satisfactory evidence, as a doctrine taught in Scripture, that true and proper divinity is possessed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; that the divine nature and perfections are possessed by three; and that, while there is only one God, and while these three, therefore, are the one God, there is yet such a distinction among them, as is, in some respects, analogous to the distinction subsisting between three persons among men,—such a distinction as lays a foundation for attributing to each of them some things which are not attributable to the others, and for applying to them the distinct personal pronouns, I, Thou, and He. This is the substance of what Scripture seems plainly to teach upon the subject; and we embody it in such statements as these, just because we cannot possibly represent or express it in any other way. Now it is alleged that this doctrine—which, in the meantime, we are entitled to assume, is taught in Scripture—involves a contradiction in itself, and is inconsistent with the divine unity; and upon the principles which have been explained, we have merely to show that this allegation is not substantiated—is not proved.

The first part of the allegation—namely, that the doctrine directly and in itself involves a contradiction—is very easily disposed of, as it is manifestly destitute of any solid foundation. In order to constitute a contradiction, it is necessary that there be both an affirmation and a negation, not only concerning the same thing, but concerning the same thing in the same respect. To say that one God is three Gods, or that three persons are one person, is, of course, an express contradiction, or, as it is commonly called, a contradiction in terms. To affirm, directly or by plain implication, that God is one in the same respect in which He is three, would also amount to a plain contradiction, and, of course, could not be rationally believed. But to assert that God is in one respect one, and in another and different respect three,—that He is one in nature, essence, or substance,—and that He is three with respect to personality, or personal distinction (and this is all that the received doctrine of the Trinity requires or implies),—can never be shown to contain or involve a contradiction. It certainly does not contain a contradiction in terms; for we not only do not assert, but expressly deny, that God is one and three in the same respect, that He is one in the same respect in which He is three, or that He is three in the same respect in which He is one; and when the defenders of the doctrine adhere, as they ought to do, to a simple assertion of what they believe to be taught or indicated in Scripture, and of what is declared in our symbolical books, without indulging in unwarranted explanations and baseless theories, it is impossible to show that the doctrine involves, by necessary implication, any appearance of a contradiction.

Accordingly, the opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity are more disposed to dwell upon the other part of the allegation,—namely, that it is inconsistent with the known and admitted truth of the divine unity; and it is chiefly by pressing this position, that they have succeeded in drawing the supporters of the doctrine into the field of explanations and theories, directed to the object of making, in some measure, intelligible how it is that unity and personal distinction—unity in one respect and trinity in another—are consistent with each other. The temptation to attempt this is, to ingenious men,

somewhat strong; but the results of the attempts which have been made have always, in consequence of the limited amount of the information which God has been pleased to reveal to us upon the subject, and the imperfection of the human faculties and of human language, proved wholly unsuccessful in effecting anything really substantial and valuable; and have commonly been attended only with mischief, as serving to furnish plausible grounds to opponents to allege, either that, to adopt the language of the Athanasian creed, we confound the persons, or divide the substance,—that is, fall, or seem to fall, into the opposite extremes of Sabellianism or Tritheism.

Of course very different measures of wisdom and caution have been exhibited by different defenders of the Trinity in the exposition and application of these explanations and theories, illustrations and analogies, which they have brought to bear upon this subject. They have been propounded with some diversity of spirit, and they have been applied to different purposes. Sometimes they have been put forth boldly, dogmatically, and recklessly; and at other times with much more modesty, diffidence, and circumspection. Sometimes they have been urged as if they afforded positive proofs, or at least strong presumptions, of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the combination of unity and distinction which it implies, and sometimes they have been adduced merely as affording proofs or presumptions of its possibility; while at other times, again, they have been brought forward, not as proofs or presumptions of anything, but merely as illustrations of what it was that was meant to be asserted. When applied to the last of these purposes, and used merely as illustrations of what is meant, there is no great harm done, provided they are restricted carefully to this purpose. When adduced for the first of these purposes,—namely, as presumptions or proofs of the truth of the doctrine,—this, from the nature of the case, can lead only to baseless and presumptuous speculation.

But even when applied only to the second of these purposes,—namely, to afford proofs or presumptions of possibility,—they ought to be regarded as unnecessary, unsafe, and inexpedient. Strictly



speaking, we are not bound to produce positive proof even of the possibility of such a combination of unity and distinction as the doctrine of the Trinity predicates of the divine nature, but merely to show negatively that the impossibility of it, alleged upon the other side, has not been established; and the whole history of the controversy shows the great practical importance of our restricting ourselves within the limits beyond which the rules of strict reasoning do not require us to advance. The only question which we will ever consent to discuss with our opponents upon this point—apart, of course, from the investigation of the meaning of Scripture—is this: Has it been clearly proved that the received doctrine of the Trinity, as set forth in our symbolical books, necessarily involves anything inconsistent with the unity of the Godhead? And there need be no hesitation in answering this question in the negative. No proof of the allegation has been produced resting upon a firm and solid basis,—no argument that can be shown to be logically connected with any principles of which we have clear and adequate ideas. It is the divine nature—the nature of the infinite and incomprehensible God—which the question respects; and on this ground there is the strongest presumption against the warrantableness of positive assertions on the part of men as to what is possible or impossible in the matter. The substance of the allegation of our opponents is, that it is impossible that there can be such a distinction in the divine nature as the doctrine of the Trinity asserts, because God is one; and they must establish this position by making out a clear and certain bond of connection between the admitted unity of God and the impossibility of the distinction asserted. The substance of what we maintain upon the point is this,—that every attempt to establish this logical bond of connection, involves the use of positions which cannot be proved; and which cannot be proved, just because they assume a larger amount of clear and certain knowledge, both with respect to the unity and the distinction, than men possess, or have the capacity and the means of attaining.

The unity of the Godhead or divine nature being universally admitted, men are very apt to suppose that they understand it fully,

—that they know more of what it means and implies than they do. But the unity of the Godhead is really as incomprehensible by men as any of His other attributes,—a position confirmed and illustrated by the fact, that it is doubtful whether the proper nature and ground of the divine unity can, in any strict and proper sense, be ascertained and established by natural reason. There has been a very general sense, among the greatest men who have discussed this subject, of the difficulty of establishing the strict and proper unity of the Godhead on mere rational grounds, apart from revelation. It has generally been regarded, indeed, as easy enough to establish that there is one Being (and not more) who is the actual Creator and Governor of the world; but it has commonly been felt to be somewhat difficult to deduce certainly, from anything cognizable by the natural faculties of man, a proposition asserting unity, in any definite sense, of the Godhead, or divine nature, intrinsically, and as such. And this fact is fitted to show us that it is not so easy to comprehend what the divine unity is, or implies, as it might at first sight appear to be. The Scriptures plainly declare the divine unity by informing us, not merely that the world was created, and has ever been governed, by one Being, but that the Godhead, or divine nature, is essentially one. But they give us no detailed or specific information as to the nature and grounds of this unity,—as to what it consists in; and of course they afford us no definite materials for determining what is, and what is not, consistent with it. And if it be true, as we are entitled at present to assume, that the same revelation which alone certainly makes known to us the strict and proper unity of the divine nature, does also reveal to us a certain distinction existing in that nature, the fair inference is,—that the unity and the distinction are quite consistent with each other, though we may not be able to make this consistency palpable either to ourselves or others.

It is scarcely alleged, though it is sometimes insinuated, by our opponents, that the admitted unity of the divine nature necessarily excludes all distinctions of every kind and degree. It is very manifest, in general, from the nature of the case,—the exalted and incomprehensible character of the subject, and the scanty amount of

information which God has been pleased to communicate to us regarding it, or which, perhaps, we were capable of receiving,—that we have no very adequate or certain materials for determining positively, in any case, that any particular alleged distinction is inconsistent with the divine unity; and, in these circumstances, and under these conditions, the position of our opponents is, and must be, that they undertake to prove that the particular distinction implied in the doctrine of the Trinity is inconsistent with the unity of God. Now, if the scriptural doctrine were to be identified with the explanations and theories about it which have been sometimes propounded by its friends, it might be admitted that considerations have been adduced, in support of the alleged inconsistency, that were possessed not only of plausibility, but of weight; but against the doctrine itself, as taught in Scripture and as set forth in our standards, nothing of real weight has been, or can be, adduced,—nothing but arguments *ab ignorantia* and *ad ignorantiam*. We profess to give no further explanation of the nature of the distinction, except this, that it is set before us in Scripture as a real, and not a merely nominal distinction,—a distinction of existences and objects, and not of mere names and manifestations,—and as analogous in some respects, though not in all, to the distinction subsisting between three persons among men; and there is nothing in any one of these ideas to which a definite argument, clearly inferring incompatibility with unity, can be shown to be logically attachable. It would be no difficult matter to show—but it is not worth while—that the attempts which have been made to establish such a connection, either, in the first place, proceed upon certain conceptions of the precise nature of the distinction of persons, which we disclaim, and are under no sort of obligation to admit; or, secondly, resolve into vague and general assertions on points which are beyond our cognizance and comprehension, and on which it seems equally unwarrantable and presumptuous to affirm or deny anything; or, thirdly and finally, are reducible to the extravagant position, more or less openly asserted and maintained, that the divine unity necessarily excludes all distinction, of every kind, and in every degree.

The steady application of these general considerations to the actual attempts which have been made by anti-Trinitarians to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily involves what is inconsistent with the divine unity, will easily enable us to see that they have not proved their position. And here we should rest, relying for the positive proof of all that we believe and maintain, upon the authority of God in His word,—revealing Himself to us,—making known to us concerning Himself what we could not know in any measure from any other source, or by any other means, but an immediate supernatural revelation. The doctrine is above reason; it could not have been discovered by it, and cannot be fully comprehended by it, even after it has been revealed; but it cannot be proved to be contrary to reason, or to be inconsistent with any other truth which, from any source, we know regarding God. We can, of course, form no definite or adequate conception of this mysterious distinction attaching to the divine nature; but we have no reason to expect that we should,—we have every reason to expect that we should not, since we have no definite or adequate conceptions of many other things about God, even though these things are discoverable, in some measure, by the exercise of our natural faculties. We find great, or rather insuperable, difficulties in attempting to explain, in words, the nature of this distinction in the Godhead; because, independently of the very inadequate conceptions which alone we could form of such a subject from the nature of the case, it has, of necessity, been made known to us, in so far as we do know it, through the imperfect medium of human language, and by means of representations which are necessarily derived from what takes place or is realized among men, and must therefore very imperfectly apply to the divine nature. In this, as well as in other matters connected with God, we must exclude from our conceptions everything that results from, or savours of, the peculiar qualities of man's finite and dependent nature, and admit nothing into our conceptions inconsistent with the known perfections and properties of God; while at the same time we must take care to exclude nothing which He has really made known to us concerning Himself, on the ground of our not being able fully to comprehend how it is, that all the truths which He has made known

to us concerning Himself can be combined in Him. He has revealed to us that He is one, but He has also revealed to us that there are three who have true and proper divinity,—who have the divine nature and perfections. We, in consequence, maintain that, in the unity of the Godhead—in the common possession of the one undivided and indivisible divine nature—there are three persons; and without meaning to assert—nay, while expressly denying—that the idea of distinct personality applies to the divine nature in the same sense as to the human, we use this mode of expression, because it is really the only way in which we can embody the idea, which scriptural statements convey to us, of the distinction existing in the Godhead,—namely, as being analogous in some respects to the distinction subsisting among three different persons among men,—an idea, however, to be always regulated and controlled by the principle, that the three to whom divinity is ascribed, though called persons, because we have no other expressions that would convey any portion of the idea which Scripture sets before us on the subject, are not three Gods,—as three persons among men are three men,—but are the one God.

It may perhaps be supposed, that though, upon principles formerly explained, Trinitarians are not obliged to give any full or exact definition of what they mean by persons, or by distinct personality, as predicated of the divine nature, when they merely lay down the general position, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, yet that they are bound to attempt something more precise or specific in defining or describing personality, when they lay down the position that the Holy Ghost is a person, since the idea of personality is in this position more distinctly held up, as the precise point to be established. Now it is true, that the proof that the Holy Ghost is a person, is a fundamental point in the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity. It is scarcely disputed that the Holy Ghost is God, is divine; the main controversy turns upon the question of His personality, which is usually denied by anti-Trinitarians. But the personality of the Spirit can be proved satisfactorily by appropriate evidence, without our being under the necessity of giving any exact

definition of what personality means, as applied to the divine nature. It is to be observed, that the discussion about the personality of the Spirit necessarily involves the maintenance of one or other of two alternatives, which really exhaust the subject. The Holy Spirit either is a mere attribute or power of God, or is a distinct person from the Father and the Son. Now we can form a pretty definite conception of the general import of these two opposite or alternative propositions, without needing or being able to define precisely and positively wherein the idea of distinct personality, as applied to the divine nature, differs from the same idea as applied to the human nature,—so far, at least, as to be able intelligently to estimate the bearing and the weight of the evidence adduced for and against them respectively. Upon this state of the question, without any exact or adequate idea of personality, we are able to adduce satisfactory evidence from Scripture, that the Holy Ghost is not a mere power or attribute of God, or to disprove one of the alternative positions. And this of itself is warrant enough for maintaining the truth of the other, which is the only alternative, especially as it holds generally of a large portion of our knowledge of God, that we approximate to an accurate statement of what we know of Him chiefly by negatives; while, at the same time, the scriptural evidence, which proves that the Spirit is not a mere power or attribute, manifestly brings Him before our minds, viewed in His relations to the Father and the Son, in an aspect analogous in some respects to the idea we entertain of the relation subsisting between distinct persons among men; and this warrants the application of the idea,—of course with the necessary modification,—and also of the phraseology of distinct personality.

#### Sec. 7.—Evidence for the Divinity of Christ.

I have endeavoured, in what has been said upon the subject of the Trinity, to guard against the tendency to indulge in unwarranted definitions, explanations, and theories upon this topic,—a tendency which too many of the defenders of the truth have exhibited,—by pointing out not only its inexpediency and danger, so far as mere controversial objects are concerned, but its unwarrantableness and

impropriety, on higher grounds, as a matter of duty. I have attempted to mark out precisely the extent to which the supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity are called upon, in strict reasoning, to go, in the discussion of abstract points connected with this matter; and have, I think, rigidly confined my own observations upon it within the limits thus defined. But still I have some apprehension that, since I am not to enter into a detailed examination of the scriptural evidence in support of the doctrine, the prominence which has been given to abstract discussions regarding it, may convey an erroneous impression of the comparative importance of the different departments of inquiry that constitute a full investigation of the subject, and may lead some to overlook the paramount, the supreme importance of making themselves acquainted with the scriptural evidence of the different positions, which may be said to constitute the doctrine, as it is generally received amongst us. On this account, I wish again to advert to the considerations, that this doctrine is one of pure revelation; that we know, and can know, nothing about the distinction in the divine nature which it asserts, except what is taught us in the sacred Scriptures; and that the first step that ought to be taken in a full investigation of the subject, should be to collect the scriptural statements which bear upon it,—to examine carefully their meaning and import,—and then to embody the substance of the different positions thus ascertained, as constituting the doctrine which we believe and maintain upon the subject. The doctrine which we believe and maintain should be reached or got at in this way; and the materials by which we defend it should be all derived from this source. We should hold nothing upon the subject which is not taught in Scripture; and we should be so familiar with the scriptural grounds of all that we profess to believe regarding it, as to be able to defend, from the word of God, the whole of what we believe, against all who may assail it. I have already made some general observations upon the Socinian method of interpreting Scripture, and given a warning against some of the general plausibilities by which they usually endeavour to defend their system against the force of scriptural arguments, and to obscure or diminish the strength of the support which Scripture gives to the scheme of doctrine that has

been generally maintained in the Christian church; and on the subject of the Scripture evidence, I can now only make a few observations of a similar kind, bearing more immediately upon the doctrine of the Trinity, and directed, not to the object of stating, illustrating, and enforcing the evidence itself, but merely suggesting some considerations that may be useful in the study of it.

The great fundamental position which we assert and undertake to prove from Scripture is this,—that true and proper divinity is ascribed to, that the divine nature is possessed by, three,—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is the basis or foundation, or rather, it is the sum and substance, of the doctrine of the Trinity; and everything, of course, depends upon the establishment of this position. The deity of the Father is not a matter of controversy; it is universally admitted. The question, so far as the Holy Spirit is concerned, turns, as I have already explained, more upon His personality than upon His divinity; for that the Spirit is God, in the highest sense, or is truly divine, is scarcely disputed. For these and other reasons, the main field of controversial discussion on this whole subject of the Trinity, has been the true and proper divinity of the Son,—that is, of Jesus Christ the Saviour of sinners. Of course all the general objections usually adduced against the doctrine of the Trinity, apply in all their force to the ascription of proper Godhead, or of the divine nature, to any person but the Father; so that, when the divinity of the Son is proved, all further controversy about the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit, so far as these general topics are concerned, is practically at an end. When a plurality of divine persons has been established, all the leading general points on which anti-Trinitarians insist are virtually negatived, and excluded from the field. If it be proved that there is more than one person in the Godhead, there can be no general reason why there should not be a third; and it is on this account that the investigation of the proper scriptural evidence in regard to the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit has been usually somewhat less disturbed by extraneous and collateral considerations, by allegations of the impossibility of the doctrine contended for being true, and by violent efforts at



perversion which these allegations were thought to justify, than the investigation into the scriptural evidence for the divinity of the Son.

But while the divinity of Jesus Christ has thus become, perhaps, the principal battlefield on this whole question, and while, therefore, the evidence bearing upon it ought to be examined with peculiar care, it is right to remark that Trinitarians profess to find evidence in Scripture bearing directly upon the doctrine of the Trinity in general,—that is, bearing generally upon a plurality, and, more particularly, upon a trinity of persons in the Godhead, independently of the specific evidence for the divinity of Jesus Christ, and the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, it is common in writers who enter fully into the discussion of this subject, to divide the scriptural evidence in support of the doctrine of the Trinity into two heads: first, that derived from passages which appear to intimate a plurality of persons in the Godhead, and from those which seem to speak of the three persons together, or in conjunction; and, secondly, that derived from passages which are alleged to assert or imply the divinity of Christ, and the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit,—the second of these heads comprising much the larger amount of scriptural materials. The principal thing in the Bible which has been regarded by many as intimating a plurality of persons in the Godhead in general, without conveying to us any further or more definite information upon the subject, is the frequent use in the Old Testament of the plural appellation, as it is called, Elohim, or Aleim, the ordinary name of God, used in the plural form, and joined with nouns and verbs in the singular. Some Trinitarians have disclaimed any assistance from this branch of evidence, explaining the peculiarity by what they call the plural of majesty or excellence; while others, and among the rest Dr. John Pye Smith,—who commonly leans to the extreme of caution, and is very careful to put no more weight upon a proof than it is clearly and certainly able to bear,—have, with apparently better reason, been of opinion that this singular construction has some real weight in the proof of the doctrine of the Trinity; or, as Dr. Smith says, that "this peculiarity of idiom originated in a design to intimate a plurality in the nature of

the One God; and that thus, in connection with other circumstances calculated to suggest the same conception, it was intended to excite and prepare the minds of men for the more full declaration of this unsearchable mystery, which should in proper time be granted."23

The chief proofs which are usually adduced in support of three distinct persons, or in which the three persons of the Godhead appear to be spoken of together, or in conjunction, and yet are distinguished from each other, are the formula of baptism and the apostolic benediction, as they are commonly called (for most Trinitarians now admit that there is a decided preponderance of critical evidence against the genuineness of 1 John v. 7, usually spoken of as the three heavenly witnesses). And here, too, there has been some difference of opinion among Trinitarians as to the weight of the evidence furnished by the passages referred to,—some thinking that these passages by themselves do not furnish what can be properly called a proof, a distinct and independent proof, of the doctrine, but only a presumption; and that, after it has been proved by a clearer and more conclusive evidence that the Son is God, and that the Holy Spirit is possessed of divinity and personality, these passages may be regarded as corroborating the conclusion, and confirming the general mass of evidence; while others are of opinion—and, I think, upon sufficient grounds—that the language employed upon these occasions,—the manner and circumstances in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are there conjoined,—are plainly fitted, and should therefore be held as having been intended, to convey to us the idea that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three distinct persons, and that they are possessed of equal power and dignity, or, in other words, that they equally possess the same divine nature.

Still, the difference of opinion that has been exhibited by Trinitarians as to the validity and sufficiency of these proofs of the doctrine of the Trinity in general, has concurred with other causes formerly mentioned, in bringing about the result that the controversy has usually turned mainly upon the passages of Scripture classed under

the second head, as those which are regarded as establishing the true and proper divinity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, and especially of Jesus Christ. All the supporters of the doctrine of the Trinity of course profess, and undertake to prove from Scripture, that Jesus Christ is truly and properly divine,—that He is God, not in any secondary or subordinate, but in the proper and highest, sense; and is thus, equally with the Father, a possessor of the one divine nature or substance; and they have agreed harmoniously, in the main, in selecting, classifying, and applying the varied and abundant scriptural evidence by which this great truth is established. They have been in the habit of classifying the evidence under four heads, and there is probably no better mode of classifying it.

First, The proof from Scripture that divine names and titles are applied to Christ; and under this head the points to be established are these two: first, that names and titles are ascribed to Christ which are exclusively appropriated to the one true God; and, secondly, that names and titles are applied to Christ which, though not exclusively appropriated to the one true God, and sometimes applied to creatures in a secondary and subordinate sense, are yet applied to Christ in such circumstances, in such a manner, and with such accompanying adjuncts, as to furnish evidence that the Scriptures were fitted, and of course intended, to impress upon us the conviction that they apply to Christ in a sense in which they do not, and cannot, apply to any creature,—in the same sense in which they are applied to the Father.

Secondly, The proof that divine qualities and attributes, such as omnipotence and omniscience, are ascribed to Christ; attributes which manifestly cannot belong to any finite or created being, and must be exclusively appropriated to the divine nature,—to the one true God.

Thirdly, The proof that acts, or works, are ascribed to Christ, which are not competent to any finite or created being; and which require or imply the possession and exercise of divine perfections and

prerogatives,—such as the creation and government of the world, and the determining the everlasting destinies of men.

Fourthly, The proof that Christ is entitled to divine worship and homage, to the adoration and the confidence, the submission and the obedience, which creatures ought to give to their Creator, and to none else, and which are claimed in Scripture as due exclusively to the one true God.

Any one of these departments of proof, when really established by a careful investigation of the precise meaning and import of particular statements, would be sufficient to settle the question of the true and proper divinity of Christ; but when each and all of these positions can be established, as has been often proved, by various and abundant scriptural evidence,—formal and incidental, palpable and recondite,—by many passages of all different degrees of clearness and explicitness,—by many proofs, corroborated by innumerable presumptions, there is presented a mass of evidence which, it is not to be wondered at, has satisfied the great body of those who, in any age, have investigated the subject, and have assumed the name of Jesus,—that He whom they call their Lord and Master is indeed God over all, blessed for evermore.

Of course the establishment of each of these four leading positions concerning Christ, depends wholly upon the particular scriptural evidence adduced in support of it,—upon the result of a careful examination of the precise meaning and import of particular statements contained in Scripture,—upon the proof that can be adduced that there are statements contained in Scripture which, when investigated in the fair and honest application of all the principles and rules of sound interpretation, bring out, as the general result, that if the Scriptures were fitted and designed to be our rule of faith, it was then wished, intended, and expected that we should believe all this concerning Jesus Christ.

All the various scriptural statements which have been adduced in support of these positions concerning Christ, have been made the subjects of controversial discussion. It has been contended by Socinians, that there is nothing in Scripture which, rightly interpreted, furnishes sufficient or satisfactory evidence that Jesus Christ had any existence until He was born in Bethlehem,—that He had any other nature than the human,—that He was anything more than a mere man; and it has been contended by Arians, that while Christ existed in a higher nature than the human before the creation of the world. He still belonged to the class of creatures,—that He is called God only in a secondary or subordinate sense,—and is not possessed of true and proper divinity,—is not a possessor of the one divine nature; and both these parties have exerted themselves to clear away the scriptural evidence adduced in support of Christ's proper divinity. The Arians, indeed, join with the Trinitarians in proving, against the Socinians, that there are scriptural statements which clearly and certainly prove that Jesus Christ existed before the creation of the world, and was possessed of a nature higher and more exalted than the human. And in giving a detailed and digested exposition of the Scripture evidence concerning Christ, it is perhaps best and most expedient to begin with establishing those positions which Arians concur with us in holding in opposition to the Socinians, by proving Christ's pre-existence and superhuman dignity; and then, abandoning the Arians, to proceed to the proof that He had a nature not only superhuman, but truly and properly divine, by adducing and expounding the evidence of the four leading positions regarding Him formerly stated. But, of course, the proof of His true and proper divinity shuts out at once not only Socinianism, but all the various gradations of Arianism, as it necessarily implies that He was, as our Confession of Faith says, "of one substance, power, and eternity with the Father." And the general features of the method of disposing of the Scripture evidence for the divinity of Christ, to which alone we can here advert, are substantially the same, in the case of all the different classes of anti-Trinitarians.

I need not add anything to the general observations formerly made about the Socinian practice, usually followed also by the Arians, of mixing up the general objections to the doctrine upon abstract grounds, with the investigation of the proper meaning of scriptural statements,—of insisting that the doctrine, if true, would have been more frequently mentioned and more clearly asserted,—and of demanding that we shall prove, in regard to the scriptural passages we adduce, not only that they may, but that they must, bear the meaning we assign to them, and cannot possibly admit of any other. All these different features of the method they employ, which they lay down beforehand as general principles, are directed to one single object,—namely, to diminish a little the amount of torture which it may be necessary to apply to particular scriptural statements, with the view of showing that they do not furnish any satisfactory evidence for Christ's divinity. It is evident that, if these general principles were conceded to them in all the latitude of construction which they commonly put upon them, a smaller amount of perverting power would be necessary to make out a plausible case in support of the positions they maintain. They are pretty distinctly conscious that it is necessary for them to subject scriptural statements to a considerable amount of pressure, in order to distort and pervert them to such an extent, as that they shall appear to give no very certain sound in support of Christ's divinity; and as they are aware that this is rather apt to disgust honest men, they are naturally solicitous to do with as little of it as they can. It was evidently with this view that they devised those principles of interpretation to which we have referred; for if these be well founded, a smaller amount of distortion and perversion will be necessary for accomplishing their object. It is enough to remember, upon the other side, that all that we are called upon to do in order to establish the doctrine of Christ's divinity, is just to show that Scripture, fairly and honestly explained, according to the recognised principles and rules of sound interpretation, does teach, and was intended to teach it.

The opponents of Christ's divinity, after having attempted by these general considerations to make provision for effecting their object

with the minimum of perversion, proceed to the work of showing, minutely and in detail, that the scriptural statements we adduce do not teach, or at least do not necessarily teach, the doctrine of Christ's divinity. They are not unfrequently somewhat skilled in the technicalities and minutiae of biblical criticism; and some of them have manifested very considerable ingenuity in applying all these to the object they have in view, which may be said to be, in general, to involve the meaning of scriptural statements in obscurity,—to show that no certain meaning can be brought out of them,—and, more particularly, that it is not by any means clear or certain that they bear the meaning which Trinitarians assign to them. I cannot enter into any detail of the various methods they have employed for this purpose. I may merely mention a specimen.

One very common course they adopt is, to break down a statement into its separate words, phrases, and clauses, and then to try to get up some evidence that the particular words, phrases, or clauses, or some of them, have been employed in some other passages of Scripture in a somewhat different sense from that in which Trinitarians understand them in the passage under consideration; and then they usually reckon this—aided, of course, by an insinuation of the impossibility or incredibility of the doctrine of their opponents—as sufficient ground for maintaining that there is nothing in the passage to support it; while, in such cases, Trinitarians have undertaken to prove, and have proved, either that the words, phrases, or clauses are never used in Scripture in the sense which Socinians and Arians would ascribe to them; or that, even though this sense might be, in certain circumstances, admissible, yet that it is precluded, in the passage under consideration, by a fair application to it of the acknowledged rules of grammar, philology, and exegesis; and that these rules, fairly applied to the whole passage, viewed in connection with the context, establish that the Trinitarian interpretation brings out its true meaning and import. The great leading impression which the Socinian mode of dealing with the Scripture evidence for the divinity of Christ is fitted to produce in the minds of those who may be

somewhat influenced by it, and may thus have become disposed to regard it with favour, is this,—that most of the passages which they may have been accustomed to regard as evidences of Christ's divinity, have been so dealt with singly and separately as to be neutralized or withdrawn, to be thrown into the background, or taken out of the way; so that, while there is much in Scripture, as Socinians admit, which would no doubt concur and harmonize with the Trinitarian view, if that view were once established, yet that there are few, if any, passages which seem to afford a clear and positive proof of it, and that thus the foundation is taken away, and the whole superstructure, of course, must fall to the ground. This is the impression which is sometimes apt to be produced when we read a plausible Socinian commentary upon the scriptural statements adduced in support of Christ's divinity, and find that every one of them has been tampered with, with more or less plausibility, and that a great variety of considerations have been suggested, wearing a critical aspect, and all tending to render the Trinitarian interpretation of them uncertain or precarious. Now the considerations that ought to be applied to, counteract this impression, are chiefly these two:—

First, There are some passages of Scripture under each of the four leading divisions of the proof which cannot be explained away without a manifest violation of the recognised principles of interpretation; and these constitute a firm and stable foundation, on which the whole mass of cumulative and corroborating evidence may securely rest. Trinitarians, of course, do not maintain that all the Scripture passages usually adduced in support of Christ's divinity are equally clear and explicit,—are equally unassailable by objections and presumptions; and they do not deny that there are some which, taken by themselves, and apart from the rest, might admit of being explained away, or understood in a different sense. All the defenders of the doctrine of the Trinity do not attach the same weight to all the different passages commonly adduced as proofs of it; and some discrimination and knowledge of the subject are necessary in fixing, amid the huge mass of evidence, upon the true dicta probantia, the



real proof passages,—those which, after all the arts and appliances of Socinian criticism have been brought to bear upon them, can be really shown to have successfully resisted all their attempts, and to stand, after the most searching application of the principles of sound interpretation, as impregnable bulwarks of Christ's divinity,—as manifestly intended to teach us that He is indeed the true God, the mighty God, Jehovah of hosts. There is a considerable number of such passages both in the Old and the New Testaments. They must necessarily constitute the main strength of the case; and no man can consider himself thoroughly versant in this subject, until, after having surveyed the whole evidence commonly adduced in the discussion, he has made up his own mind, as the result of careful study and meditation, as to what the passages are which of themselves afford clear and conclusive proof of Christ's divinity, as distinguished from those which are rather corroborative than probative; and has made himself familiar with those exegetical principles and materials, by the application of which the true meaning of these passages may be brought out and established, and all the common Socinian glosses and attempts at perverting or neutralizing them may be exposed.

Secondly, the full and complete evidence for Christ's divinity is brought out only by a survey of the whole of the scriptural materials which bear upon this subject. Socinians are in the habit of assailing each text singly and separately, and labour to convey the impression that they have succeeded conclusively in disposing of all the proofs one by one; while they usually strive to keep in the background, and to conceal from view, the evidence in its entirety and completeness. It is of course quite right and necessary that every Scripture text adduced should be subjected to a careful and deliberate examination, and that its real meaning and import should be correctly ascertained. It is also necessary, as we have explained under the last head, that we should be prepared, in maintaining our doctrine, with particular texts, which, taken singly and of themselves, afford conclusive proofs of the truth. But it is not right that the entire discussion should be restricted to the examination of particular texts,

without this being accompanied and followed by a general survey of the whole evidence, taken complexly and in the mass. When the Socinians have only a single text to deal with, they can usually get up something more or less plausible to involve its meaning in obscurity or uncertainty; but when their denial of Christ's divinity is brought into contact with the full blaze of the whole word of God, as it bears upon this subject, it then appears in all its gross deformity and palpable falsehood. There is perhaps no more conclusive and satisfactory way of bringing out and establishing the divinity of Christ, than just to collect together, and to read over in combination, a considerable number of the passages of Scripture which speak of Him, and then to call on men to submit their understandings, honestly and unreservedly, to the fair impression of the views of Christ which are thus brought before them, and to put to themselves the simple question: Is it possible that the Bible could really have been fitted and designed to be our rule of faith, if these statements about Christ, taken in combination, were not intended to teach us, and to constrain us to believe, that He is the one true and supreme God, possessed of the divine nature, and of all divine perfections? A minute and careful examination of the precise import and bearing of scriptural statements, will bring out a great deal of evidence in support of Christ's divinity that is not very obvious at first sight,—will show that this great doctrine is interwoven with the whole texture of revelation, and that the more direct and palpable proof is corroborated by evidence, possessed, indeed, of different degrees of strength in the different portions of which it is composed, but all combining to place this great doctrine upon an immovable foundation; but there is nothing better fitted to assure the mind, to impress the understanding and the heart, to satisfy us that we are not following a cunningly-devised fable, when we rely upon Him as an almighty Saviour, and confide in the infinity of His perfections, than just to peruse the plain statements of God's word regarding Him, and to submit our minds honestly and unreservedly to the impressions which they are manifestly fitted and intended to produce. We should take care, then, while giving a due measure of time and attention to the exact and critical investigation of the

precise meaning of particular texts, to contemplate also the evidence of Christ's divinity in its fulness and completeness, that we may see the more clearly, and feel the more deeply, the whole of what God has revealed to us concerning His Son.

There is one other general observation which I wish to make in regard to the study of this subject. It will be found occasionally, in perusing works written in vindication of Christ's divinity, that some texts which are founded on by one author as proofs of the doctrine, are regarded by another as affording only a presumption of its truth, and perhaps by a third as having no bearing upon the question; and this fact suggests the consideration, that there are two different and opposite tendencies upon this subject, both of which ought to be guarded against. The one is, that of pertinacity in adhering to everything that has ever been adduced as a proof or argument, though it may not be able to stand a searching critical investigation; and the other is, that of undue facility in giving up, as inconclusive or irrelevant, arguments that really are possessed of some weight and relevancy. Both of these tendencies have been manifested by the defenders of the truth, and both of them operate injuriously. Some men seem to think that it is nothing less than treachery to the doctrine itself, to doubt the validity of any arguments that have ever at any time been brought forward in support of it; while others, again, seem to think that they manifest a more than ordinary skill in biblical criticism, and a larger measure of candour and liberality, in abandoning some posts which Trinitarians have commonly defended. Of course no general rule can be laid down for the regulation of this subject; for the only rule applicable to the matter is, that every man is bound, by the most solemn obligations, to use the utmost impartiality, care, and diligence, to ascertain the true and correct meaning and import of everything contained in the word of God. It is enough to point out these tendencies and dangers, and exhort men to guard carefully against being misled or perverted by either of them; while they should judge charitably of those who may seem not to have escaped wholly uninjured by them, provided they have given no sufficient reason to doubt (for, in some instances, the

second of these tendencies has been carried so far as to afford reasonable ground for suspicion on this point) that they are honest and cordial friends of the great doctrine itself. There is enough of scriptural evidence for the doctrine of the supreme divinity of our blessed Saviour,—evidence that has ever stood, and will ever stand, the most searching critical investigation,—to satisfy all its supporters that there is no temptation whatever to deviate from the strictest impartiality in the investigation of the meaning of scriptural statements,—no reason why they should pertinaciously contend for the validity of every atom of proof that has ever been adduced in support of it, or hesitate about abandoning any argument that cannot be shown to stand the test of a searching application of all the sound principles both of criticism and exegesis.

The doctrine of the divinity of Christ is a peculiarly interesting topic of investigation, both from the intrinsic importance of the subject, and its intimate connection with the whole scheme of revealed truth, and from the way and manner in which the investigation has been, and of course must be, conducted. There is perhaps no doctrine of Scripture which has called forth a larger amount of discussion,—the whole evidence about which has been more thoroughly sifted; there is none which has been more vigorously and perseveringly attacked,—none which has been more triumphantly defended and more conclusively established. Viewed simply as a subject of theological discussion, apart from its practical importance, this doctrine perhaps presents fully as much to interest and attract as any other that has been made a subject of controversy.

The evidence bearing upon it extends nearly over the whole Bible,—the Old Testament as well as the New; for a great deal of evidence has been produced from the Old Testament, that the Messiah promised to the fathers was a possessor of the divine nature, of divine perfections and prerogatives, and fully entitled to have applied to Him the incommunicable name of Jehovah. A great deal of learning and ability have been brought to bear upon the discussion of this question, both in establishing the truth, and in labouring to

undermine and overthrow it. All the resources of minute criticism have been applied to the subject, and to everything that seemed to bear upon it; materials of all different kinds, and from all various sources, have been heaped up in the investigation of it. The discussion thus presents a sort of compendium of the whole science and art of biblical criticism, in the widest sense of the word,—the settling of the true text, in some important passages, by an examination of various readings,—the philological investigation of the true meaning of a considerable number of important words,—the application of grammatical and exegetical principles and rules to a great number of phrases, clauses, and sentences. All this is comprehended in a full discussion of the subject of our Lord's proper divinity. And there is perhaps no one doctrine to the disproof or overthrow of which materials of these different kinds, and from these various sources, have been more skilfully and perseveringly applied,—none in regard to which, by a better, and sounder, and more effective application of the same materials, a more certain and decisive victory has been gained for the cause of truth. Every point has been contested, and contested with some skill and vigour; but this has only made the establishment of the truth, in the ultimate result, the more palpable and the more undoubted.

For these reasons I have always been inclined to think, in opposition to some views put forth by Dr. Chalmers,<sup>24</sup> that it is very desirable that a pretty full investigation of the subject of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ should come in at an early period in the study of the system of Christian theology. The study of this subject leads to the consideration and application of many important principles, both of a more general and comprehensive, and of a more minute and special kind, intimately connected with the investigation of divine truth, and the critical interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, and is thus fitted to teach important lessons that bear upon the whole field of theological discussion. To the humble and honest reader of God's word, the divinity of the Saviour seems to be very plainly and fully taught there; and when men are first brought into contact with Socinian perversions, they are apt, if they have not previously

studied the subject critically, to be startled with the plausibility attaching to some of their attempts to involve the evidences of the doctrine, or at least the precise meaning of some particular passages of Scripture, in doubt and uncertainty. On this account, it is all the more satisfactory in itself, and all the better fitted to suggest useful lessons of general application, to find, as the result of a more thorough and searching investigation, and of the most stringent application of the recognised rules of critical inquiry, that our first and most natural impressions of the meaning and import of scriptural statements are fully confirmed and conclusively established,—that the criticism, the learning, and the ingenuity of opponents are met and overborne, on the part of the advocates of the truth, by all these qualities in a much superior degree,—and thus to be brought deliberately and rationally to the conclusion, that what has been in all ages the faith of the humbly devout, though not learned and critical, readers of God's word, is indeed its true meaning, and can be satisfactorily established in all its parts by the highest learning, and the most accomplished and searching criticism.

One leading consideration that ought to be kept in view in the investigation of the scriptural evidence bearing on this subject is this,—that the object to be aimed at is to find out, from an examination of the whole word of God, what it is that He wished and intended us to believe regarding it. The Scriptures are manifestly not constructed upon the principle of giving us, in formal general statements, or in single passages, the substance of what they are designed to teach us upon any particular topic. It was manifestly God's design, in the construction of His word, that men, in using it for the purpose which it was intended to serve, should be called upon to exercise diligence and research in collecting and combining the scattered rays of light, possessed of different degrees of intensity, that bear upon any particular point, and in estimating from the combination of the whole the real character, complexion, and position of the object presented. This consideration is fitted to impress upon our minds the unreasonableness and unfairness of selecting a few particular statements,—laying them down as a basis or foundation,—and then

setting ourselves to pervert or explain away all other statements which, at first view, it may not seem very easy to. reconcile with those we may have thought proper to select as our favourites, in place of investigating all fairly and impartially,—ascertaining the combined result of all that the Bible has stated or indicated upon the subject,—and then dealing with this result in one or other of the only two ways which can be regarded as in any sense rational in such a case, namely, either submitting implicitly to the doctrine as revealed by God, or else rejecting wholly the revelation which contains it.

In accordance with this view, it is proper to give prominence to this general consideration, which ought ever to be remembered and applied,—namely, that Socinian and Arian doctrines, in regard to the Trinity and the person of Christ, are founded only upon a partial selection of scriptural statements, to the neglect and disregard, or rather, what is much worse, to the perversion and distortion, of many others; while the orthodox doctrine exhibits accurately and fully the combined result of all, giving to every class of scriptural statements its true and fair meaning and its right place; and by this very quality or circumstance is proved to be the true key for interpreting Scripture, and solving all the difficulties that may occur in the investigation of its various statements. That Jesus Christ is a man, a true and real man,—that He had a true body, and a reasonable or rational soul,—is a doctrine clearly taught in Scripture, because it is manifestly implied in, and absolutely indispensable to, a fair and honest interpretation of many of its statements; and it is accordingly held by all who call themselves Christians, by Trinitarians as well as by Socinians and Arians. But there are also passages which, when fairly interpreted, afford satisfactory evidence that Jesus Christ existed, and was in heaven, before He was born at Bethlehem, and before the creation of the world; and that in this state of pre-existence He possessed a superhuman nature,—a nature higher and more exalted than that in which He presented Himself to men while upon earth. Now all such statements the Socinians refuse to take into account, in forming their conceptions or in settling their general doctrines about Christ; and they labour to vindicate their

conduct in doing so, by exerting their utmost ingenuity in distorting and perverting their meaning, in order to make out some plausible grounds for alleging that they convey no such ideas as have been commonly deduced from them, and as they seem very evidently fitted to convey.

The Arians agree with us in holding, in opposition to the Socinians, that those passages do prove the pre-existence and superhuman dignity of Christ; and accordingly they admit these additional ideas—additional, I mean, to that of His mere humanity—into their doctrine concerning Him. But here they stop; and this is stopping short—far short—of the whole of what Scripture teaches us regarding Him, for it still leaves Him in the class of creatures. And we assert, and undertake to prove, that, in addition to those passages which prove His pre-existence and superhuman dignity,—and which perhaps, taken by themselves, prove nothing more,—there are many passages which cannot be fairly and impartially investigated according to the strictest principles of criticism, without constraining men to believe that they were intended to represent to us Christ as possessed of true and proper divinity,—a possessor of the one divine nature, with all divine perfections and prerogatives. Of course, upon this ground, we insist that the Arian account of Christ, though fuller and more accurate than the Socinian, is yet fundamentally defective; and we maintain that, in order to express and embody the substance of all that Scripture teaches us concerning Him, we must hold that He existed not merely before the creation of the world, but from eternity,—not only in the possession of a superhuman, but of the one properly divine nature. This doctrine, and this alone, comes up to the full import of what is taught or indicated in Scripture concerning Him. When any part of it is left out or denied, then there are some scriptural statements—more or less few, of course, according to the extent of the omission or negation—to which torture must be applied, in order to show that they do not express the ideas which they seem plainly fitted and intended to convey; whereas, when this great doctrine is admitted in all its extent, the whole demands of Scripture are satisfied,—no distortion or perversion is required,—and



there is the full satisfaction of having investigated fairly and honestly everything that God has said to us upon the subject, and of having implicitly submitted our understandings to His authority. What a mass of confusion and inconsistency the Bible presents,—how thoroughly unfitted is it to be the standard or directory of our faith,—if it be indeed true that Christ was a mere man, and that the Bible was intended to teach us this; whereas, if we admit and apply the orthodox doctrine that He was God and man in one person, then order and consistency at once appear,—difficulties are solved, otherwise insoluble,—apparent contradictions are removed,—and the whole body of the scriptural statements concerning Him are seen to be in entire harmony with each other, and to concur, all without force or straining, in forming one consistent and harmonious whole.

The same general consideration may be applied to other points comprehended in the doctrine commonly received upon this subject. Take, for instance, the personality of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be disputed that there are passages of Scripture which speak of the Spirit of God, and which contain, taken by themselves, no sufficient evidence of distinct personality. But if men rest here, and upon this ground deny that the Spirit is a distinct person in the Godhead, then they are refusing to take into account, and to receive in their fair and legitimate import, other passages in which the idea of distinct personality is clearly indicated, and which cannot, without great and unwarrantable straining, be interpreted so as to exclude or omit it. The same principle applies to the denial of Christ's eternal Sonship by those who admit His true and proper divinity. By admitting His true and proper divinity, they interpret rightly a large number of the scriptural statements regarding Him, which Socinians and Arians distort and pervert; and they receive what must be admitted to be most essential and fundamental truth in the scriptural views of Christ. But still, as we believe, they come short of what Scripture teaches concerning Him, by refusing to admit that, even as God, He is the Son of the Father,—that there existed from eternity a relation between the first and second persons of the Godhead, analogous in some respects to that subsisting between a father and a son among

men; and we are persuaded that there are passages in Scripture to which a considerable amount of straining must be applied in order to exclude this idea.

The Scripture, however, was evidently constructed upon the principle not only of requiring, and thereby testing, men's diligence and impartiality in collecting and examining, in taking into account and applying, the whole of the materials which it furnishes, for regulating our judgment upon any particular point; but likewise upon the principle of requiring, and thereby testing, their real candour and love of truth, by providing only reasonable and satisfactory, and not overwhelming, evidence of the doctrines it was designed to teach. The peculiar doctrines of Christianity are not set forth in Scripture in such a way as to constrain the immediate assent of all who read its words, and are in some sense capable of understanding them; they are not there set forth in such a way as at once to preclude all difference of opinion and all cavilling, or to bid defiance to all attempts at distorting and perverting its statements. In short, startling as the position may at first sight appear, there is not one of the peculiar doctrines of the Christian system which is set forth in Scripture with such an amount of explicitness, and with such overwhelming evidence, as it was abstractly possible to have given to the statement and the proof of it, or in such a way as to deprive men who are averse to the reception of its doctrines, of all plausible pretences for explaining away and perverting its statements, even while admitting their divine authority. No sane man ever doubted that the Nicene Creed and the Westminster Confession teach, and were intended to teach, by those who framed them, the true and proper divinity of the Son. But many men, to whom we cannot deny the possession of mental sanity, while we cannot but regard them as labouring under some ruinously perverting influences, have denied that the Scripture teaches this doctrine; they have argued strenuously in support of this denial, and have been able to produce some considerations in favour of their views, which are not altogether destitute of plausibility.

The explanation of this is, that Scripture was constructed upon the principle of testing our candour and love of truth, by leaving some opening for men who had little or no candour or love of truth rejecting the doctrines it was designed to teach, without either formally denying its authority, or openly renouncing all claim to sense or rationality, by advocating views in support of which nothing that was possessed even of plausibility could be alleged. The doctrine of the divinity of the Son, in common with all the other peculiar doctrines of the Christian system, is set forth in Scripture with a force of evidence amply sufficient to satisfy every candid man—every man who really desires to know the truth, to know what God has revealed regarding it—with such evidence as that the rejection of it, of itself, proves the existence and operation of a sinful state of mind, of a hatred of truth, and imposes a fearful responsibility; but not with such evidence as at once to secure and compel the assent of all who look at it, and to cut off the possibility of the assignation of some plausible grounds for rejecting it when men are led, by their dislike of the doctrine, and what it implies, to reject it. God is fully warranted in requiring us to believe whatever He has revealed, and accompanied with sufficient evidence of its truth, and to punish us for refusing our assent in these circumstances; and it is in accordance with the general principles of His moral administration, to test or try men by giving them evidence of what He wishes and requires them to believe, that is amply sufficient, without being necessarily overwhelming,—that shall certainly satisfy all who examine it with candour and a real desire to know the truth,—and that may leave in ignorance and error those who do not bring these qualities to the investigation.

The Socinians would demand for the proof of Christ's divinity a kind and amount of evidence that is altogether unreasonable. We formerly had occasion, in considering the general principles on which Socinians proceed in the interpretation of Scripture, to expose the unreasonableness of their demand, that we must show that the scriptural statements which we produce in support of our doctrines, not only may, but must, bear the meaning we ascribe to them, and

cannot possibly admit of any other. We acknowledge, indeed, that it is not enough for us to show that Scripture statements may bear the meaning we attach to them; and we contend that there are statements about Christ of which it might be fairly said that they must bear our sense, and cannot possibly—that is, consistently with the principles of sound criticism and the dictates of common sense—admit of any other. But we do not acknowledge that the establishment of this second position is indispensable to making out our case, for there is a medium between the two extremes,—of proving merely, on the one hand, that certain statements may possibly admit of the meaning we ascribe to them; and, on the other hand, proving that they cannot possibly admit of any other meaning. This intermediate position is this,—that upon a fair examination of the statements, and an impartial application to them of the recognised principles and rules of interpretation, we have sufficient materials for satisfying ourselves, and for convincing others, that this, and not anything different from it, is their true meaning,—the meaning which it is right and proper, if we would act uprightly and impartially, to ascribe to them. This is enough. This should satisfy reasonable and candid men. This fully warrants us to maintain, as it affords us sufficient materials to prove, that this is the meaning which they were intended to bear,—that these are the ideas which they were intended to convey to us. It must of course be assumed, in all such investigations, that the one object to be aimed at is to ascertain the true meaning of Scripture,—the meaning which the words bear, and were intended to bear. When this is once ascertained, we have what we are bound to regard as the doctrine which the Author of Scripture wished, intended, and expected us to adopt upon His authority. It must further be assumed that the words were intended to convey to us the meaning which they are fitted to convey; so that the inquiry is virtually limited to this: What is the meaning which these words, in themselves and in their connection, are fitted to convey to us, when fairly and impartially investigated by the recognised rules of philology, grammar, and criticism, as they apply to this matter?

The results brought out in this way we are bound to receive as exhibiting the true, real, and intended meaning of Scripture, and to deal with them accordingly. Cases may occur in which we may not be able to reach any very certain conclusion as to the true meaning of a particular statement,—in which, of several senses that may be suggested, we may, after examining the matter, be at a loss to decide which is the true meaning,—that is, we may not be able to attain to more than probability upon the point. There are such statements in Scripture, and of course they must be dealt with honestly, according to their true character, and the real evidence of the case, as it fairly applies to them. But these statements are very few, and comparatively unimportant. We can, in general, in the fair, diligent, and persevering use of appropriate materials, attain to a clear conviction as to what the true meaning of scriptural statements is,—what is the sense which they are fitted, and of course intended, to convey to us; and this we should regard as settling the question, and satisfying our judgment, even though there may remain some ground for cavilling,—something not altogether destitute of plausibility that might be alleged in favour of the possibility of their bearing a different sense. In regard to the Trinity and the divinity of Christ, the evidence is full, complete, and conclusive, that the Scriptures are fitted to teach us these doctrines,—to convey to us, to impress upon us, the ideas that constitute them; and of course that the Author of the Scriptures intended and expected, nay, demands at our peril, that we shall believe upon His authority, that "in the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity,—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and that God the Son became man."

We conclude with a few remarks upon the importance of this doctrine, and the responsibility connected with the admission or denial of it. When we reflect upon the fulness and clearness with which the divinity of Christ—which, as we formerly explained, may be said practically to carry with it the whole doctrine of the Trinity—is revealed to us in Scripture, we cannot regard those who refuse to receive it in any other light than as men who have determined that

they will not submit their understandings to the revelation which God has given us. They are refusing to receive the record which He has given us concerning Himself and concerning His Son, in its substance and fundamental features; and they are doing so under the influence of motives and tendencies which manifestly imply determined rebellion against God's authority, and which would effectually lead them to reject any revelation He might give that did not harmonize with their fancies and inclinations. It is evident from the nature of the case, and from the statements of Scripture, that the doctrines of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ are of essential and fundamental importance in the Christian scheme. Whether we view the gospel theoretically, as a system of doctrines intended to enlighten our understandings in the knowledge of God and of divine things, or more practically, as intended to bear upon the formation of the character and the regulation of the motives of men, the admission or denial of the doctrine of three distinct persons in the unity of the Godhead, and of the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, must evidently affect fundamentally its whole character and influence. To the second person in the Godhead is assigned the work of satisfying divine justice, and of reconciling us to God; and to the third person is assigned the work of renewing our moral natures, and preparing us for the enjoyment of happiness. And God has made our enjoyment of the blessings of salvation dependent upon our knowing something of the nature of these blessings, and of the way and manner in which they have been procured and are bestowed.

If the Son and the Holy Ghost are not truly divine,—partakers of the one divine nature,—we are guilty of idolatry in bestowing upon them divine honours; and if they are divine, we are, in refusing to pay them divine honours, robbing God of what is due to Him, and of what He is demanding of us. Christ has Himself uttered this most solemn and impressive declaration, "that God hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that (in order that, or with a view to secure that) all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father;" where we are plainly enjoined to give the same honour to the Son as

to the Father, and where the injunction is sanctioned by an express assertion of the certainty of its bearing upon the proceedings of the day of judgment, and the decision then to be pronounced upon our eternal destinies. What, indeed, is Christianity without a divine Saviour? In what essential respect does it differ, if Christ was a mere man, or even a creature, from Mahommedanism, or from the mere light of nature? How can two systems of doctrine, or two provisions for accomplishing any moral object, have the same influence and result, which are, and must be, so different, so opposite in their fundamental views and arrangements, as the doctrines maintained by the advocates and opponents of Christ's proper Godhead. Accordingly, it has held universally, that according as men admitted or denied the divinity of Christ, have their whole notions about the gospel method of salvation been affected. On the divinity of Christ are evidently suspended the doctrine of atonement, or satisfaction for sin, and the whole method of justification; in short, everything that bears most vitally upon men's eternal welfare. Our Saviour Himself has expressly declared, "It is eternal life to know Thee (addressing His Father), the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent,"[25](#)—a statement which does not prove, as anti-Trinitarians allege, that the Father is the only true God, to the exclusion of the Son, because this is not necessarily involved in it, and because to interpret it in this way would make Scripture contradict itself, as in another passage it expressly calls Jesus Christ the true God and eternal life,[26](#) and affords us most abundant materials for believing that He is so; but which does prove that a knowledge of Jesus Christ must consist in the perception, the maintenance, and the application of the real views regarding Him, which are actually taught in the sacred Scriptures,—in knowing Him as He is there revealed,—and in cherishing towards Him all those feelings, and discharging towards Him all those duties, which the scriptural representations of His nature and person are fitted to produce or to impose. This is eternal life; and the men who, having in their hands the record which God has given concerning His Son, refuse to honour Him, even as they honour the Father,—to pay Him divine honour, as being a possessor of the divine nature,—and to

confide in Him, as a divine and almighty Saviour,—must be regarded as judging themselves unworthy of this eternal life, as deliberately casting it away from them.

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Endnotes:

1. Mosheim's Church History, last section of sixteenth century.
2. "Non est quod expectes, dum ad illa, quæ objicis, quæstionum portenta respondeam. Si tibi per aereas illas speculationes volitare libet, sine me, quæso, humilem Christi discipulum ea meditari, quæ ad fidei meæ edificationem faciunt. Ac ego quidem silentio meo id quod cupio consequar, ne tu mihi posthac sis molestus. Liberale vero ingenium, quod tibi Dominus contulit, non modo in rebus nihili frustra occupari, ed exitialibus figmentis corrumpi vehementer dolet. Quod pridem testatus sum, serio iterum moneo: nisi hunc quærendi prurimum mature corrigas, metuendum esse, ne tibi gravia tormenta accersas. Ego si indulgentiæ specie vitium, quod maxime noxium esse judico, alerem, in te essem perfidus et crudelis. Itaque paululum nunc mea asperitate offendi malo, quam dulcibus curiositatis illecebris male captum non retrahi. Erit tempus, ut spero, cum te ita violenter expergefatum fuisse gaudebis." A letter without date, but probably written in December 1551 or January 1552; See Vita F. Socini, prefixed to first edition of Bib. Frat. Polon. Przypcovius, the author of this Life of Faustus Socinus, professes to give this extract from Calvin's MS., which he had before him. There are similar indications of his character in Calvin's letters to him, published in his *Epistolæ* (*Opera*, tom. ix. pp. 51, 57, 197). This letter is given in an English translation, in Bonnet's, edition of the Letters of Calvin, vol. ii. p. 315. Bonnet says that it is "published here for the first time." He professes to give it from a Latin copy in the Library of Geneva.
3. Published in 1572.
4. Zanchii *Opera*, tom. i. Genev. 1619.



5. Belsham's *Calm Inquiry*, Introd. pp. 4, 5; quoted and animadverted on in Abp. Magee's *Supplement to the Remarks on the Unitarian Version of the New Testament—Works*, vol. ii. p. 108.
6. Dr. J. P. Smith's *Scripture Testimony*, Book i., especially last chapter, in reply to Belsham.
7. Dr. Owen, Pref. to *Vindiciæ Evangelicæ*.
8. Vide Mosheim, Cent. xvi. chap. iv. sec. xiv. *Cloppenburgii Compendiolum Socinianismi confutatum*, c. vi. quoted also by Witsius, *De Œcon. Fœd. lib. ii. c. iv. sec. xii.* As to the authorship of this Compend, see *Sandii Bibliotheca Antitrinitariorum*, p. 91; *Buddæi Isagoge*, tom. i. p. 380, ed. 1730; Wallace's *Antitrinitarian Biography*, vol. ii. pp. 400 and 405.
9. See Fuller's *Calvinistic and Socinian Systems Examined and Compared as to their Moral Tendency*.
10. *Racov. Cat. c. viii. Ed. 1680.*
11. *Racov. Cat. sec. viii. pp. 179, 180.*
12. Wakefield held the doctrine of annihilation; while Priestly, after hesitating long between the doctrines of annihilation and universal restitution, finally adopted the latter. Estlin's *Discourses on the Universal Restitution*, pp. 69-72. Dr Lant Carpenter's *Examination of Magee's Charges against Unitarians and Unitarianism*, 1820, c. iii. pp. 40-44.
13. *Sec. vi. p. 92.*
14. *Magee's Works*, vol. i. p. 59.
15. *Magee*, vol. ii. p. 32; *Belsham, Calm Inquiry*, pp. 325, 345.
16. *Letter v. pp. 134-5.*
17. *Calm Inquiry*, p. 529.
18. Vide Knapp's *Lectures on Christian Theology*, p. 142.
19. *Calm Inquiry*, p. 504.
20. *P. 516.*
21. *Belsham's Calm Inquiry*, p. 51.
22. This pamphlet is discussed in the Preface to *Stillingfleet's Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*.
23. *Scripture Testimony*, vol. i. pp. 483, 484; *Hopkins' Primitive Creed Examined and Explained*, pp. 321-337.

24. Preface to his Collected Works, vol. i. pp. iv., etc. -EDRS.
25. John xvii. 3.
26. 1 John v. 20.

# The Arminian Controversy

Source: Chapter 25 in the The Works of William Cunningham, D.D. Vol. 3; Historical Theology, Vol 2. pages 383-525.

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## Sec. 1. Arminius and the Arminians.

We have had occasion to show that the fundamental principles of Calvinism, with respect to the purposes or decrees, and the providence or proceedings, of God, were believed and maintained by Luther and Zwingle, as well as by Calvin. The opposite view of Zwingle's opinion—though given both by Mosheim and Milner—is quite destitute of foundation; and its inaccuracy has been demonstrated by Scott, in his excellent continuation of Milner. Luther and Melancthon had repeatedly asserted God's fore-ordaining whatever comes to pass, and His executing His decrees in providence, in stronger terms than ever Calvin used. There is no evidence that Luther changed his opinion upon this subject. There is evidence that Melancthon's underwent a considerable modification, though to what extent it is not easy to determine, as in his later works he seems to have written upon these subjects with something very like studied ambiguity; while in his letters to Calvin he continue to make a sort of profession of agreeing with him. The Reformers were substantially of one mind, not only in regard to what are sometimes spoken of in a somewhat vague and general way as the fundamental principles of evangelical doctrine, but also in regard to what are called the peculiarities of Calvinism; though there were some differences in their mode of stating and explaining them, arising from their different mental temperaments and tendencies, and from the degrees in the extent of their knowledge and the fulness of their comprehension of the scheme of divine truth. The principal opponent of Calvinistic doctrines, while Calvin lived, was Castello, who had no great weight as a theologian. The Lutheran churches,

after the death of Melancthon, generally abandoned Calvin's doctrine in regard to the divine decrees, and seem to have been somewhat tempted to this course, by their singularly bitter animosity against all who refused to receive their doctrine about the corporal presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The Socinians rejected the whole system of theology which had been generally taught by the Reformers; and Socinus published, in 1578, Castellio's Dialogue on Predestination, Election, Free Will, etc., under the fictitious name of Felix Turpio Urbevitanus.<sup>1</sup> This work seems to have had an influence in leading some of the ministers of the Reformed churches to entertain laxer views upon some doctrinal questions.

The effects of this first appeared in the Reformed Church of the Netherlands.<sup>2</sup> The Reformation had been introduced into that country, partly by Lutherans from Germany, and partly by Calvinists from France. Calvinistic principles, however, prevailed among them; and the Belgic Confession, which agrees with almost all the confessions of the Reformed churches in teaching Calvinistic doctrines, had, along with the Palatine or Heidelberg Catechism, been, from about the year 1570, invested with public authority in that church. It was in this country that the first important public movement against Calvinism took place in the Reformed churches, and it may be dated from the appointment of Arminius to the chair of theology at Leyden in 1603. An attempt, indeed, had been made to introduce anti-Calvinistic views into the Church of England a few years before this; but it was checked by the interference of the leading ecclesiastical authorities, headed by Whitgift, who was at that time Archbishop of Canterbury. And it was only as the result of the labour of Arminius and his followers, and through the patronage of the Church of England falling into the hands of men who had adopted their views, that, at a later period, Arminianism was introduced into that church. Before his appointment to the chair of theology, Arminius—whose original name was Van Harmen—who had studied theology at Geneva under Beza, and has been for some years pastor of a church in Amsterdam, seems have adopted, even then, most of the doctrinal views which have since been generally

associated with his name, though he was only suspected of heterodoxy, or of holding views inconsistent with the doctrine of the Reformed churches, and of the Belgic Confession, and had not yet afforded any public or tangible proofs of his deviation from sound doctrine. Although he seems, in general, even after he was settled as Professor of Theology at Leyden, to have proceeded in the promulgation of his opinions with a degree of caution and reserve scarcely consistent with candour and integrity, yet it soon became evident and well known that he had embraced, and was inculcating, opinions inconsistent with those which were generally professed in the Reformed churches. This led to much contention between him and his colleague, Gomarus, who was a learned and zealous defender of Calvinism. The Church of the United Provinces soon became involved in a controversy upon this subject, which got entangled also with some political movements. Arminius was with some difficulty prevailed upon, in 1608, to make a public declaration of his sentiments on the points in regard to which he was suspected of error. He died in 1609. After his death, Episcopius was considered the head of the party; and he ultimately deviated much further from the path of sound doctrine than Arminius had done.

The followers of Arminius, in 1610, presented a remonstrance to the civil authorities of the United Provinces, stating, under five heads or articles, the opinions they had adopted, asking a revision or correction of the symbolical books of the church,—the Belgic Confession, and the Palatine or Heidelberg Catechism,—and demanding full toleration for the profession of their views. This fact procured for them the designation of the Remonstrants, the name by which they are most commonly described in the theological writings of the seventeenth century; while their opponents, from the answer they gave to this paper, are often called Contraremonstrants. A conference was held between the parties, at the Hague, in 1611,—usually spoken of as the *Collatio Hagiensis*, —at which the leading points in dispute were fully discussed, but without any approach being made towards an agreement. The orthodox party were very anxious to procure a meeting of a national synod, which might take

up the subjects controverted, and give a decision upon them. The Arminians laboured to prevent this, and had influence enough with the civil authorities to succeed in this object for several years. At length, in November 1618, a national synod was held at Dort, at which were present also representatives or delegates from almost all the Reformed churches of Europe, including even the Church of England. This synod sat for about six months,—unanimously condemned the doctrinal views of the Remonstrants,—and adopted a body of canons upon those points at issue which have been ever since regarded as one of the most valuable and authoritative expositions of Calvinistic theology. By the sentence of the synod, the Remonstrants were deposed from their ecclesiastical offices; and by the civil authorities they were suppressed and exiled. But in a few years—in 1626—they were allowed to return to their country were tolerated in the performance of public worship, and permitted to establish a theological seminary at Amsterdam. This seminary has been adorned by men of distinguished talents and learning, especially Episcopius, Curcellæus, Limborch, Le Clerc and Wetstein,—whose labours and writings contributed, to no small extent, to diffuse Arminianism among the Reformed churches.

These are the leading facts connected with the origin and progress of Arminianism, and the reception it met with in the Reformed churches;—facts of which, from their important bearing upon the history of theology, it is desirable to possess a competent knowledge.

As there was nothing new in substance in the Calvinism of Calvin, so there was nothing new in the Arminianism of Arminius;— facts, however, which do not in the least detract from the merits of Calvin as a most powerful promoter of scriptural truth or from the demerits of Arminius as an influential disseminator of anti-scriptural error. The doctrines of Arminius can be traced back as far as the time of Clemens Alexandrinus, and seem to have been held by many of the fathers of the third and fourth centuries, having been diffused in the church through the corrupting influence of pagan philosophy. Pelagius and his followers, in the fifth century, were as decidedly

opposed to Calvinism as Arminius was, though they deviated much further from sound doctrine than he did. The system of theology which has generally prevailed in the Church of Rome was substantially very much the same as that taught by Arminius, with this difference in favour of the Church of Rome, that the Council of Trent at least left the Romanists at liberty to profess, if they chose, a larger amount of scriptural truth, upon some important points than the Arminian creed, even in its most evangelical form, admits of,—a truth strikingly confirmed by the fact, that every Arminian would have rejected the five propositions of Jansenius, which formed the ground of the Jansenistic controversy, and would have concurred in the condemnation which the Pope, through the influence of the Jesuits, pronounced upon them.

The more evangelical Arminians, such as the Wesleyan Methodists, are at great pains to show that the views of Arminius himself have been much misunderstood and misrepresented,—that his reputation has been greatly injured by the much wider deviations from sound doctrine which some of his followers introduced, and which have been generally ranked under the head of Arminianism. They allege that Arminius himself agreed with all the leading doctrines of the Reformers, except what they are fond of calling the peculiarities of Calvinism. There is undoubtedly a good deal of truth in this statement, as a matter of fact. The opinions of Arminius himself seem to have been almost precisely the same as those held by Mr. Wesley, and still generally professed by his followers, except that Arminius does not seem to have ever seen his way to so explicit a denial of the doctrine of perseverance, or to so explicit a maintenance of the possibility of attaining perfection in this life, as Wesley did; and it is true, that much of what is often classed under the general name of Arminianism contains a much larger amount of error, and a much smaller amount of truth, than the writings of Arminius and Wesley exhibit. Arminius himself, as compared with his successors, seems to have held, in the main, scriptural views of the depravity of human nature,—and the necessity, because of men's depravity, of a supernatural work of grace to effect their renovation

and sanctification,— and this is the chief point in which Arminianism, in its more evangelical form, differs from the more Pelagian representations of Christian doctrine which are often classed under the same designation. The difference is certainly not unimportant, and it ought to be admitted and recognised wherever it exists. But the history of this subject seems to show that, whenever men abandon the principles of Calvinism, there is a powerful tendency leading them downwards into the depths of Pelagianism. Arminius himself does not seem—so far as his views were ever fully developed—to have gone further in deviating from scriptural truth than to deny the Calvinistic doctrines of election, particular redemption, efficacious and irresistible grace in conversion, and to doubt, if not to deny, the perseverance of the saints. But his followers, and particularly Episcopius and Curcellseus, very soon introduced further corruptions of scriptural truth, especially in regard to original sin, the work of the Spirit, and justification; and made near approaches, upon these and kindred topics, to Pelagian or Socinian views. And a large proportion of those theologians who have been willing to call themselves Arminians, have manifested a similar leaning,—have exhibited a similar result.

It is quite common, among the writers of the seventeenth century, to distinguish between the original Remonstrants—such as Arminius and those who adhered to his views, and who differed from the doctrines of the Reformed churches only in the five articles or the five points, as they are commonly called—and those who deviated much further from scriptural truth. The latter class they were accustomed to call Pelagianizing or Socinianizing Remonstrants; and the followers of Arminius very soon promulgated views that fully warranted these appellations,—views which tended to exclude or explain away almost everything that was peculiar and fundamental in the Christian scheme ; and to reduce Christianity to a mere system of natural religion, with only a fuller revelation of the divine will as to the duties and destinies of man. The followers of Arminius very soon began to corrupt or deny the doctrines of original sin,—of the grace of the Spirit in regeneration and conversion,—of justification through



Christ's righteousness and merits. They corrupted, as we have seen, the doctrine of the atonement,—that is, the substitution and satisfaction of Christ; and some of them went so far towards Socinianism, as at least to talk very lightly of the importance, and very doubtfully of the validity of the evidence, of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Something of this sort, though varying considerably in degree, has been exhibited by most writers who have passed under the designation of Arminians, except the Wesleyan Methodists; and it will be a new and unexampled thing in the history of the church, if that important and influential body should continue long at the position they have hitherto occupied in the scale of orthodoxy,—that is, without exhibiting a tendency to imbibe either more truth or more error,—to lean more to the side either of Calvinism or Pelagianism. Pelagian Arminianism is more consistent with itself than Arminianism in its more evangelical forms; and there is a strong tendency in systems of doctrine to develop their true nature and bearings fully and consistently. Socinianism, indeed, is more consistent than either of them.

The Pelagians of the fifth century did not deny formally the divinity and the atonement of our Saviour, but they omitted them,—left them out in their scheme of theology to all practical intents and purposes,—and virtually represented men as quite able to save themselves. The Socinians gave consistency to the scheme, by formally denying what the Pelagians had practically set aside or left out. Many of those who, in modern times, have passed under the name of Arminians, have followed the Pelagians in this important particular, and while distinguished from the Socinians by holding in words—or rather, by not denying—the doctrines of the divinity and atonement of Christ, have practically represented Christianity, in its general bearing and tendency, very much as if these doctrines formed no part of revelation; and all who are Arminians in any sense—all who reject Calvinism—may be proved to come short in giving to the person and the work of Christ that place and influence which the Scriptures assign to them. The Papists have always held the doctrines of the divinity and atonement of Christ; and though they have contrived to

neutralize and pervert their legitimate influence by a somewhat more roundabout process, they have not, in general, so entirely omitted them, or left them out, as the Pelagians and many Arminians I have done. This process of omission or failing to carry out these doctrines in their full bearings and applications upon the way of salvation, and the scheme of revealed truth, has of course been exhibited by different writers and sections of the church, passing under the general designation of Arminian, in very different degrees. But, notwithstanding all this diversity, it is not very difficult to point out what may fairly enough be described as the fundamental characteristic principle of Arminianism,—that which Arminianism either is, or has a strong and constant tendency to become; and this is,—that it is a scheme for dividing or partitioning the salvation of sinners between God and sinners themselves, instead of ascribing it wholly, as the Bible does, to the sovereign grace of God,—the perfect and all-sufficient work of Christ,—and the efficacious and omnipotent operation of the Spirit. Stapfer, in his *Theologia Polemica*, states the *prwton yeudoj*, or originating false principle of the Arminians, in this way: "Quod homini tribuunt vires naturales obediendi Evangelio, ut si non cum Pelagianis saltern cum semi-Pelagianis faciant. Hoc est, si non integras vires statuunt, quales in statu integritatis fuerunt, tamen contendunt, illas licet ægras, ad gratiam oblatam tamen recipiendam sufficientes esse."<sup>3</sup> The encroachment they make upon the grace of God in the salvation of sinners varies, of course, according to the extent to which they carry out their views, especially in regard to men's natural depravity, and the nature and necessity of the work of the Spirit in regeneration and conversion; but Arminianism, in any form, can be shown to involve the ascription to men themselves,—more directly or more remotely,—of a place and influence in effecting their own salvation, which the Bible denies to them and ascribes to God.

While this can be shown to be involved in, or fairly deducible from, Arminianism in every form, it makes a very material difference in the state of the case, and it should materially affect our judgment of the parties, according as this fundamental characteristic principle is

brought out and developed with more or less fulness. This distinction has always been recognised and acted upon by the most able and zealous opponents of Arminianism. It may be proper to give a specimen of this. Ames, or Amesius,—whose writings upon the Popish controversy, in reply to Bellarmine, cannot be spoken of except in the very highest terms of commendation,—has also written several very able works against the Arminians. He was present at the Synod of Dort, though not a member of it,—was much consulted in drawing up its canons,—thoroughly versant in the whole theology of the subject,—and a most zealous and uncompromising advocate of Calvinism. In his work, *De Conscientia*, under the head *De Hæresi*, he put this question, *An Remonstrantes sint hæretici?* And the answer he gives is this: "*Remonstrantium sententia, prout a vulgo ipsis faventium recipitur, non est proprie hæresis, sed periculosus error in fide, ad hæresin tendens. Prout vero a quibusdam eorura defenditur, est hæresis Pelagiana: quia gratiæ internæ operationem efficacem necessariam esse negant ad conversionem, et fidem ingerendam.*"<sup>4</sup> Ames, then, thought that Arminianism, in its more mitigated form, was not to be reckoned a heresy, but only a dangerous error in doctrine, tending to heresy; and that it should be stigmatized as a heresy, only when it was carried out so far as to deny the necessity of an internal work of supernatural grace to conversion and the production of faith. And the general idea thus indicated and maintained should certainly be applied, if we would form anything like a fair and candid estimate of the different types of doctrine, more or less Pelagian, which have passed under the general name of Arminianism.

## Sec. 2. Synod of Dort.

The Synod of Dort marks one of the most important eras in the history of Christian theology; and it is important to possess some acquaintance with the theological discussions which gave occasion to it,—with the decisions it pronounced upon them,—and the discussions to which its decisions gave rise. No synod or council was ever held in the church, whose decisions, all things considered, are

entitled to more deference and respect. The great doctrines of the word of God had been fully brought out, in the preceding century, by the labours of the Reformers; and, under the guidance of the Spirit which accompanied them, they had been unanswerably defended against the Romanists, and had been cordially embraced by almost all the churches which had thrown off antichristian bondage. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, some men appeared in different churches, who, confident in their own powers, and not much disposed to submit implicitly to the plain teaching of the word of God, were greatly disposed to speculate upon divine things. They subjected the system of doctrines, which had been generally received by the Reformers, to a pretty searching scrutiny, and imagined that they had discovered some important errors, the removal of which tended, as they thought, to make the scheme of scriptural doctrine more rational, and better fitted to command the assent of intelligent men, and to promote the interests of practical religion. They were men abundantly fitted, by their talents and acquirements, to give to these views, and to the grounds on which they rested, every fair advantage. After these alleged improvements upon the theology of the Reformation had been for some time published, and had been subjected to a pretty full discussion, the Synod of Dort assembled to examine them, and give an opinion upon them. It consisted not only of the representatives of the churches of one country (the United Provinces), but of delegates from almost all the Protestant churches, except the Lutheran. The Protestant Church of France, indeed, was not represented in it; because the delegates appointed by that church to attend the synod (Peter du Moulin and Andrew Rivet, two of the most eminent divines of the age), were prohibited by the King from executing the commission the church had given them. But the next national Synod of the Reformed Church of France adopted the canons of the Synod of Dort, and required assent to them from all their ministers. The delegates from the Church of England had not indeed a commission from the church, properly so called, and therefore did not formally represent it; but they were appointed by the civil and the ecclesiastical heads of the church,—the King, and the Archbishop of Canterbury; and there is no reason to doubt that

they fairly represented, in fact, the doctrinal sentiments that then generally prevailed among their brethren. While the members of the Synod of Dort thus represented, either formally or practically, the great body of the Protestant churches, they were themselves personally the most able and learned divines of the age, many of them having secured for themselves, by their writings, a permanent place in theological literature. This synod, after full and deliberate examination, unanimously determined against the innovations of Arminius and his followers, and gave a decided testimony in favour of the great principles of Calvinism, as accordant with the word of God and the doctrines of the Reformation. These subjects continued to be discussed during the remainder of the century, very much upon the footing of the canons of the Synod of Dort, and with a reference to the decisions they had given. And in order to anything like an intelligent acquaintance with our own Confession of Faith, it is necessary to know something of the state of theological discussion during the period that intervened between the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Assembly, by which the statements and phraseology of our Confession were very materially influenced.

The influential and weighty testimony thus borne in favour of Calvinism, has of course called down upon the Synod of Dort the hostility of all who have rejected Calvinistic principles. And much has been written, for the purpose of showing that its decision is not entitled to much weight or deference; and that generally for the purpose of exciting a prejudice against it. The chief pretences employed for this purpose are these: First, It is alleged that the assembling of the synod was connected with some political movements, and that it was held under political influence,—a statement which, though true in some respects, and as affecting some of the parties connected with bringing about the calling of the synod, does not in the least affect the integrity and sincerity of the divines who composed it, or the authority of their decisions; for no one alleges that they decided from any other motive but their own conscientious convictions as to the meaning of the word of God. Secondly, The opponents of the synod dwell much upon some

differences of opinion, on minor points, that obtained among members of the synod, and upon the exhibitions of the common infirmities of humanity, to which some of the discussions, on disputed topics, occasionally gave rise,—a charge too insignificant to be deserving of notice, when viewed in connection with the purpose to which it is here applied. And, thirdly, They enlarge upon the hardship and suffering to which the Remonstrants were subjected by the civil authorities, in following out the ecclesiastical decisions of the synod, employing these very much as they employ Calvin's connection with the death of Servetus, as if this at all affected the truth of the doctrines taught, or as if there was any fairness in judging, by the notions generally prevalent in modern times, of the character and conduct of men who lived before the principles of toleration were generally understood or acted upon.

It is quite true that the divines who composed the Synod of Dort generally held that the civil magistrate was entitled to inflict pains and penalties as a punishment for heresy, and that the Arminians of that age—though abundantly subservient to the civil magistrate when he was disposed to favour them, and indeed openly teaching a system of gross Erastianism—advocated the propriety of both the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities practising a large measure of toleration and forbearance in regard to differences of opinion upon religious subjects. The error of those who advocated and practised what would now be reckoned persecution, was the general error of the age, and should not, in fairness, be regarded as fitted to give an unfavourable impression of their character and motives, and still less to prejudice us against the soundness of their doctrines upon other and more important topics; while the views of the Arminians about toleration and forbearance—at least as to be practised by the ecclesiastical authorities, in abstaining from exercising ecclesiastical discipline against error—went to the opposite extreme of latitudinarian indifference to truth; and, in so far as they were sound and just as respected the civil authorities, are to be traced chiefly to the circumstances of their own situation, which naturally led them to inculcate such views when the civil authorities were opposed to

them, and afford no presumption, in favour of the superior excellence of their character, or the general soundness of their opinions.

The Romanists, too, have attacked the Synod of Dort, and have not only laboured to excite a prejudice against it, but have endeavoured to draw from it some presumptions in favour of their own principles and practices. Bossuet has devoted to this object a considerable part of the fourteenth book of his *History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches*. The chief points on which he dwells, so far as the history and proceedings of the synod are concerned,—for I reserve for the present the consideration of its theology,—are these: that it indicated some diversities of opinion among Protestants, on which no deliverance was given; that it was a testimony to the necessity of councils, and of the exercise of ecclesiastical authority in deciding doctrinal controversies; that the answers of the synod to the objections of the Remonstrants against the way in which the synod proceeded, and in which it treated the accused, are equally available for defending the Council of Trent against the common Protestant objections to its proceedings; and that the results of the synod show the uselessness and inefficacy of councils, when conducted and estimated upon Protestant principles. Upon all these points Bossuet has exhibited his usual unfairness, misrepresentation, and sophistry, as has been most conclusively proved by Basnage, in his *History of the Religion of the Reformed Churches*.<sup>5</sup>

It can be easily proved that there was nothing inconsistent with the principles which Protestants maintain against Romanists, on the subject of councils and synods, in anything that was done by the Synod of Dort, or in any inferences fairly deducible from its proceedings; that there was no analogy whatever between the claims and assumptions of the Council of Trent and those of the Synod of Dort, and the relation in which the Protestants in general stood to the one, and the Remonstrants stood to the other; that, in everything which is fitted to command respect and deference, the Synod of Dort contrasts most favourably with the Council of Trent; and that the

whole history of the proceedings of the Church of Rome, in regard to substantially the same subjects of controversy, when agitated among themselves during the whole of the seventeenth century, manifests, first, that her claim to the privilege of having a living infallible judge of controversies is practically useless; and, secondly, that the practical use which she has generally made of this claim has been characterized by the most shameless, systematic, and deliberate dishonesty. It is the doctrine of Protestants in general, as laid down in our Confession of Faith, that "it belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, and that their decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His word." This is their duty and function; and all this may be claimed and exercised without the possession or the assumption of infallibility.

The Synod of Dort, as a national Synod of the United Provinces, were the legitimate ecclesiastical superiors of the Remonstrants, entitled to try them, to examine into the innovations in doctrine which they had been introducing into the church, to condemn their errors, and, on the ground of these errors, to subject them to ecclesiastical censure,—a position which the Remonstrants usually either deny or evade, but which is undoubtedly true, and which, being true, affords a conclusive answer to the charges of injustice and tyranny which they usually bring against the Synod's proceedings in regard to them; whereas the Council of Trent had no rightful jurisdiction, in any sense, or to any extent, over Protestants in general. It is interesting, and upon a variety of grounds,—and not merely as affording materials for a retort upon Romanists in answer to their attempts to excite prejudices against the Synod of Dort,—to remember that controversies, upon substantially the same topics, divided the Church of Rome, from the time of the dispute excited by Baius, soon after the dissolution of the Council of Trent, down till the publication of the Bull Unigenitus, in 1713; that the Popes were repeatedly urged



to pronounce a decision upon these controversies, and repeatedly took them into consideration, professedly with an intention of deciding them; that the whole history of their proceedings in regard to them, for 150 years, affords good ground to believe that they never seriously and honestly considered the question as to what was the truth of God upon the subject, and what their duty to Him required them to do, but were supremely influenced, in all that they did, or proposed, or declined to do in the matter, by a regard to the secular interests of the Papacy; and that, in the prosecution of this last object, all regard to soundness of doctrine, and all respect to the dictates of integrity and veracity, were systematically laid aside.<sup>6</sup> I shall not dwell longer upon the historical circumstances connected with the rise of Arminianism and the Synod of Dort, but must proceed to advert to some of the leading points connected with its theology.

### Sec. 3. The Five Points.

The subjects discussed in the Synod of Dort, and decided upon by that assembly, in opposition to the Arminians, have been usually known in theological literature as the five points; and the controversy concerning them has been sometimes called the quinquarticular controversy, or the controversy on the five articles. In the remonstrance which the followers of Arminius presented to the civil authorities in 1610, they stated their own doctrines under five heads; and this circumstance determined, to a large extent, the form in which the whole subject was afterwards discussed,—first at the conference at the Hague, in 1611, and afterwards at the Synod of Dort, in 1618. Of these five articles, as they were originally stated, the first was upon predestination, or election; the second, on the death of Christ, and the nature and extent of His redemption; the third, on the cause of faith,—that is, of course, the power or agency by which faith is produced the fourth, the mode of conversion, or the kind of agency by which it is effected, and the mode of its operation; and the fifth on perseverance.

On this last topic—namely, perseverance—neither Arminius himself nor his followers, for some little time after his death gave a decided deliverance. They did not seem quite prepared to give an explicit and positive denial to the doctrine which had been generally taught in the Reformed churches, of the certain perseverance of all believers. Accordingly, in the conference at the Hague, they professed, as Arminius had done in his public declaration the year before his death, that their mind was not fully made up upon this point, and that they must make a fuller investigation into the import of the scriptural statements regarding it, before they could make any confident assertion, either affirmatively or negatively.<sup>7</sup> It is very manifest, however, that their general scheme of theology imperatively required them, in consistency, to deny the doctrine of the certain perseverance of believers, and to maintain that they may totally and finally fall away; and indeed it is rather wonderful that they should have doubted upon this point when they had rejected every other doctrine of Calvinism; for there is certainly no article in the Arminian creed which has more appearance of countenance from scriptural statements than that of the possibility of the apostasy or falling away of believers. Accordingly they did not continue long in this state of doubt or indecision; and before the Synod of Dort assembled, they were fully prepared to assert and maintain an explicit denial of the Calvinistic doctrine of perseverance.

We have already considered the second article, under the head of the Atonement.

The third and fourth articles are evidently, from their nature, very closely connected with each other; and indeed are virtually identical. Accordingly, in the subsequent progress of the controversy, they were commonly amalgamated into one; and in the canons of the synod itself, they are treated of together, under one head, though designated the third and fourth articles. As originally stated in the remonstrance, and as discussed in the conference at the Hague, they referred chiefly, the one to the way and manner in which faith was produced, and the other to the way and manner in which conversion

was effected. But these two words really describe what is substantially one and the same process and result. Faith and conversion both describe, in substance—though in different relations and aspects—the one great process by which men, individually, are united to Christ,—returned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God,—by which they are put in actual possession of the blessings which Christ purchased. Conversion is descriptive more immediately of the process or change itself; and faith, in the sense in which it is here used, of the means by which it is effected. Every one admits that faith and conversion are certainly and invariably connected with each other; and all, except the lowest Socinians, admit that, while they are acts of man,—that is, while it is man himself who believes and turns to God,—these acts are also, in some sense, produced by the grace or gracious operation of God. Now the dispute upon this point—and indeed upon all the points involved in the Arminian controversy—turns upon the question as to the way and manner in which God and man are concerned in the production of man's actions; so that the question as to the cause of faith and the mode of conversion is virtually one and the same, they being two parts, or rather aspects, of one and the same process, which must be regulated and determined by the same principles. In the *Acta et Scripta Synodalia Remonstrantium*—an important work, in which they explained and defended at length the statement of their opinions which they had given in to the synod—they also join together the third and fourth articles; and the general title which they give to the two thus combined is, "De gratia Dei in conversione hominis,"—the general subject thus indicated being of course, the nature, qualities, and regulating principles of this gracious operation, by which God effects, or co-operates in effecting, the conversion of a sinner.

#### Sec. 4. Original Sin.

There is a difference between the title given by the Arminians to their discussion of the third and fourth articles conjointly, and that given by the Synod of Dort to the same two articles, treated also by them as

one; and the difference is worth adverting to, as it suggests a topic of some importance in a general survey of the Arminian theology. The title given to these two articles, in the canons of the Synod, is this: "On the corruption or depravity of man,—his conversion to God, and the mode or manner of his conversion."<sup>8</sup> Here we have prominence given to the corruption or depravity of man, as a part of this subject, and as in some way the ground or basis of the doctrine which treats of it. If a man possessed some knowledge of what has usually passed under the name of Arminianism in this country,—except as exhibited by the Wesleyans,—but did not know anything of the form in which it appeared and was discussed at the time of the Synod of Dort, he might probably be surprised to find that original sin, or human depravity, did not form the subject of one of the five points. It is a common, and not an inaccurate impression, that a leading and an essential feature of the Arminian scheme of theology, is a denial of man's total depravity, and an assertion of his natural power or ability to do something, more or less, that is spiritually good, and that will contribute to effect his deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, and his eternal welfare. Every consistent Arminian must hold views of this sort, though these views may be more or less completely developed, and more or less fully carried out. The original Arminians held them, though they rather shrunk from developing them, or bringing them into prominence, and rather strove to keep them in the background. Accordingly they did not introduce, into the original statement and exposition of their peculiar opinions, anything directly and formally bearing upon the subject of original sin or human depravity, and only insinuated their erroneous views upon this important topic in connection with their exposition of the manner in which conversion is effected, and the part which God and man respectively act in that matter.

It holds true universally, that the view we take of the natural condition and character of men, in relation to God and to His law, must materially affect our opinions as to the whole scheme of revealed truth. This is evident from the nature of the case, and it has been abundantly confirmed by experience. The direct and primary

object of God's revelation may be said to be,—to make known to us the way in which men may attain to eternal happiness. But the way in which this result is to be attained, must depend upon, and be regulated by, the actual state and condition of men,—the nature and strength of the obstacles, if there be any, which stand in the way of accomplishing this object,—and the power or ability of men to do anything towards removing these obstacles, and thereby effecting the results. The way of salvation, accordingly, revealed in Scripture, assumes, and is based upon, men's actual state and capacities. The one is, throughout adapted or adjusted to the other in the actual divine arrangements and of course in the revelation given to us concerning the whole state of the case. If men can attain to eternal happiness only in a certain way, and through certain arrangements, their actual state and character must have rendered these arrangements necessary: and these two things being thus necessarily connected, the one must at once determine and indicate the other. Accordingly we find, in the history of the church, that the views which men have entertained of the natural state and condition of the human race have always accorded with the opinions they have formed with regard to the scheme of divine truth in general.

Socinians, believing that man labours under no depraved tendency, but is now in the same condition, and possessed of the same powers, in a moral point of view, as when he was first created naturally and consistently discard from their scheme of theology a divine Saviour and a vicarious atonement. Calvinists, believing that man is by nature wholly guilty and entirely depraved, recognise the necessity of a full satisfaction, a perfect righteousness and an almighty and irresistible agency. Arminians occupy; sort of intermediate place between them,—admitting the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the necessity of the agency of the Spirit,—but not assigning to the work either of the Son or of the Spirit, in the salvation of sinners, that supreme place—that efficacious and determining influence—which Calvinists ascribe to them. And, in accordance with these views, they have been in the habit of corrupting the doctrine of original sin, or of maintaining defective and erroneous opinions in

regard to the guilt and sinfulness of the estate into which man fell. They have usually denied the imputation of Adam's first sin to his posterity; and while admitting that man's moral powers and capacities have been injured or deteriorated by the fall, they have commonly denied that entire depravity, that inability—without a previous change effected upon them by God's almighty grace—to will or do any thing spiritually good, which Calvinists have generally asserted or, if they have admitted the entire depravity of men by nature—as Arminius and Wesley did, or at least intended to do,—the effect of this admission has been only to introduce confusion and inconsistency into the other departments of their creed. While erroneous and defective views of the natural guilt and depravity of man have generally had much influence in leading men to adopt the whole Arminian system of theology, their views upon this subject have not always come out earliest or most prominently, because they can talk largely and fully upon men's depravity, without palpably contradicting themselves; while by other parts of their system—such as their doctrine about the work of the Spirit, and the way and manner in which conversion is effected—they may be practically undermining all scriptural conceptions upon the subject.

This was very much what was exhibited in the development of the views of Arminius and his followers. The statements of Arminius himself in regard to the natural depravity of man, so far as we have them upon record, are full and satisfactory. And the third and fourth articles, as to the grace of God in conversion, even as taught by his followers at the time of the Synod of Dort, contain a large amount of scriptural truth. It is worthy of notice, however, that on the occasion when Arminius, in the year before his death, made a public declaration of his statements in the presence of the civil authorities of Holland, his colleague, Gomarus, charged him with holding some erroneous opinions upon the subject of original sin,—a fact from which, viewed in connection with the subsequent history of this matter, and the course usually taken by Arminians upon this subject, we are warranted in suspecting that he had given some indications, though probably not very distinct, of softening down the doctrines

generally professed by the Reformers upon this point.<sup>9</sup> In the third article, the Remonstrants professed to ascribe the production of faith, and the existence of everything spiritually good in man, to the operation of divine grace, and to assert the necessity of the entire renovation of his nature by the Holy Spirit. And in the fourth article they extended this principle of the necessity of divine grace, or of the agency of the Spirit, to the whole work of sanctification,—to the whole of the process by which men, after being enabled to believe, are cleansed from all sin, and made meet for heaven. These statements, of course, did not form any subject of dispute between them and their opponents. The Calvinists held all this, and had always done so. They only doubted whether the Arminians really held these doctrines honestly, in the natural meaning of the words, or at least whether they could intelligently hold them consistently in union with other doctrines which they maintained. Ames, after quoting the third article, as stated by the Remonstrants in the conference at the Hague,—and they retained it in the same terms at the Synod of Dort,—says: "De assertionis hujus veritate, nulla in Collatione movebatur controversia, neque nunc in quæstionem vocatur: imo ad magnam harum litium partem sedandam, hæc una sufficeret thesis, modo sinceram eam Remonstrantium confessionem continere constaret, et ex labiis dolosis non prodire. Sed magna subest suspicio, eos non tam ex animo, quam ex arte dixisse multa, quæ continentur in istoc effato. Diruunt enim alibi, quæ hic sedificant: ut ex paucis his inter sese collatis, mihi saltem videtur manifestum."<sup>10</sup> He then proceeds to quote statements made on other occasions by the Arminians who took part in this conference, that are inconsistent with this article, and that plainly enough ascribe to men some power to do what is spiritually good of themselves, and in the exercise of their own natural capacities.

I have quoted this passage, because it contains an accurate description of the course commonly pursued in all ages by Arminians in discussing this subject, and most fully by the Arminians of the Church of England. They are obliged, by the necessity of keeping up

an appearance of consistency with their Articles and Homilies, to make large general admissions in regard to the depravity of men, and their inability of themselves to do anything spiritually good; and as these admissions are inconsistent with the general spirit and the fundamental principles of their scheme of theology, they are under the necessity of contradicting themselves, and of withdrawing with the one hand what they had given with the other.

The confusion and inconsistency often displayed by Episcopalian Arminians on these topics, when treating of original sin, regeneration, and the work of the Spirit, is very deplorable, and sometimes appears in a form that is really ludicrous. Bishop Tomline quoted, with disapprobation, as Calvinism, a statement on the subject, which was taken from the Homilies.<sup>11</sup> Dr. Sumner, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his *Apostolical Preaching Considered*,—which, though a poor book, is yet decidedly superior, both in point of ability and orthodoxy, to Tomline's *Refutation of Calvinism*,—warned, apparently, by the exposure of Tomline's blunders, adopts a different mode of dealing with the strong statements of the Homilies on this subject. He quotes two passages from the Homilies; one from the Homily on the Nativity, and the other from that on Whitsunday, Part I.,—the second of these being the one denounced by Tomline,—and charges them with exaggeration as containing "strong and unqualified language, which is neither copied from Scripture nor sanctioned by experience."<sup>12</sup>

The first part of the fourth article—in which they apply the principle of the necessity of divine grace to the whole process of sanctification—is to be regarded in the same light as the third,—namely, as sound in itself, but contradicted on other occasions by themselves, because inconsistent with the general spirit of their system. In the end of the fourth article, however, they have introduced a statement, which forms the subject of one of the leading departments of the controversy. It is in these words: "Quoad vero modum operationis istius gratiæ, illa non est irresistibilis." Calvinists, in general, do not admit that this is an accurate statement of the question, and do not



undertake, absolutely, and without some explanation of the principal term, to defend the position here by implication ascribed to them,—namely, that the grace of God, in conversion, is irresistible. Still the statement points, and was intended to point, to an important subject of controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians,—one in which a real and important difference of opinion exists. It is usually discussed by Calvinists under the heads of effectual calling and efficacious grace, and it will be necessary to devote to it some portion of our attention.

The way and manner in which faith is produced, and in which conversion is effected, depend somewhat upon the power or capacity which man has, by nature, of doing anything spiritually good and acceptable to God; and that, again, depends upon the entireness or totality of the corruption or depravity that attaches to man through the fall. And hence it was, that though the Arminians had not, in what they laid down upon the mode or manner of conversion, said anything directly about men's natural depravity, the Synod of Dort, in their canons on the third and fourth articles, included and expounded the doctrine of man's entire depravity by nature, and his inability to do anything spiritually good, and made this the basis—as the Scripture does—of their whole doctrine with respect to the cause of faith,—the necessity and nature of regeneration and conversion, —the work of the Spirit,—and the principles by which His operations are regulated, in applying to men individually the benefits purchased for them by Christ.

I have thought it proper to explain why it was that the subject of man's natural depravity did not occupy so prominent a place as might have been expected in the formal discussion of the Arminian controversy, when it first arose, about the time of the Synod of Dort,—at least as it was conducted on the Arminian side,—although it really lies at the root of the whole difference, as was made more palpably manifest in the progress of the discussion, when the followers of Arminius developed their views upon this subject more fully, and deviated further and further from the doctrine of the Bible

and the Reformation on the subject of the natural state and character of men. I do not mean, however, in proceeding with the examination of the Arminian controversy, to dwell upon this topic; because I have already considered pretty fully the subjects of original sin and free-will in connection with the Pelagian controversy. The doctrine of most Arminians upon these subjects is, in substance, that of the Church of Rome, as defined by the Council of Trent,—that is, it holds true of them both that they qualify or limit the extent or completeness of the depravity which attaches to man by nature, in consequence of the fall, so as to leave room for free-will, in the sense of a natural power or ability in men to do something that is spiritually good as well as to do what is spiritually evil and thus to represent man as able, in the exercise of his own natural powers, to contribute, in some measure, to the production of faith, and at least to prepare himself for turning to God and doing His will. In discussing this subject, in opposition to the doctrine of the Pelagians and the Church of Rome,—which is very much the same as that of the generality of Arminians,—I took occasion to explain pretty fully the great doctrine of the Reformation and of our own Confession of Faith, about the connection between men's entire moral corruption and the entire bondage or servitude of their will to sin because of depravity, or their inability to will or to do anything spiritually good,—the only species of bondage or necessity, or of anything opposed in any sense to freedom of will, which, upon scriptural grounds, as Calvinists, or because of anything contained in our Confession of Faith, we are called upon to maintain. But while right views of the entire depravity of man's moral nature, and of the thorough bondage or servitude of his will to sin, because of this depravity,—or, as our Confession says, "his total loss, by the fall into a state of sin, of all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation,"—should, when applied and carried out, settle the questions which have been raised as to the production of faith and the cause of conversion, and the nature and character of the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit in effecting these results,—the topics usually discussed under the head of effectual calling,—the sufficiency, efficacy, and, in some sense, irresistibility of grace,—yet the full

exposition of these latter topics was not brought out until the Arminian and Jansenistic controversies arose in the Protestant and Romish churches respectively in the seventeenth century. And while the chief topics involved in these two great controversies were substantially the same, they present, in regard the particular topic now before us, this remarkable and interesting contrast, that while in the Protestant Church the Arminians corrupted the doctrine of the Reformers with regard to effectual calling, and the efficacy of divine grace, or of the work of the spirit in regeneration, without, at first at least, formally denying man's depravity and moral inability; on the other hand, the Jansenists in the Church of Rome strenuously maintained what were, in substance, scriptural and Calvinistic views in regard to the efficacy of grace, without formally denying the corrupt doctrine of the Council of Trent in regard to original sin and free-will.

We shall advert to this subject of effectual calling, and the nature and efficacy of divine grace, or of the work of the Spirit, in producing faith and regeneration, as suggested by the third and fourth articles of the Synod of Dort, before we proceed to consider the important subject of the first article,—the great doctrine of Predestination or Election; and we shall follow this order, partly for reasons of convenience suggested by the topics we have already been led to consider, and partly for reasons founded on the nature of the case, and the intrinsic connection of the subjects to which we may afterwards have occasion to refer.<sup>13</sup>

#### Sec. 5. Universal and Effectual Calling.

We have had occasion, in discussing the subject of the atonement, to explain the distinction which has been generally made by divines between the impetration and the application of the blessings of redemption, and to advert especially to the use, or rather the abuse, of it by the Arminians, in maintaining that impetration and application are not only distinct in themselves but separable, and often in fact separated,—that is, that Christ impetrated the spiritual

blessings of reconciliation and forgiveness for many to whom they are never applied, who never actually receive or partake of them,—a position, as we have seen, which can be made to assume something like plausibility only by maintaining that reconciliation and forgiveness are not reconciliation and forgiveness, but merely something preparatory to or tending toward them. Calvinists admit that the impetration and the application of spiritual blessings are distinct things,—impetration being the immediate effect of Christ's work, and being completed when Christ's sacrifice of Himself in men's room was presented and accepted; and application, or the actual bestowal of these blessings upon men individually, being the result of the operation of the Holy Spirit, when by Him men individually are united to Christ through faith, so as actually to receive the blessings which He purchased for them, and are created again in Christ Jesus by His almighty power. Arminians hold that spiritual blessings—at least reconciliation and pardon—were impetrated or purchased for all men, but that they are applied only to some; while Calvinists hold that they were purchased only for some, but that they are applied to all for whom they were purchased. This disjunction or separation of impetration and application—an essential feature of the Arminian scheme—compels them, as I formerly illustrated, first, to explain away the true scriptural import of the blessings which they admit to have been purchased,—to reduce reconciliation to reconciliability, pardon to a possibility of pardon salvation to salvability; and, secondly, to deny altogether that other blessings, equally indispensable to the salvation of men individually,—such as faith and regeneration,—are to be regarded as the fruits of Christ's purchase. These are corruptions of Christian doctrine not peculiar to the Arminians. They must be held in substance by all who believe in an unlimited atonement, it will follow out their principles consistently. This has been already explained, and we have to do now only with the application of the blessings of redemption; and with this, too, not as procured and secured by the work of Christ, but only as actually effected in men individually by the work of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of whose agency in this matter is admitted by all but Socinians.

This whole subject, taken in its widest sense, may be regarded as resolving into this question: What provision has God made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them, and which are indispensable to their deliverance and salvation? and what are the principles which regulate or determine the actual results of this provision in the pardon, conversion, and salvation of some men, and in the continued guilt and impenitence, and the everlasting misery, of others? It will be recollected that, having reserved the subject of predestination for future consideration, we have not, in examining this question, anything to do, in the first instance, with the decree, purpose, or design of the divine mind in regard to individuals, but only with the provision made by God for executing His decrees or accomplishing His purposes, as it is presented to our contemplation, and with the results which flow from it. It is with the providence, not the decrees, of God, that we have at present to do; and in this statement the word providence is not to be understood in the more limited sense in which it is sometimes employed, as contra-distinguished from grace, but as including it. God executes all His decrees or purposes, with respect to the human race, in His works of creation and providence,—that is, in creating and thereafter regulating all things; and though it is common to employ the word providence as descriptive only of that department of the divine procedure, in regulating and governing the world, which has respect to material, external, and temporal things, and to apply the word grace to that department of the divine actings which bear immediately upon the conversion, sanctification, and salvation of sinners, and is ascribed in Scripture to the special agency of the Holy Spirit; and though it is right that these two departments of the divine procedure should be distinguished from each other, yet this mode of distinguishing them is neither sanctioned by Scripture usage, nor very accurate in itself. All that good does in regard to the world and the human race, after creating them, is comprehended in His providence, or in the supreme dominion which He is ever exercising over all His creatures and over all their actions; and this providence, therefore, comprehends all that He does in the dispensation of the Spirit,—in communicating that

grace, or those gracious supernatural influences, on which the actions and the destinies of men so essentially depend.

The general provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased by the shedding of His precious blood, may be said to consist in these three things: first, the making known to men what Christ has done and suffered for their salvation; secondly, the offering to men the blessings which Christ purchased, and the inviting men to accept of them; and, thirdly, the communication of the Holy Spirit to dispose or enable them to accept the offer,—to comply with the invitation,—that is, to repent and believe, and to effect or contribute to effect, in them the renovation or sanctification of their natures. Calvinists and Arminians agree in admitting that these things, when stated in this somewhat vague and indefinite form, which has been adopted intentionally for the present, constitute the provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the benefits of redemption; but they differ materially in their views upon some important points connected with the necessity and the nature of the different branches of this provision, and the principles that regulate their application and results. The Arminians, believing in universal grace, in the sense of God's love to all men,—that is, *omnibus et singulis*, or His design and purpose to save all men conditionally,—and in universal redemption, or Christ's dying for all men,—consistently follow out these views by asserting a universal proclamation to men of God's purpose of mercy,—a universal vocation, or offer and invitation, to men to receive pardon and salvation,—accompanied by a universally bestowed, sufficient grace,—gracious assistance actually and universally bestowed, sufficient to enable all men, if they choose, to attain to the full possession of spiritual blessings, and ultimately to salvation. Calvinists, while they admit that pardon and salvation are offered indiscriminately to all to whom the gospel is preached, and that all who can be reached should be invited and urged to come to Christ and embrace Him, deny that this flows from, or indicate any design or purpose on God's part to save all men; and without pretending to understand or unfold all the objects or ends of the

arrangement, or to assert that it has no other object or end whatever, regard it as mainly designed to effect the result of calling out and saving God's chosen people; and they deny that grace, or gracious divine assistance, sufficient to produce faith and regeneration, is given to all men. They distinguish between the outward vocation or calling and the internal or effectual, and regard the real regulating principle that determines the acceptance or non-acceptance of the call or invitation of the gospel by men individually, to be the communication or the non-communication of the efficacious agency of the Holy Spirit; Arminians, of course, resolving this—for there is no other alternative—into men's own free-will, their own improvement or non-improvement of the sufficient grace given to them all.

In investigating these subjects, the first thing to be attended to manifestly, is the proclaiming or making known to men God's purpose of mercy or way of salvation; and here, at the very outset, Arminians are involved in difficulties which touch the foundations of their whole scheme of theology, and from which they have never been able to extricate themselves. They can scarcely deny that it is at least the ordinary general rule of God's procedure, in imparting to men the blessings of redemption, that their possession of them is made dependent upon their becoming acquainted with what Christ did for sinners, and making a right use and application of this knowledge. If this be so, then it would seem that we might naturally expect that—if the Arminian doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption are well founded—God would have made provision for securing that a knowledge of His love and purpose of mercy, and of the atonement of Christ—the great means for carrying it into practical effect—should be communicated to all men, or at least brought within their reach. And Calvinists have always regarded it as a strong argument against the Arminian doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption, and in favour of their own views of the sovereign purposes of God, that, in point of fact, so large a portion of the human race have been always left in entire ignorance of God's mercy, and of the way of salvation revealed in the gospel;

may, in such circumstances as, to all appearance, throw insuperable obstacles in the way of their attaining to that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, which is eternal life.

It is a fact, that a large portion of every successive generation that has peopled the earth's surface, have been left in the condition,—a fact which we should contemplate with profound reverence and holy awe, but which we should neither turn from nor attempt to explain away, and which, like everything else in creation and providence, ought to be applied for increasing our knowledge of God, of His character and ways. The diversities in the condition of different nations with respect to religious privileges or the means of grace, as well as the determination of the condition and opportunities in this respect of each individual, as regulated ordinarily in a great measure by the time and place of his birth, are to be ascribed to the sovereign good pleasure of God. He has determined all this according to the counsel of His own will. We can give no other full or complete explanation of these things. Partial explanations may sometimes be given in regard to particular countries; but these do not reach the root of the matter in any case, and are palpably inadequate as applied to the condition of the world at large. We can assign no reason for instance, why it is that Great Britain, which, at the time of our Saviour's appearance upon earth, was in a state of thorough ignorance and barbarism, should now possess so largely herself and be disseminating so widely to others, the most important spiritual privileges; or why we, individually, have been born in this highly favoured land, instead of coming into existence amid the deserts of Africa, which does not resolve itself, either immediately or ultimately, into the good pleasure of God. Arminians have laboured to reconcile all this, as a matter of fact, with their defective and erroneous views of the divine sovereignty, and with their unscriptural doctrines of universal grace and universal redemption; but they have not usually been satisfied themselves with their own attempts at explanation, and have commonly at last admitted, that there were mysteries in this matter which could not be explained,



and which must just be resolved into the sovereignty of God and the unsearchableness of His counsels.

We have, however, to do with this topic, at present, only as it is connected with the alleged universal proclamation of God's purpose of mercy to sinners, or of a way of salvation. Arminians are bound to maintain, in order to expound with something like consistency the great leading principles of their scheme of theology, that God has made such a revelation to all men, as that, by the right use of it, or if they do not fail in the due improvement of what they have, they may, and will, attain to salvation. This has led many of them not only to maintain that men may be, and that many have been, saved by Christ, or upon the ground of His atonement, who never had any knowledge of what He had done for men, but also to devise a sort of preaching of the gospel, or proclamation of the way of salvation, without a revelation, and by means merely of the works of nature and providence,—views which are plainly inconsistent with the teaching of Scripture. While they are compelled to admit an exercise of the divine sovereignty—that is, of God's acting in a way, the reasons of which we do not know, and cannot trace or explain—in the different degrees of knowledge and of privilege which He communicates to different nations, they usually maintain that it is indispensable, in order to the vindication of the divine character, that all men—however inferior in degree the privileges of some may be to those of others—should have, at least, such means of knowing God, as that, by the right use and improvement of them, they can attain to salvation. We, of course, do not deny that there are mysteries in this subject which we cannot explain, and which we can only contemplate with profound reverence and awe; or that men's everlasting condition will be, in some measure, regulated by the privileges and opportunities they have enjoyed; or that all who perish shall perish justly and righteously, having incurred real guilt by the ignorance of God which they actually manifested; but we cannot, because of the difficulties attaching to this mysterious subject, renounce the plain scriptural principle, that it is "eternal life to know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent;" or dispute the plain matter of fact, that, as the certain

result of arrangements which God has made, many of our fellow-men are placed in circumstances in which they cannot attain to that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ on which eternal life depends.

Some Arminians have been so much impressed with these considerations, as to indicate a willingness to make a sort of compromise upon this subject, by agreeing to exclude from happiness those to whom Christ has not been made known, provided they are not consigned to misery; that is, they have been disposed to cherish the notion of an intermediate eternal state, in addition to the two which the Bible reveals to us, as the ultimate and everlasting abodes of all the individuals of the human race,—heaven being provided for those who have believed the gospel,—hell for those who have rejected it when it was proclaimed to them,—and an intermediate state, without suffering, for those who never heard it.<sup>14</sup> This idea is thus expressed by Limborch. After declaring it to be very probable that men who make a good use of the light they have will be graciously saved through Christ though they have never heard of Him, he adds: "Vel, si id nolimus, antequam divina bonitas eos ad inferni cruciatus damnam credatur, sicut triplex hominum in hoc ævo est status, credentium, incredulorum, et ignorantium; ita etiam triplex post hanc vitam hominum status, concedendus videtur: vitæ æternæ, qui est credentium: cruciatuum infernalium, qui est incredulorum; et præter hosce, status ignorantium."<sup>15</sup> This awful subject should certainly preclude the indulgence of those feelings which mere controversial discussion is apt to produce,—anything like an approach to an eager contending for victory; but it is right, from a regard to the interests of truth, to observe, that the only evidence he produces for these notions—and which he seems to think must prove one or other of them—is the general scriptural principle, that men shall be dealt with according to the opportunities they have enjoyed. This principle is manifestly insufficient to support such notions; so that the whole matter resolves into this,—that Arminians will rather invent theories about subjects of which they can know nothing, than believe what God has plainly told us concerning Himself, when this

does not coincide with the previous conceptions they may have formed of His character and His ways.[16](#)

They are usually glad, however, to escape from this branch of the subject, about the universal proclamation of God's grace and of a way of salvation to all men,—feeling, apparently, that the plain facts of the case, viewed in connection with the plainly revealed, though awful and mysterious, doctrines of Scripture cannot easily be reconciled with their system; and they hasten on to try their notions of universal vocation, and sufficient grace in the case of all to whom the gospel is made known. In making this transition, they usually allege that they have no desire to inquire curiously into the condition and destiny of those to whom the gospel is not made known,—that we have to do chiefly with the case of those who have an opportunity of knowing God's revelation, and with the principles which regulate their fate,—and that it is quite sufficient to overthrow the Calvinistic system of theology, if it can be proved that sufficient grace is communicated to all of them. We have no satisfaction, any more than they, in dwelling upon the mysterious subject of the destiny of the innumerable multitudes of our fellow-men who have died without having had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only name given under heaven or among men whereby we can be saved;—we indulge in no speculations upon their fate, beyond what Scripture sanctions;—we leave them in the hands of the Judge of all the earth, who, we are assured, will do right. But there is nothing in all this to warrant or excuse us in refusing to believe what Scripture teaches, or to contemplate in the light of Scripture what the condition of the world sets before us; and it is the more necessary and important that we should realize and apply—so far as we have clear and certain materials—the doctrines and the facts bearing upon this subject, awful and incomprehensible as it undoubtedly is, when we find that these doctrines and facts afford proofs of the erroneousness of some of the views of the divine character and government, and of the way of salvation, which the Arminians have been accustomed to propound. As to their allegation that it is sufficient to refute Calvinism, if they can establish their principle as applicable to all

who hear the gospel, it is enough, at present, to remind them that they have not only to attack Calvinism, but to defend their own system; and that the survey of the condition of the world at large, taken in connection with doctrines plainly taught in Scripture,—and this is the first subject which naturally presents itself for examination in this department of the controversy,—not only answers many of their common objections against Calvinism, but suggests objections to the Arminian scheme of theology, which its advocates are unable satisfactorily to dispose of.

Let us briefly advert to the application they make of their principles to all who live within the sound of the gospel. The view they give of the state and condition of those persons is this—that they are all equally called and invited to the reception and enjoyment of the blessings which Christ purchased for all men,—that as God desires and purposes the salvation of all of them, He gives to them all such grace or gracious assistance as is sufficient to enable them all to repent and believe, if they choose, and as will certainly effect their conversion and salvation, unless they refuse to use and improve it aright. Calvinists admit that all to whom the gospel is preached, are called or invited to come to Christ and to embrace Him; but they deny that this flows from or indicates on God's part, a design or purpose to save them all, and they deny that grace or gracious assistance, sufficient to enable them to repent and believe, is communicated to them all. They distinguish between the outward call addressed to all by the word and the inward or effectual call addressed to some by the Spirit whereby they are really enabled to accept of the offer,—to comply with the invitation,—and thus to believe in Christ and to turn to God. The great facts presented by the preaching of the gospel viewed in connection with its results, are these,—that some believe it and submit to its influence, and are, in consequence, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and enabled thereafter to walk in the way of God's commandments; while others, with the same outward opportunities, with the same truths addressed to them and the same arguments and motives urged upon them, continue to reject the truth, and remain wholly unaffected by

it, in the great features of their character, and in the leading motives by which they are animated. And the question in dispute virtually resolves into this: What is the true cause or explanation of the difference in the result in the case of different individuals? They all enjoy the same outward privileges; they all possess substantially the same natural capacities; they are all warranted and bound to believe the truth proclaimed to them; they are all invited to come to Christ, and to receive salvation through Him. The call or invitation is seriously or honestly addressed to them all. Upon this point the statement of the Synod of Dort is this,—and it is quoted with cordial approbation by Turretine,<sup>17</sup> and concurred in generally by Calvinists: "Quotquot per evangelium vocantur serio vocantur. Serio enim et verissime ostendit Deus Verbo sum quid sibi gratum sit, nimirum ut vocati ad se veniant. Serio etiam omnibus ad se venientibus et credentibus requiem animarum et vitam aeternam promittit." Calvinists likewise believe that all who reject the gospel, and refuse to submit to it and to turn to God, are themselves fully responsible for doing so,—are guilty of sin, and justly expose themselves to punishment on this account; or, as the Synod of Dort says, "Hujus culpa non est in Evangelio,—nec in Christo per Evangelium oblato,—nec in Deo per Evangelium vocante, et dona etiam varia iis conferente,—sed in ipsis vocatis." There is no dispute upon these points, though Arminians attempt to show that Calvinists cannot hold these doctrines consistently with some of their other principles.

Were this all that is revealed to us as to the cause of the difference of the results, the Arminian doctrine might be true, that all had received sufficient grace to enable them to accept of the call, and that the only principle that could be brought to bear upon the explanation of the difference of the results, was, that some used and improved aright the grace they had received, and others did not. This is true, but it is not the whole truth upon the subject. The Scriptures not only inform us that all who refuse to repent and believe, are responsible for this, and incur guilt by it; they likewise tell us of the way and manner in which faith and conversion are produced in those who

believe and turn to God; and what they tell us upon this point, makes it manifest that the result, in their case, is not to be ascribed to anything that is merely common to them with others, either in their natural capacities or in the grace of God,—that is, in gracious assistance communicated by Him,—but to a special distinguishing work or influence of His Spirit bestowed upon them, and not bestowed on the rest. This is what Calvinists commonly call special, distinguishing, efficacious grace, as opposed to the Arminian universal sufficient grace; they regard it as a peculiar operation of God's Spirit bestowed upon some and not upon others,—the true and real cause of faith and regeneration wherever they exist, and certainly and effectually securing the production of faith and regeneration wherever it is bestowed.

Now the questions to be discussed upon this point are these: first, Do the Scriptures set before us such a special, distinguishing operation of the Spirit, bestowed upon some and not bestowed upon other? and, secondly, Do they represent this special grace or distinguishing gracious operation of the Spirit, as the true cause or source of faith and regeneration wherever they exist,—the real reason or explanation of the different results exhibited,—in that some men repent and believe, while others, with the same outward call or vocation, and with the same external privileges, continue in impenitence and unbelief? I do not mean to enter into an examination of the scriptural evidence, but will only make one or two observations upon the points involved in the discussion, as it has been usually conducted.

It is important to fix in our minds a clear conception of the alternatives in the explanation of this matter, according as the Calvinistic or the Arminian doctrine upon the subject is adopted. The thing to be accounted for is,—the positive production of faith and regeneration in some men; while others continue, under the same outward call and privileges, in their natural state of impenitence and unbelief. Now this is just virtually the question Who maketh those who have passed from death to life, and are now advancing towards

heaven, to differ from those who are still walking in the broad way? Is it God? or is it themselves? The Calvinists hold that it is God who makes this difference; the Arminians—however they may try to conceal this, by general statements about the grace of God and the assistance of the Spirit—virtually and practically ascribe the difference to believers themselves. God has given sufficient grace—everything necessary for effecting the result—to others as well as to them. There is no difference in the call addressed to them, or in the grace vouchsafed to them. This is equal and alike. There is a difference in the result; and from the sufficiency and consequent substantial equality of the universal grace vouchsafed, this difference in the result must necessarily be ascribed, as to its real adequate cause, to something in themselves,—not to God's grace—not to what He graciously bestowed upon them, but to what they themselves were able to do, and have done, in improving aright what God communicated to them. If sufficient grace is communicated to all who are outwardly called, then no more than what is sufficient is communicated to those who actually repent and believe; for, to assert this, is virtually to deny or retract the position, that what was communicated to those who continue impenitent and unbelieving, was sufficient or adequate, and thus to contradict their fundamental doctrine upon this whole subject.<sup>18</sup> And when the true state of the question, and the real alternatives involved, are thus brought out, there is no difficulty in seeing and proving that the Arminian doctrine is inconsistent with the plain teaching of Scripture,—as to the great principles which regulate or determine men's spiritual character and eternal destiny,—the true source and origin of all that is spiritually good in them,—the real nature of faith and regeneration, as implying changes which men are utterly unable to produce, or even to co-operate, in the first instance, in originating; and as being not only the work of God in men,—the gift of God to men,—but also, and more particularly, as being in every instance the result of a special operation of the Holy Ghost,—an operation represented as altogether peculiar and distinguishing,—bestowed upon some and not upon others, according to the counsel of God's

own will, and certainly or infallibly effecting, wherever it is bestowed, all those things that accompany salvation.

## Sec. 6. Efficacious and Irresistible Grace.

We have stated generally the nature and import of the application of the blessings which Christ purchased for men,—or the way and manner in which God imparts these blessings to men individually,—explaining the Arminian doctrines of universal vocation and sufficient grace, as applicable, first, to mankind in general, and, secondly, to all to whom the gospel is made known; and contrasting them with the doctrines generally held by Calvinists, in regard to effectual calling and efficacious grace. We have seen that, as we cannot assign any other adequate cause or reason, except the good pleasure of God, why so many of our fellow-men have always been, and still are, left in a state in which they cannot attain to a knowledge of the way of salvation, while others enjoy the glorious light of the gospel; so we are shut up also to ascribe to a special distinguishing gracious operation of God's Spirit,—bestowed upon some and not upon others,—the fact, that of those who do enjoy the same outward vocation and the same external privileges, some reject the call, refuse to believe and to turn to God, while others believe and are converted. The provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased, may be ranked under two general heads,—namely, first, outward privileges or means of grace, the knowledge of the way of salvation, and the offers and invitations of the gospel; and, secondly, what is commonly called grace itself, or the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit upon men's minds, enabling or assisting them to repent and believe. We have already considered the first of these subjects, and have entered upon the explanation of the second,—stating, generally, the Arminian doctrine of sufficient grace, bestowed upon all men who hear the gospel, to enable them to believe it if they choose; and the Calvinistic doctrine of effectual calling and efficacious grace, bestowed only upon some, and constituting the true cause or reason why they believe and are converted, while others continue in their natural state of impenitence



and unbelief. The establishment of the doctrine of special distinguishing grace, bestowed by God on some and not on others,—and certainly producing in all on whom it is bestowed faith and regeneration,—may be said to terminate the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians upon this important point.

The controversy, however, has branched out into several other questions, about which—though they are all virtually included under that of special distinguishing grace—it may be proper to give a brief explanation, especially as I have not yet adverted directly and formally, to the point on which the Arminians commonly represent the whole controversy upon this subject as turning,—namely, what they call the irresistibility of grace. Arminius himself, and the more evangelical of those who have generally been called after his name, professing to hold the total depravity of man by nature, have asserted the necessity of the special supernatural agency of the Spirit to the production of faith and regeneration; and, in general terms, have indeed ascribed these results wholly to the grace of God and the operation of the Spirit while they professed to be anxious only to show that, as to the mode of the Spirit's operation, it is not irresistible. The discussions, however, which have taken place upon this subject, have made it manifest that there are other deviations from sound doctrine on the subject of the work of the Spirit in producing faith and regeneration, into which Arminians are naturally, if not necessarily, led; and the subject is inseparably connected with right views of the entire depravity of man, and of his inability, in his natural state, to will or to do anything spiritually good,—subjects on the consideration of which, for reasons formerly stated, I do not at present enter.

Arminius, in his declaration addressed to the States of Holland in 1608, the year before his death, stated his views upon the subject in this way: "I ascribe to grace THE COMMENCEMENT, THE CONTINUANCE, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF ALL GOOD,—and to such an extent do I carry its influence, that a man, though already regenerate, can neither conceive, will, nor do any good at all,

nor resist any evil temptation, without this preventing and exciting, this following and co-operating grace. From this statement it will clearly appear that I am by no means injurious or unjust to grace, by attributing, as it is reported of me, too much to man's free-will: For the whole controversy reduces itself to the solution of this question, 'Is the grace of God a certain, irresistible force?' That is, the controversy does not relate to those actions or operations which may be ascribed to grace (for I acknowledge and inculcate as many of these actions and operations as any man ever did), but it relates solely to the mode of operation,—whether it be irresistible or not: With respect to which, I believe, according to the Scriptures, that many persons resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace that is offered."[19](#) In like manner, as we have seen, his followers at the Synod of Dort, in their declaration as to the third and fourth articles, spoke to the same effect; though some of the very same men who professed so much scriptural truth at that time,—and especially Episcopius,—afterwards adopted, or at least promulgated, sentiments much more Pelagian in regard to the nature and necessity of grace. It would have been well if all who have been called Arminians had ascribed as much as Arminius did to the grace of God, in the conversion and sanctification of men. But we cannot admit that, on the ground of the statement we have quoted,—strong and plausible as it is,—he can be proved to be guiltless of attributing too much to man's free-will, or must be regarded as giving a scriptural view of the nature and mode of the Spirit's operation. Notwithstanding all that he has said, in ascribing to grace, and to the operation of the Spirit, the commencement, the continuance, and consummation of all good,—that is—for it does not necessarily mean more than this—that nothing spiritually good is produced in man, without, or except by, the agency of the Spirit,—it is quite possible that he may have held such a co-operation or concurrence of man himself, in the exercise of his own natural powers and capacities, with the Spirit, in the whole process by which faith and regeneration are produced, as to neutralize or obscure the grace of God in the matter; and to make man a joint or concurrent cause with God even in originating those changes which are indispensable to salvation.

And this, indeed, is just what is implied in the denial that the mode of the Spirit's operation in producing conversion is irresistible.

Calvinists, indeed, do not admit that it is an accurate mode of stating the question, to put it in this form,—whether or not the grace or gracious operation of the Spirit be irresistible? for they do not dispute that, in some sense, men do resist the Spirit; and they admit that resistance to the Spirit may be predicated both of the elect and of the non-elect,—the non-elect having operations of the Spirit put forth upon them which they resist or throw off, and never yield to,—and the elect having generally resisted the operations of the Spirit for a time before they yielded to them. Accordingly, although the only thing in the Arminian declaration, as given in to the Synod of Dort, which was regarded as containing a positive error in doctrine, was the assertion that, as to the mode of the Spirit's operation in conversion, it was not irresistible, there is not, in the canons of the synod, any formal deliverance, in terminis, upon this precise point, though all that the Arminians meant to assert, by denying the irresistibility of grace, is clearly and fully condemned. This statement likewise holds true, in all its parts, of our own Confession of Faith. It does not contain, in terminis, an assertion of the irresistibility, or a denial of the resistibility, of the grace of God in conversion; but it contains a clear and full assertion of the whole truth which Arminians have generally intended to deny, by asserting the resistibility of grace, and which Calvinists have intended to assert, when—accommodating themselves to the Arminian phraseology, but not admitting its accuracy—they have maintained that grace in conversion is irresistible.

They object to the word irresistible as applied to their doctrine, because of its ambiguity,—because, in one sense, they hold grace in conversion to be resistible, and in another, not. It may be said to be resistible, and to be actually resisted, inasmuch as motions or operations of the Spirit upon men's minds—which, in their general nature and bearing, may be said to tend towards the production of conversion—are resisted, or not yielded to, by the non-elect, and for

a time even by the elect; while it may be said to be irresistible,—or, as Calvinists usually prefer calling it, insuperable, or infrustrable, or certainly efficacious,—inasmuch as, according to their doctrine, whenever the gracious divine power that is sufficient to produce conversion, and necessary to effect it, is put forth, it certainly overcomes all the resistance that men are able to make, and infallibly produces the result.

And here I may remark by the way, that it is a point sometimes controverted among Calvinists themselves, whether the non-elect are ever the subjects of motions or operations of the Spirit, which, in their own nature, tend towards conversion, or possess, in a measure, those general properties which, when they possessed them in a higher degree, produce conversion. Upon this point, our Confession of Faith<sup>20</sup> takes the side of asserting that they "may have some common operations of the Spirit;" and this view of the matter is more accordant than the opposite one with what seems to be indicated by Scripture upon the subject, while it is not liable to any serious objection. But Calvinists, while differing upon this point,—which is not of much intrinsic importance,—all admit that the elect do for a time resist divine grace, or the gracious operations of the Spirit; while they all maintain that, whenever that special grace which is necessary to conversion, and which alone is sufficient to effect it, is put forth, men cannot resist, or overcome, or frustrate it, and do, in fact, certainly and necessarily yield to its influence. This doctrine is asserted in our Confession of Faith—not in express terms, indeed, but plainly and unequivocally—in this way: It declares that, in the work of effectual calling,—which is asserted to be wrought in "all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only,"—He renews their wills, and, by His almighty power, determines them to that which is good, and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ, yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace; and it further declares that, in this process of effectual calling, man is "altogether passive," "until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."

If the depravity of man by nature is so entire or total, as that he labours under an inability to will anything spiritually good, and therefore—for this is a necessary consequence of his want of ability to will—must have his will renewed by a power from without himself, and must be wholly passive in the commencement of the process by which this renovation of the will is effected, then it is evident that—though he may have resisted an inferior measure of the power that tended in the direction of renewing him—the power by which the renovation of the will was actually effected, must have been such that he could not resist or overcome it,—that whenever power sufficient to effect such a result was really put forth, it must certainly remove every obstacle, and infallibly accomplish the result intended. If it were a power that could be overcome or frustrated by anything in man, it would not be sufficient to effect the result, because there is no other source from which any assistance or co-operation in producing the result could be derived. Man himself is dead in sins and trespasses,—utterly destitute, until his will has been renewed, of any ability to will what is good; and therefore the power which is sufficient or adequate to renew his will, must be such as certainly to overcome all obstacles, and infallibly produce the necessary change. The Arminian doctrine is, that when all the means have been used, and the whole power has been put forth, that are sufficient to produce faith and regeneration, and that do, in point of fact, produce them, wherever they are produced, all men may, and many do, resist these means and this power, and, in the exercise of their own free-will, continue impenitent and unbelieving, overcoming or frustrating the very same power or agency—the same both in kind and degree—to which others yield, and are, in consequence, converted and saved. This is plainly—whatever general statements may be made about the necessity of divine grace—to ascribe to men a natural power to will what is spiritually good, and to make this natural power to will what is spiritually good the real determining cause of their conversion,—that which discriminates or distinguishes those who repent and believe from those who continue in impenitence and unbelief. Men attribute too much to man's free-will,—to adopt the language of Arminius—when they ascribe to it any power to will what is

spiritually good, or any activity or power of co-operating with divine grace the origin or commencement of the process of regeneration. And unless this be ascribed to it, the power by which regeneration is actually effected must be irresistible,—must be such that men cannot frustrate or overcome it.

It will be seen, then, that the doctrine of the irresistibility, or insuperability, of divine grace in conversion is a necessary consequence of scriptural views of man's entire depravity, and his inability by nature to will anything spiritually good; and that all that Calvinists intend to set forth in maintaining this doctrine, is declared when they assert that it is necessary that men's will be renewed, and that, in the commencement of the process by which this renovation is effected, they are wholly passive,—incapable of co-operating with divine grace, or with the Holy Spirit operating upon them, until He has, by His own almighty power, effected an important change upon them. This change is sometimes called regeneration, when that word is taken in its most limited sense, as distinguished from conversion; and, in that case, regeneration means the first implantation of spiritual life,—the process of vivification, or making alive,—while conversion describes the process by which men, now quickened and renewed,—no longer passive, but active,—do willingly turn to God, and embrace Jesus Christ as all their salvation and all their desire; and the whole is comprehended under the designation of effectual calling, which includes the whole work of the Spirit, in applying to men the blessings which Christ purchased, and in effecting that important change in their condition and character which is, in every instance, indispensable to salvation.

An essential part of this process is the renovation of the will, or the giving it a new capacity or tendency,—a power of willing what is spiritually good,—whereas, before, it could will only what was spiritually evil. And it is important to have our attention directed to this feature in the process, as it is that right views of which most directly oppose and exclude Arminian errors upon this subject. In the description of effectual calling given in the Shorter Catechism, it

is said to be "a work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills. He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel." The general principles of the Arminians upon this subject lead them to deny the renovation of the will, as a distinct step in this process. If there be such a thing as a renovation of the will, it must manifestly, from the nature of the case, be effected by a divine power; and that power, finding nothing previously existing in or about the will, that can assist or co-operate in the production of the result of its own renovation, must be exerted in such a measure, in effecting the object as to be insuperable, or certainly and infallibly victorious. The Arminians, in denying the insuperability of the grace of God in conversion, and in maintaining that, even when a divine power sufficient to produce conversion is put forth, men may frustrate it and continue unconverted, not only ascribe to the will of man, in his natural state, a power or capacity, in regard to what is spiritually good, which is inconsistent with the necessity of its being renewed, but also assign to the truth, or the word, an influence or efficacy in the matter which Calvinists generally regard as opposed to the teaching of Scripture; and hence the importance, not only of holding the necessity of the renovation of the will, but also of regarding this as a distinct step in the Spirit's work of effectual calling, from the enlightening the mind in the knowledge of Christ.

Arminians commonly resolve regeneration, not into an almighty and insuperable agency of the Spirit, operating directly upon the will, in renovating it, by giving it a new capacity, tendency, or direction, but into what they commonly call a moral suasion,—that is, into the mere influence of motives addressed to the understanding, and, through the understanding, operating upon the will,—in other words, into the mere influence of the truth, opened up and impressed by the Spirit; while Calvinist have usually maintained that there is a direct and immediate operation of the Spirit upon the will itself, and not merely through the influence of the truth operating upon the understanding.[21](#)

The distinctions and explanations which have been put forth in the discussions upon this subject, are too numerous and minute to admit of our attempting any exposition of them: we can merely point it out as a subject which has been much discussed and is entitled to some attention. The standards of our church, while they do not give any formal deliverance upon this subject, as it has been usually handled in theological discussions, and no deliverance at all upon some of the minuter questions which have been controverted among Calvinists regarding it, plainly enough indicate, not only that it is necessary that the will should be renewed, but also that this step in the process of effectual calling is distinct from any mere agency of the Spirit in enlightening the understanding,—in opening up and impressing the truth which God has revealed. And I have no doubt that this view corresponds most fully with all that Scripture makes known to us about men's natural condition of darkness and depravity,—about the nature of faith and regeneration, and the agency and the means by which they are produced.

The Arminians usually object to these views about the certain efficacy or insuperability of the grace of God in conversion, that they are inconsistent with the nature of the human will, and with the qualities that attach to it. They usually represent our doctrine as implying that men are forced to believe and to turn to God against their will, or whether they will or not. This is a misrepresentation. Calvinists hold no such opinion; and it cannot be shown that their doctrine requires them to hold it. Indeed, the full statement of their doctrine upon the subject excludes or contradicts it. Our Confession of Faith, after giving an account of effectual calling, which plainly implies that the grace of God in conversion is an exercise of omnipotence, and cannot be successfully resisted, adds, "Yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace." That special operation of the Spirit, which cannot be overcome or frustrated, is just the renovation of the will itself, by which a power of willing what is spiritually good—a power which it has not of itself in its natural condition, and which it could not receive from any source but a divine and almighty agency—is communicated to it. In the exercise of



this new power, men are able to co-operate with the Spirit of God, guiding and directing them; and they do this, and do it, not by constraint, but willingly,—being led, under the influence of the news concerning Christ, and the way of salvation which He has opened up to and impressed upon them, and the motives which these views suggest, to embrace Christ, and to choose that better part which shall never be taken away from them. In the commencement of the process, they are not actors at all; they are wholly passive,—the subjects of a divine operation. And from the time when they begin to act in the matter or really to do anything, they act freely and voluntarily, guided by rational motives, derived from the truths which their eyes have been opened to see, and which, humanly speaking, might have sooner led them to turn to God, had not the moral impotency of their wills to anything spiritually good prevented this result. There is certainly nothing in all this to warrant the representation, that, upon Calvinistic principles, men are forced to repent and believe against their wills, or whether they will or not.

Neither is there anything in this view of the subject that can be shown to be inconsistent with any truth concerning the will of man, or the properties attaching to it, established, either by an examination of man's mental constitution, or by the word of God. It is plainly inconsistent, both with reason and with revelation, to suppose that God has created anything which He cannot regulate and direct, absolutely and infallibly, and which He cannot regulate and direct without treating it inconsistently with its proper nature,—the nature and qualities He has assigned to it. We cannot suppose that God should have bestowed any powers or properties upon any creatures which would place them beyond His entire and absolute control, or would require Him, in any case, in order to effect any of His purposes, with them, or by them, to exercise His omnipotence, in a manner that runs counter to the constitution He has assigned to them. He does indeed exercise His omnipotence in renewing men's wills, and giving them a capacity for willing what is spiritually good; but in doing so. He is only restoring them, in so far, to the condition in which He originally created them. And in the mode of doing it,

while there is an exercise of omnipotence, effecting a change upon them, there is nothing done that interferes with the constitution of man, as man, or with the nature of will, as will. Our Confession teaches,22 that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil." But this does not imply that God Himself cannot, if He chooses, certainly and effectually determine it to good—whatever may be necessary, in existing circumstances, in order to secure this,—without taking away the natural liberty with which He has endued it. This natural liberty does indeed imply a possibility of men yielding to temptation, and falling into sin; but it does not imply that God cannot, by an exercise of His omnipotence, recover men from any of the consequences of the sin into which, from the abuse of their freedom of will, they may have fallen; and do this without taking from them, or obstructing, the exercise of that freedom which He originally conferred upon them.

In short, the will of man could not originally have possessed, and never could by any process acquire, any capacity or property, in virtue of which it should be placed beyond God's absolute control, or which should prevent Him from regulating and determining, at all times and in all circumstances, the character and actions of His creatures. Nothing is more clearly revealed in Scripture than this, that when God enables men to repent and believe. He puts forth upon them an exercise of almighty power, analogous to that by which He created all things out of nothing, or by which He raises the dead; but there is no ground for asserting that, even upon the Calvinistic view of the nature of this process. He does not treat man, in effecting this change, according to his proper nature as a rational and responsible being. We are very sure that no property does, or can, attach to the will of man, whether fallen or unfallen, that can take it beyond the reach of God's sovereign control, or prevent Him from directing its operations, without interfering, by a mere exercise of omnipotence, with its true nature and essential properties. Of all the capacities or properties that have ever been ascribed to the human will, the one that has most the appearance of being inconsistent with

God's supremacy over it, is what is called by the Arminians its self-determining power; and yet I doubt if there are sufficiently clear and certain reasons for denying even this view of the freedom of the will, upon the mere ground that, if the will possess this self-determining power, it would be impossible for God to exercise absolute control over its operations. But if this cannot be clearly and certainly made out, still less can it be proved, on the other hand, that any agency which Calvinists ascribe to God in renewing the will, is inconsistent with a full regard to its true nature and essential properties,—to anything that can be shown to attach to it.

It is, of course, no objection to the Calvinistic doctrine of efficacious, insuperable grace in conversion,—though some of the more Pelagian Arminians have sometimes represented it in that light,—that it deprives men of everything like merit or ground of boasting in repenting and believing. If it did not do so, it would not be the doctrine of the sacred Scriptures; and one great objection to the Arminian doctrine,—that men, even when a divine power amply sufficient to produce in them faith and regeneration has been put forth, may still overcome and frustrate the exercise of this power, and continue unconverted,—is just this, that this doctrine, with whatever general professions about man's depravity and moral impotency by nature, and about the necessity of the gracious operation of the Spirit in producing conversion, it may be accompanied, practically assigns to men themselves, and not to God, the regulating or determining power in the matter,—the power by which, in each case, it is settled that repentance and conversion shall take place,—that is, that a man shall be put in actual possession of all spiritual blessings, and finally of the kingdom of heaven.

The difficulty is much more serious that is founded upon the case of those who are not converted, though they have the gospel offers and invitations addressed to them; or, when the special distinguishing efficacious grace of God is not put forth who continue in their sins, and finally perish. The difficulty, of course, is to reconcile their responsibility for their impenitence and unbelief,—their guilt and

just liability to punishment on this account,—with the views which have been explained as to the way and manner in which the conversion of those who are converted is effected. This is virtually the great difficulty which is commonly urged against the whole Calvinistic scheme of theology; it is usually discussed in connection with the subject of predestination. To the examination of that subject we must now proceed and under that head we will have to advert to the consideration by which this difficulty has been usually met and disposed of.

### Sec. 7. The Decrees of God.

Having been led to enter upon the consideration of the Arminian controversy by an examination of the extent of the atonement—because it was most natural and convenient to finish, without turning aside to any other topic, the subject of the atonement, which we had been examining as an important department of the Socinian controversy,—we endeavoured to improve this order in the arrangement of the topics, for the purpose of bringing out more fully the important principle, that right scriptural views of the true nature and immediate bearing and effects of the atonement are sufficient to settle the question of its extent; and of showing also that the doctrine of a limited destination of the atonement—which is commonly reckoned the weakest part of the Calvinistic system—is quite able to stand upon its own distinct and appropriate evidence, without being dependent, for the proof of its truth, merely upon the connection subsisting between it and the other doctrines of the system. Having, in this way, been led to advert to the connection subsisting between the impetration and the application of the blessings of redemption,—to the connection subsisting between the sufferings and death of Christ, and not merely reconciliation, pardon, and acceptance (the blessings which involve or imply a change in men's state in relation to God and His law), but also those blessings which involve or imply a change in their character, and prepare them for the enjoyment of God,—we have further thought it best, in proceeding with the examination of the Arminian controversy, to finish the subject of the

application of the blessings of redemption, or the investigation of what it is that God does in bestowing upon men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them. Accordingly we have explained the doctrine of our standards in regard to the work of the Spirit in effectual calling,—the doctrine of special, distinguishing, efficacious, insuperable grace in the production of faith, and regeneration, wherever they are produced,—as opposed to the Arminian doctrine of universal vocation, accompanied by the bestowal upon all of grace sufficient to produce faith and regeneration. The connection of the topics, as forming part of the development of a great scheme for securing the salvation of sinners, has thus been preserved; and some other collateral advantages, arising from the order we have been led to adopt, may appear in the course of the investigation of the subject of predestination, which we have hitherto reserved, but which we must now enter.

We have now to consider the important and difficult topic of predestination, which formed the subject of the first of the five points in the original discussions between Calvinists and Arminians, about the time of the Synod of Dort, and in connection with which are usually considered most of those general topics that bear upon all the leading doctrines in regard to which the Calvinistic and Arminian systems of theology differ from each other. The consideration of this great doctrine runs up into the most profound and inaccessible subjects that can occupy the minds of men,—the nature and attributes, the purposes and the actings of the infinite and incomprehensible Jehovah,—viewed especially in their bearing upon the everlasting destinies of His intelligent creatures. The peculiar nature of the subject certainly demands, in right reason, that it should ever be approached and considered with the profoundest humility, caution, and reverence, as it brings us into contact, on the one side, with a subject so inaccessible to our full comprehension as the eternal purpose of the divine mind; and, on the other, with a subject so awful and overwhelming as the everlasting misery of an innumerable multitude of our fellow-men. Many men have discussed the subject in this spirit, but many also have indulged in much

presumptuous and irreverent speculation regarding it. There is probably no subject that has occupied more of the attention of intelligent men in every age. It has been most fully discussed in all its bearings, philosophical, theological, and practical; and if there be any subject of speculation with respect to which we are warranted in saying that it has been exhausted, it is this.

Some, at least, of the topics comprehended under this general head have been discussed by almost every philosopher of eminence in ancient as well as in modern times; and it is to this day a standing topic of reproach against Calvinists, that they teach the same doctrines as the ancient Stoics about fate and necessity. The subject was largely discussed in the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, in connection with the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies. It exercised most fully the subtilty of the schoolmen, many of whom held sounder views upon this subject than might have been expected from the general character and tendency, in other respects, of the theology that then generally prevailed,—a few which, it appears to me, may be fairly regarded as affording a presumption that Calvinistic doctrines upon this subject are the only ones that can really stand a thorough investigation, even upon philosophical grounds, or as mere subjects of intellectual speculation. The subject was not much discussed at the era of the Reformation, for the Reformers were of one mind concerning it; and the Romanists did not then openly and formally deny the doctrine which the Reformers taught upon this point,—though they laboured to excite a prejudice against the Reformed doctrine, as making God the author of sin. Protestants, however, soon differed upon this and cognate questions; and it has ever since formed a prominent feature in a large proportion of theological discussions. All that the highest human ability, ingenuity, and acuteness can effect, has been brought to bear upon the discussion of this subject; but the difficulties attaching to it have never been fully solved, and we are well warranted in saying that they never will, unless God give us either a fuller revelation or greatly enlarged capacities,—although, perhaps, it would be more correct to say that, from the very nature the case, a finite being never

can fully comprehend it, since this would imply that he could fully comprehend the infinite mind.

It is not practicable, and it would not be at all profitable, to enter at any length into the intricacies of this subject,—into the innumerable speculations which have been put forth concerning it. Here, as in regard to most subjects, the topics which it is most important for us clearly to apprehend and to remember, are just the plainest, the most obvious and palpable, views of the question; and to these, therefore, we will confine our attention.

The subject may be said, in general, to embrace the investigation of the plan which God has formed for administering the government of the world, and especially of His rational creatures, and more particularly for regulating the actions and determining the everlasting destinies of man. The materials to be employed in the investigation are, generally, the knowledge we may possess concerning God's attributes, character, and ways,—especially any knowledge which He may have Himself directly communicated to us upon these subjects; and the survey of what He actually has done and is doing in the government of the world,—viewed in the light of His word, or in connection with any information He may have given us, as to the principle that regulates His procedure. The subject embraces the investigation of such questions as these: Has God formed a plan for governing the world, and for regulating or controlling the actions, and determining the fate, of His rational creatures? If so, when was this plan formed, what are the principles on which it was formed, and the qualities that attach to it? What provision has He made for carrying into execution, and what are the principles that regulate the execution of it, and determine its results? Thus wide and various, thus profound and incomprehensible, are the topics involved in the investigation of this subject; and the slightest reference to the general nature and import should impress upon us the necessity in proceeding in the investigation with the profoundest reverence and caution,—of abandoning all confidence in our own discoveries and speculations,—and of submitting our understandings

implicitly to anything which God may have revealed to us concerning it.

Let us, first, advert to the meaning and ordinary application of some of the principal terms usually employed in connection with this subject, and then to the settlement of the state of the question as a topic of controversial discussion. The principal terms employed in describing and discussing this subject are these,—the decrees of God, predestination, election, and reprobation. "The decrees of God" is the widest and most comprehensive of these terms, and describes generally the purposes or resolutions which God has formed, and in accordance with which He regulates His own procedure, or orders whatever comes to pass in the government of the world. That God has, and must have formed decrees—that is, purposes or resolutions—for the regulation of His own procedure, must be admitted by all who regard Him as possessed of intelligence and wisdom; and the disputes which have been raised upon this subject, respect not the existence of the divine decrees, but the foundation on which they rest,—the properties which attach to them,—and the objects which they embrace.

Predestination, or fore-ordination, is sometimes used in so with a sense, as to comprehend the whole decrees or purposes of God—the whole plan which He has formed,—including all the resolutions He has adopted for the regulation of the government of the world; and sometimes it is used in a more limited sense, as including only His decrees or purposes with respect to the ultimate destinies of men, as distinguished from the other departments of His government. It is sometimes used in a still more limited sense, as synonymous with election, or that department of God's decrees or purposes which respects the salvation of those men who are saved, without including reprobation. Election, of course describes God's decree or purpose to choose some men out of the human race to be saved, and at length to save them; while reprobation is generally used by theologians to describe the decrees or purposes of God, whatever these may be, in regard to those of the human race who ultimately perish.



Little more can be said in the explanation of these terms, without entering into topics which belong rather to the state of the question; but before proceeding to this, we may make a remark or two in illustration of the phraseology employed upon this subject in the standards of our church. The general title of the chapter in the Confession where this subject is stated—the third—is, "Of God's Eternal Decree;" and under this head is embodied a statement of the leading truths taught in Scripture concerning the whole plan and purposes formed by God from eternity, and executed in time, in governing the world, and in determining the everlasting destiny of all His creatures. God's decree, made from eternity, is represented as comprehending everything that takes place in time, so that He has ordained whatsoever comes to pass. In proceeding to state the substance of what is taught in Scripture as to God's decree or eternal purpose, with respect to the destiny of His intelligent creatures, the Confession represents men and angels as equally included in the decree; while it uses a different phraseology in describing the bearing of the decree upon those of them whose ultimate destiny is life or happiness, from what is employed in regard to those of them whose ultimate destiny is death or misery. The result, in both cases, takes place, with respect to angels and to men, by virtue of God's decree; but one class,—the saved,—both angels and men, are said to be "predestinated" by the decree to life, while the other class are said to be "fore-ordained" by the decree to death. The statement is this:<sup>23</sup> "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory" (the whole sentence being under the regimen of this important clause), "some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death;" and that the substitution of the word "fore-ordained" for "predestinated" was intentional, and designed to mark a distinction in the two cases, is evident from the words which immediately follow in the fourth section, where, resuming the whole subject, without reference to the different results of life and death, but stating a point common to both, it introduces both words, in order to include both classes, in this way: "These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed." It can scarcely be said that,

either etymologically or according to the general usage of theologians, there is any difference of meaning between the words "predestinated" and "fore-ordained;" but Calvinists, in general, have held that there is an important difference between the way and manner in which the decree of election bears or operates upon the condition and fate of those who are saved, and that in which the decree of reprobation, as it is often called, bears or operates upon the condition of those who perish; and the existence of this difference, though without any exact specification of its nature, the complicity of our Confession seem to have intended to indicate, by restricting the word "predestinate" to the elect, the saved; and using the word "fore-ordained" in regard to the rest. The Confession does not make use of the word "reprobation," which is commonly employed by theologians upon this subject; and the reason of this undoubtedly was, that it is an expression very liable to be misunderstood and perverted, and thus to excite a prejudice against the truth which Calvinistic theologians intend to convey by it. The Confession further says, that "those men who are predestinated unto life, God . . . hath from eternity also chosen or elected in Christ unto everlasting glory;" that "God hath appointed the elect unto glory," and has also, "by the eternal and most free purpose of His will, fore-ordained all the means there unto;"<sup>24</sup>—so that they certainly and infallibly attain to eternal life, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which God has devised for the salvation of sinners. Though the Confession does not use the word "reprobation," and does not apply the word "predestinate" to those who perish, it teaches explicitly that, by the decree of God, some men are fore-ordained to everlasting death; and the further explanation given of this subject is,<sup>25</sup> that "the rest of mankind"—that is, all those not predestinated unto everlasting life, not chosen or elected in Christ—"God was pleased . . . to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of His glorious justice,"—these expressions being descriptive of two distinct acts which Calvinistic theologians usually regard as included in what is commonly called the decree of reprobation,—namely, first, *præteritio*, or passing by, which is an act of sovereignty; and,

secondly, *prædamnatio*, which is a judicial act, described in the Confession as "ordaining them to dishonour and wrath for their sin."

The views generally entertained by Calvinists upon this subject have been, in some measure, indicated by the explanations we have given of the statements of the Confession. But it will be proper to explain them somewhat more fully, and to compare our doctrine with that of the Arminians, that we may bring out exactly the state of the question. The whole controversy may be said to be involved in the settlement of the question as to the nature and properties of the divine decrees.

The doctrine generally held by Calvinists upon this subject is—as the Confession says—that God, from all eternity, did freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass,—that is, that He has eternally formed, and does in time execute, a plan for the government of the world, including in it all actions and events; so that every event that takes place comes to pass as God had from all eternity purposed and arranged that it should come to pass, and because He had so purposed and arranged. If this doctrine about the divine decrees, in general, be well founded, it determines the whole question about election and reprobation, which are included under the decrees. If the ordinary actions of men are fore-ordained by God, of course their ultimate fate or destiny must also, in every instance, have been determined. The Arminians generally hold that God only foresees all the events and actions that take place, but deny that He fore-ordained them. They admit that He exerted some kind or degree of efficiency in actually bringing them about; but deny that, in doing so, He was carrying into effect, in each case, a purpose which He had formed from eternity, and which He had resolved to execute; or that it was His agency that exerted any determining influence in causing them to come to pass. On this subject, the controversy, as usually conducted, is made to turn principally upon what are called the properties or qualities of the divine decrees; for that God, in some sense, did make decrees, or form purposes, in regard to the way in which He would govern the world, is not disputed, except by

Socinians, who deny that He could even foresee future contingent events, which were, in any sense, dependent upon the volitions of responsible beings. And the chief questions usually discussed with reference to the general properties of the divine decrees are these two:—First, Are they conditional or not? Secondly, Are they unchangeable or not?

It seems pretty plain, that if they are conditional and changeable, as the Arminians hold, they cannot, in any proper sense, be the decrees or purposes of a Being of infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom; in other words, the Arminian doctrine amounts to a virtual denial of the existence of divine decrees, in any proper sense of the word. If God has formed plans and purposes with regard to the actual administration of the whole government of the world, and the regulation of man's actions and fate,—and if these plans or purposes were not conditional and changeable,—that is, if they were not left dependent for their execution upon what creatures might do, independently of God, and liable to be changed or altered, according to the manner in which these creatures might choose to act,—and all this seems to be necessarily involved in all that we know concerning the divine perfections, both from reason and Scripture,—then the substance of all this truth is just expressed in the doctrine taught in our Confession, that "God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass."

The foundations of this great doctrine are these:—that unless God left the world, and all the creatures whom He had formed, to rule and govern themselves, altogether independently of Him, He must, from eternity, have formed plans and purposes for regulating its affairs,—for determining and controlling their actions,—that these plans and purposes could not be conditional and changeable,—that is, left to be dependent upon the volitions of creatures, and liable to be changed, according to the nature and results of these volitions,—but must have been formed in the exercise of His infinite knowledge, and all His other infinite perfections, and must therefore certainly

and infallibly be in time carried into full effect. These are the topics usually discussed under the head " De Decretis Dei," taken in its widest sense; and it is manifest, as we formerly remarked, that if the Calvinistic doctrine upon this great general question be established, this settles all the questions bearing upon the subjects of election and reprobation, or the purposes and actings of God with respect to the character and fate of men individually. If God has unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, and if, in point of fact, some men are saved and the rest perish, then it must be true that He has predestinated some men to everlasting life, and has fore-ordained others to everlasting death.

It is, however, upon the field of this latter and more limited question that the controversy has been chiefly conducted; and there is no doubt that there are more full and abundant materials furnished to us in Scripture upon this more limited topic, than upon the wider and more comprehensive one of the divine decrees in general, in their bearing upon whatsoever comes to pass. We have seen, in the Confession, what is the doctrine held by Calvinists upon this subject. It is in substance this,—that from all eternity God chose or elected some men—certain definite persons of the human race—to everlasting life; that He decreed or determined, certainly and infallibly, and not conditionally and mutably, to bring those persons to salvation by a Redeemer; that in making this selection of some men, and in decreeing to save them, He was not influenced or determined by anything existing in them, or foreseen in them,—such as faith or good works,—by which they were distinguished from other men, or by anything out of Himself, by any reason known to us, or comprehensible by us; and that this eternal purpose or decree He certainly and infallibly executes, in regard to each and every one included under it; while all the rest of men not thus elected He decreed to pass by,—to leave in their natural state of sin and misery, and finally to punish eternally for their sin.

The Arminians, on the contrary, hold that God made no decree—formed no purpose— bearing immediately upon the salvation of

men, except this general one, that He would save and admit to heaven all who should in fact repent and believe, and that He would condemn and consign to punishment all who would continue impenitent and unbelieving. God having formed His general purpose, and announced it to men, and having sent His Son into the world to remove the obstacles that stood in the way of their salvation, virtually left it to men themselves to comply or not with the terms or conditions He had prescribed, having no purpose to exercise, and of course not in fact exercising, any determining influence upon the result in any case.

Some Arminians profess to believe that God has made, from eternity, fixed and unchangeable decrees, with respect to the eternal condition of men individually. But those of them who, in accommodation to the language of Scripture, choose to adopt this mode of expressing their statements, do not, in reality, hold anything different from the rest; for they make the sole ground or foundation of these decrees or purposes, in regard to the salvation of individuals, God's foreknowledge of the faith and repentance of some, and of the unbelief and impenitence of others. All that is implied in the election of a particular individual to life is, that God foresees that that individual will repent and believe; and that, on this ground, this being the cause or condition moving Him thereto, God decrees or purposes to admit him to heaven and to give him everlasting life,—the result being thus determined by the man himself; and God's decree, with respect to his salvation, being nothing more than a recognition of him as one who would, without God's efficacious determining interposition, comply with the conditions announced to him. This being all that any Arminians do, or can, admit, as to the bearing or import of any decree or purpose of God, upon the salvation of men individually, those Arminians act much the more manly and consistent part, who deny altogether any decree or purpose of God, with respect to the salvation of men individually.

The fundamental position of the Arminians, at the time of the Synod of Dort, was, that the only and whole decree of election consisted in

this, that God had formed a general purpose of determination, that all who should repent and believe would be saved, and that all who should continue impenitent and unbelieving would be condemned, without any reference whatever to individuals, except the bare foresight or foreknowledge of what would be, in fact, the result in the case of each person. A decree or purpose, based or founded solely upon the foreknowledge or foresight of the faith and obedience of individuals, is of course the same thing as the entire want or non-existence of any purpose or decree in regard to them. It determines nothing concerning them,—bestows nothing upon them,—secures nothing to them. It is a mere word or name, the use of which only tends to involve the subject in obscurity and confusion; whereas, upon Calvinistic principles, God's electing decree, in choosing some men to life, is the effectual source, or determining cause, of the faith and holiness which are ultimately wrought in them, and of the eternal happiness to which they at last attain. God elects certain men to life, not because He foresees that they will repent, and believe and persevere in faith and holiness, but for reasons, no doubt, fully accordant with His wisdom and justice, though wholly unknown to us, and certainly not based upon anything foreseen in them, as distinguished from other men; and then further decrees to give to those men, in due time, everything necessary, in order to their being admitted to the enjoyment of eternal life, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which His wisdom has devised for saving sinners.

The Arminians do not well know how to explain the source of the faith and holiness by which some men come to be distinguished, and to be prepared for heaven. They do not venture, as the Socinians do, to exclude God's agency wholly from the production of them; and they can scarcely deny, that whatever God does in the production of them. He decreed or resolved to do, and decreed and resolved to do it from eternity; and on this account, as well as for other reasons, they are much fonder of dwelling upon reprobation than election; because they think that, in regard to the former subject, they can make out a more plausible case than with respect to the latter, if not in

defending their own views, at least in assailing those of the Calvinists. The Arminians at the Synod of Dort wished to begin, under the first article, with discussing the subject of reprobation, and complained of it as injustice, when the Synod refused to concede this demand.<sup>26</sup> The demand was obviously unreasonable; it did not, and could not, spring from an honest love of truth, and it was not fitted to promote the cause of truth; and yet this has been substantially, though not in form, the course generally adopted by Arminians, in stating and discussing this subject. They usually endeavour to excite a prejudice against the doctrine of reprobation, or God's decree or purpose with relation to those who ultimately perish, often by distorting and misrepresenting the views held by Calvinists upon this subject; and then, after having produced all they can allege against this doctrine, they argue that, as there is no such thing as reprobation, so neither can there be any such thing as election.

Calvinists, on the contrary, usually produce first the evidence for the doctrine of election, and then show that, this doctrine being once established, all that they hold on the subject of reprobation follows as a matter of course. They do not indeed regard the doctrine of reprobation as wholly dependent for its evidence upon the doctrine of election; for they believe that the doctrine of reprobation has its own distinct scriptural proof; but they think that the proof of the doctrine of election is quite sufficient to establish all they hold on the subject of reprobation, and that there are much fuller materials in Scripture bearing upon the former subject than upon the latter. It is this last consideration that establishes the utter unfairness of the course usually pursued by the Arminians, in giving priority and superior prominence to the discussion of the doctrine of reprobation. As the Scripture give us much more information as to what God does in producing faith and regeneration in those who believe and are converted than as to His mode of procedure in regard to those who are left in impenitence and unbelief, so it tells us much more with respect to His decrees and purposes with regard to those who are saved than with regard to those who perish; and if so, we ought, in our investigations into the subject, to begin with the former, and not



with the latter, and to endeavour to form our opinion of what is less clearly revealed in Scripture by what is more plainly declared. Calvinists do not shrink from discussing the subject of reprobation, though, from its awful character, they have no satisfaction in dwelling upon it, and feel deeply the propriety of being peculiarly careful here not to attempt to be wise above what is written. They do not hesitate to admit that it is necessarily involved in or deducible from, the doctrine of election;<sup>27</sup> and they think they can fully prove and defend all that they really hold regarding it. What they hold upon this subject is this,—that God decreed, or purposed, to do from eternity what He actually does in time, in regard to those who perish, as well as in regard to those who are saved; and this is, in substance, to withhold from them, or to abstain from communicating to them, those gracious and insuperable influences of His Spirit, by which alone faith and regeneration can be produced,—to leave them in their natural state of sin, and then to inflict upon them the punishment which, by their sin, they have deserved.

Some Calvinists have been disposed to go to the other extreme from that which we have just exposed on the part of the Arminians. The Arminian extreme is to press reprobation, as a topic of discussion, into undue and unfair prominence; the other is, to throw it too much out of sight. Those to whom we now refer, are disposed to assert God's eternal, unconditional, and unchangeable decree or purpose, electing some men to everlasting life, and effecting and ensuring their salvation; but to omit all mention of His decrees or purposes in regard to those who ultimately perish. This is the course adopted in the seventeenth article of the Church of England, where the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to life is set forth so plainly, that it is strange that men could have persuaded themselves that the article fairly admits of an Arminian sense, but where nothing is said of what theologians have been accustomed to discuss under the head of reprobation. Whatever respect may be entertained for the motives in which such an omission originates, or for the general character of some of the men who are influenced by them, the omission itself is unwarranted. Every one who adopts the Calvinistic interpretation of

those passages of Scripture on which the doctrine of election to life is founded, must admit that there are indications in Scripture—although certainly neither so full nor so numerous—of God's decrees or purposes with respect to those who perish, as well as with respect to those who are saved. And unless men deliberately refuse to follow out their principles to their legitimate consequences, they cannot dispute that the election of some men necessarily implies a corresponding preterition, or passing by, of the rest. And though there is certainly no subject where the obligation to keep within the limits of what is revealed is more imperative, and none that ought to be stated and discussed under a deeper feeling of reverence and holy awe, yet there is no reason why, upon this, any more than other subjects, we should not ascertain and bring out all that "is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture."[28](#)

In stating and discussing the question with respect to reprobation, Calvinists are careful to distinguish between the two different acts formerly referred to, decreed or resolved upon by God from eternity, and executed by Him in time,—the one negative and the other positive,—the one sovereign and the other judicial. The first, which they call non-election, preterition, or passing by, is simply decreeing to leave—and in consequence, leaving—men in their natural state of sin,—to withhold from them, or to abstain, from conferring upon them, those special, supernatural, gracious influences, which are necessary to enable them to repent and believe; so that the result is, that they continue in their sin, with the guilt of their transgression upon their head. The second—the positive judicial act—is more properly that which is called, in our Confession, "fore-ordaining to everlasting death," and "ordaining those who have been passed by to dishonour and wrath for the sin." God ordains none to wrath or punishment, except on account of their sin, and makes no decree to subject them to punishment which is not founded on, and has reference to, their sin, as a thing certain and contemplated. But the first, or negative, act of preterition, or passing by, is not founded upon their sin, and perseverance in it, as foreseen. Were sin foreseen

the proper ground or cause of the act of preterition or passing by, preterition must have been the fate equally of all men, for all have sinned, and of course were foreseen as sinners. It is not alleged that those who are not elected, or who are passed by, have been always greater sinners than those who have been chosen and brought to eternal life. And with respect to the idea that final impenitence or unbelief foreseen might be the ground or cause of the first act of preterition, as distinguished from fore-ordination to wrath because of sin, this Calvinists regard as plainly inconsistent with the scriptural statements, which ascribe the production of faith and regeneration, and perseverance in faith and holiness, solely to the good pleasure of God and the efficacious operation of His Spirit, and with the intimations which Scripture also gives, that there is something about God's decrees and purposes, even in regard to those who perish, which can be resolved only into His own good pleasure,—into the most wise and holy counsel of His will.

#### Sec. 8. Predestination—State of the Question.

From the account which we have given of the state of the question, in the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, upon the subject of the divine decrees, it must be evident that there are just two theories which can be maintained upon this matter; and that all men who are able to understand the question, and who have formed any fixed opinion regarding it, must be either Calvinists or Arminians; while it is also manifest that Calvinists cannot, on any point of very material importance, differ among themselves. It is, I think, of great importance, in order to our having clear and definite conceptions upon this subject, and in order to our being prepared to thread our way, most safely and successfully, through the intricacies of this controversy, that we should see clearly that there are just two alternatives, and no medium between them, and that we should firmly and distinctly apprehend what these two alternatives are.

It will be seen, from what has been said, that the course which fairness, and an impartial love of truth, obviously dictate in the

investigation of this subject, is to seek to ascertain, in the first place, what we should believe as to what God has decreed from eternity, and does or effects in time, with respect to the salvation of those who are saved; and then consider what information we have as to His purposes and actings with respect to the ultimate destiny of those who perish. As much fuller information is given us, in Scripture, in regard to the former than the latter of these subjects, the course which right reason dictates is,—that we should first investigate the subject of election, and then consider whether there be anything revealed or established, in regard to reprobation, or God's decrees or purposes with respect to those who perish, which should confirm, or overthrow, or modify the opinions we have formed on the subject of election,—that, in short, in the primary and fundamental investigation of the subject, we should have in view only the case of those who are saved,—the sources or causes to which this result is to be traced,—the principles by which it is to be explained,—the provision made for effecting it,—and the way in which this provision is brought into operation.

The substance of the Calvinistic doctrine is:—that God, from eternity, chose, or elected, certain men to everlasting life; and resolved, certainly and infallibly, to effect the salvation of these men, in accordance with the provisions of a great scheme which had devised for this purpose,—a scheme without which no sinners could have been saved; and that, in making this selection of these individuals, who were to be certainly saved. He was not influenced or determined by the foresight or foreknowledge, that they, as distinguished from others, would repent and believe, and would persevere to the end in faith and holiness; but that, on the contrary, their faith and conversion, their holiness and perseverance, are to be traced to His election of them, and to the effectual provision He has made for executing His electing purpose or decree, as their true and only source,—they being chosen absolutely and unconditionally to salvation; and chosen also to faith, regeneration, and perseverance, as the necessary means, and in some sense, conditions, of salvation. Now, if this doctrine be denied, it is plain enough that the view which

must be taken of the various points involved in the statement of it, is in substance this:—that God does not make from eternity any selection of some men from among the human race, whom He resolves and determines to save; that of course He never puts in operation any means that are fitted, and intended, to secure the salvation of those who are saved, as distinguished from others; and that, consequently, their faith and regeneration, with which salvation is inseparably connected, are not the gifts of God, effected by His agency, but are wrought by themselves, in the exercise of their own powers and capacities. On this theory, it is impossible that God could have decreed or purposed the conversion and salvation of those who are saved, any more than of those who perish. And the only way in which their salvation, individually, could have come under God's cognizance, is that merely of its being foreseen as a fact future,—which would certainly take place—though He neither decreed nor caused it,—their own acts in repenting and believing, and persevering in faith and obedience, simply foreseen as future, being the cause, or ground, or determining principle of any acts which God either did or could pass in regard to them, individually, as distinguished from the rest of their fellow men. This brings out the true, real, and only possible alternative in the case; and it is just in substance this: whether God is the the author and cause of the salvation of those who are saved? or whether this result is to be ascribed, in each case, to men themselves? Calvinistic and Arminian writers have displayed considerable variety in their mode of stating and discussing this subject; and Calvinists, as well as Arminians, have sometimes imagined that they had fallen upon ideas and modes of statement and representation, which threw some new light upon it,—which tended to establish more firmly their own doctrine, or to expose more successfully that of their opponents. But the practical result of all these ingenious speculations has always, upon a full examination of the subject, turned out to be, that the state of the question was found to be the same as before,—the real alternative unchanged,—the substantial materials of proof and argument unaltered; and the difficulties attaching to the opposite doctrines as

strong and perplexing as ever, amid all the ingenious attempts made to modify their aspect, or to shift their position.

The practical lesson to be derived from these considerations—considerations that must have suggested themselves to every one who has carefully surveyed this controversy—is, that the great object we ought to aim at, in directing our attention to the study of it, is this: to form a clear and distinct apprehension of the real nature of the leading point in dispute,—of the true import and meaning of the only alternatives that can be maintained with regard to it; to familiarize our minds with definite conceptions of the meaning and evidence of the principal arguments by which the truth upon the subject may be established, and of the leading principles applicable to the difficulties with which the doctrine we have embraced as true may be assailed; and then to seek to make a right and judicious application of it, according to its true nature, tendency, and bearing, without allowing ourselves to be dragged into endless and unprofitable speculations, in regard to its deeper mysteries or more intricate perplexities, or to be harassed by perpetual doubt and difficulty.

The same cause which has produced the result of there being really just two opposite alternatives on this important subject, and of the consequent necessity of all men who study it, taking either the Calvinistic or the Arminian side in the controversy, has also produced the result, that Calvinists and Arminians have not offered very materially among themselves, respectively, as to the substance of what they held and taught upon the subject. I have referred to the many attempts that have been made to devise new solutions of the difficulties attaching to the opposite theories; but these have not, in general, affected the mode of stating and expounding the theories themselves. The same ingenuity has been often exerted in trying to devise new arguments, or to put the said arguments in a new and more satisfactory light; but, so far from affecting the state of the question, these attempts have scarcely ever produced any substantial variety, even in the arguments themselves.

The Socinians generally, upon this subject, agree with the Arminians,—that is, they agree with them in rejecting the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. While, however, these two parties agree with each other in what they hold and teach upon the subject, there is one important point, in the mode in which they conduct the argument against Calvinism, where there is a difference, which it may be worth while to notice. The Socinians as we formerly had occasion to explain, deny that God does or can foresee, certainly and infallibly, future contingent events,—such as the future actions of men, dependent upon their volitions and I formerly had occasion to mention the curious and interesting fact, that some of them have been bold enough and honest enough to acknowledge that the reason which induced them to deny God's certain foreknowledge of the future actions of men was, that if this were admitted, it was impossible to disprove, or to refuse to concede, the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The Arminians have not, in general, denied God's certain foreknowledge of all future events, though some of them have made it very manifest—as I may perhaps afterwards show—that they would very willingly deny it if they could; but, not denying it, they have, in consequence, been obliged to try to show, though, without success, that this admission is not fatal, as Socinians acknowledge it to be, to anti-Calvinistic views upon the subject of predestination; while the Socinians, with greater boldness and consistency, cut the knot which they felt themselves unable to untie. These differences, however, do not affect the substance of what is maintained on either side of the question; and accordingly we concede to the anti-Calvinists, that they are all, in the main of one mind as to the substance of what they teach upon the subject of predestination, though they differ considerably as to the arguments by which their doctrine should be defended. Indeed, we reckon it a point of some importance, to make it palpable that there is really but one alternative to Calvinism,—one doctrine that can be held upon this subject, if that of the Calvinists be denied. But they scarcely make the same concession to us; at least they usually endeavour to excite a prejudice against Calvinism, by dwelling much upon, and exaggerating, a difference connected with this matter, that has been

discussed, and occasionally with some keenness, among Calvinists themselves. I allude to the dispute between the Supralapsarians and the Sublapsarians.

There have been two or three eminent Calvinists, especially among the supralapsarians, who have contended with considerable earnestness upon this subject, as if it were a vital point,—particularly Gomarus, the colleague and opponent of Arminius; and Twisse, the prolocutor or president of the Westminster Assembly; but Calvinists, in general, have not reckoned it a controversy of much importance. Indeed, it will be found that the subject is much more frequently spoken of by Arminians than by Calvinists, just because, as I have said, they usually endeavour to improve it, as a means of exciting a prejudice against Calvinism,—first, by representing it as an important difference subsisting among Calvinists, on which they are not able to come to an agreement; and, secondly, and more particularly, by giving prominence to the supralapsarian view, as if it were the truest and most consistent Calvinism,—this being the doctrine which is the more likely of the two to come into collision with men's natural feelings and impressions. I do not think it necessary to enter into any exposition or discussion of these topics, because, in truth, to give it much prominence, or to treat it as a matter of much importance, is just to give some countenance to what is merely a controversial artifice of our opponents. The state of the question upon this point is very clearly explained, and the sublapsarian view very ably defended, by Turretine, under the head "De Praedestinationis objecto."<sup>29</sup> I will merely make a single remark, to explain what will be found in the writings of theologians upon the point. The question is usually put in this form: Whether the object or the subject—for, in this case, these two words are synonymous—of the decree of predestination, electing some and passing by others, be man unfallen, or man fallen,—that is, whether God, in the act of electing some to life, and passing by others, contemplated men, or had them present to His mind, simply as rational and responsible beings, whom He was to create, or regarded them as fallen into a state of sin and misery, from which state He



decreed to save some of them, and to abstain from saving the rest. Those who hold the former view are supralapsarians; and those who hold the latter are sublapsarians.

The difference between Calvinists upon this subject is not in itself of any material importance; and almost all judicious Calvinists in modern times have thought it unnecessary, if not unwarrantable, to give any formal or explicit deliverance upon it while they have usually adhered to the ordinary representation of Scripture upon the subject, which are practically sublapsarian. This is substantially the course adopted both in the canons of the Synod of Dort and in our own Confession; though there is perhaps, less in our Confession that would be distasteful to a rigid supralapsarian, than in the canons of the Synod of Dort. Sublapsarians all admit that God unchangeably fore-ordained that fall of Adam, as well as everything else that comes to pass; while—in the words of our Confession—they deny that this principle can be proved to involve the conclusion, that "God is the author of sin; that violence is offered to the will of the creatures; or that the liberty or contingency of second causes is taken away." And supralapsarians all admit that God's eternal purposes were formed upon a full and certain knowledge of all things possible as well as actual,—that is, certainly future,—and in the exercise of all His perfections of wisdom and justice, and, more especially, that a respect to sin does come into consideration in predestination, or, as Turretine expresses it, settling the true state of the question upon this point, "in Praedestinatione rationem peccati in considerationem" venire . . . "ut nemo damnetur nisi propter peccatum; et nemo salvetur, nisi qui miser fuerit et perditus."[30](#)

The fall of the human race into a state of sin and misery in Adam, is the basis and foundation of the scheme of truth revealed in the sacred Scripture,—it is the basis and foundation of the Calvinistic system of theology; and in the truths plainly revealed in Scripture as to the principles that determine and regulate the provision by which some men are saved from this their natural state of sin and misery, and the rest are left to perish in it, there are, without entering into

unwarranted and presumptuous speculations, ample materials for enabling us to decide conclusively in favour of Calvinism, and against Arminianism, on all the points that are really involved in the controversy between them.[31](#)

If we are correct in this account of the state of the question concerning predestination as controverted between Calvinists and Arminians, it is evident that the real points in dispute are these: Did God from eternity, in contemplating and arranging about the everlasting condition of mankind, choose some men out of the human race—that is, certain persons, individually and specifically—to be, certainly and infallibly, partakers of eternal life? or did He merely choose certain qualities or properties,—faith, repentance, holiness, and perseverance,—with a purpose of admitting to heaven all those men, whoever they might be, that should possess or exhibit these qualities, and to consign to punishment all those who, after being favoured with suitable opportunities, should fail to exhibit them? This question really, and in substance, exhausts the controversy; and the second of these positions must be maintained by all anti-Calvinists. But as the Arminian differs from the Socinian section of the anti-Calvinists, in admitting God's foreknowledge of all events,—and, of course, in admitting that God foresaw from eternity, and consequently had present to His mind, though He did not fore-ordain, what would, in fact, be the ultimate fate of each individual,—the controversy, as managed with Arminian opponents, has more commonly assumed this form: Was God's election of some men to everlasting life based or founded only on His mere free grace and love, or upon their faith, holiness, and perseverance, foreseen as future? This is the form in which the controversy is usually discussed with Arminians who admit God's foreknowledge of all events; but the question in this form does not at all differ in substance from the preceding, in which it applies equally to all anti-Calvinists, whether they admit or deny foreknowledge. Of course an election founded upon a foresight of the faith, holiness, and perseverance of particular persons is not an election at all, but a mere recognition of the future existence of certain qualities found in certain men, though God has neither produced, nor decreed to produce, them. Accordingly, Arminians are accustomed to identify the election of a particular individual with his faith or believing in Christ, as if there was no antecedent act of God bearing upon him—his character and

condition—until he believed; while others of them reacting upon the same general idea, but following it out more consistently by taking into account their own doctrine, that faith is not necessarily connected with salvation, since believers may fall away and finally perish—identify the time of God's decree of election with the death of believers, as if then only their salvation became by the event certain, or certainly known, while till that time nothing had been done to effect or secure it.<sup>32</sup> But a more important question is, To what is it that men are chosen? is it merely to what is external and temporary, and not to what is internal and everlasting?

It is common, in discussions upon this subject, to divide it into two leading branches,—the first comprehending the investigation of the object of election, or the discussion of the question whether God, in election, chooses particular men, or merely general qualities; and the second comprehending the investigation of the cause of election, or the discussion of the question whether God, in resolving to save some men, is influenced or determined by a foresight of their faith, holiness, or perseverance or chooses them out of His mere good pleasure,—His free grace and love,—and resolves, in consequence of having chosen them to salvation, to give them faith, holiness, and perseverance. But from the explanations already given, it is manifest that these two questions virtually resolve into one.

It has been common, also, in discussions upon this subject, to give the supposed ipsissima verba of God's decree of election upon the two opposite theories; and though this, perhaps, savours of presumption, as putting words into the mouth of God, it is fitted to bring out the difference between them in a clear and impressive light. Upon the Calvinistic theory, the decree of election, or that which God decrees or declares in regard to a particular individual, runs in this way: "I elect Peter,—or any particular individual, definitely and by name,—I elect Peter to everlasting life; and in order that he may obtain everlasting life in the way appointed, I will give him faith and holiness, and secure that he shall persevere in them;" whereas, upon the Arminian theory the decree of election must run

in this way: "I elect to everlasting life all those men who shall believe and persevere, I foresee that Peter will believe and persevere, and therefore elect him to everlasting life."

But we have said enough upon the state of the question, and must now proceed to make a few observations upon the leading grounds on which the Calvinistic doctrine has been established and the objections by which it has been assailed.

### Sec. 9. Predestination, and the Doctrine of the Fall.

The evidence upon this, as upon most subjects of a similar kind, is usually divided into two branches: first, that derived from particular statements of Scripture which bear, or are alleged to bear, directly and immediately upon the precise point in dispute; and, secondly, that derived from general principles taught in Scripture, or other doctrines revealed there, from which the one or the other theory upon the subject of predestination may be alleged to follow by necessary logical sequence. It holds true, to a large extent, that the interpretation which men put upon particular statements of Scripture is, in point of fact, determined by the general conceptions they may have formed of the leading features of the scheme of divine truth. It is dangerous to indulge the habit of regulating our opinions upon divine truth chiefly in this way, without a careful and exact investigation of the precise meaning of particular statements of Scripture; for we are very apt to be mistaken in the views we form of the logical relations of different doctrines to each other, and to be led, in attempting to settle this, into presumptuous speculations in which we have no solid foundation to rest upon. Still it cannot be disputed that there is a complete and harmonious scheme of doctrine revealed to us in Scripture,—that all its parts must be consistent with each other,—and that it is our duty to trace out this consistency, though we must be careful of making our distinct perception of the consistency of doctrines with each other the sole, or even the principal, test of their truth individually.

We shall first advert to the arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derived from other principles or doctrines which are taught in Scripture, with which it seems to be connected, or from which it may be probably or certainly deduced.

And here we are naturally led to advert, in the first place, to the connection subsisting between the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to eternal life, and the doctrine of the fall of the human race in Adam into an estate of sin and misery. With regard to this point, Calvinists generally admit that the fall of mankind, or of the whole human race, in Adam, is an essential part of their scheme of predestination, in this restricted sense; and that, unless this doctrine were true, their views upon the subject of predestination could not well be maintained, and would be destitute of one of the foundations on which they rest. Our doctrine of predestination necessarily implies that men are all by nature, in point of fact, in a condition of guilt and depravity, from which they are unable to rescue themselves, and that God might, without injustice, have left them all in this condition to perish. It is this state of things, as a fact realized in the actual condition of men by nature, that lays a foundation for the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, or God's choosing some out of this condition, of His mere free grace and love, and determining to save them; and it is upon this ground—as evincing that all might justly have been left to perish, and that none had any claim upon God for deliverance and salvation—that we vindicate our doctrine from many of the objections by which it is commonly assailed, as if it represented God as exhibiting respect of persons, in any sense implying injustice, with reference to those whom He decreed to save, or as exhibiting injustice in any sense with reference to those whom He decreed to pass by, and to leave to perish. I do not at present enter into any exposition or defence of the doctrine of the fall of the human race in Adam,—of the grounds on which the universal guilt and depravity of men, as a matter of fact, is established, or of the light, partial indeed, but still important, which Scripture casts upon this mysterious subject, by making known to us the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. It is enough to remark

that Arminians never have disproved the Calvinistic doctrine of the universal guilt and depravity of mankind, and of course have no right to found upon a denial of this great fact an argument against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Could the universal guilt and depravity of mankind by nature, as a matter of fact, be conclusively disproved, this would no doubt occasion serious difficulty to Calvinists, in establishing and vindicating their doctrine of predestination; but then, on the other hand, the proof of this fact—which can be satisfactorily established both from Scripture and experience—not only leaves the doctrine of predestination unassailable from that quarter, but affords some positive evidence in support of it; for it is manifest that, if men are all by nature, in point of fact, involved in guilt or depravity,—if they are wholly unable to deliver themselves, and have no claim whatever upon God for deliverance,—then the deliverance and salvation of those of them who are delivered and saved must originate wholly in the good pleasure—in the free grace and love—of God, and must be effected only by His almighty power,—principles which Arminians may profess to hold in words, but which are manifestly inconsistent with the whole substance and spirit of their theology, and which find their full and honest expression only in the doctrines of Calvinism.

#### Sec. 10. Predestination, and the Omniscience of God.

This naturally leads us to advert to the support which the Calvinistic doctrine derives from the scriptural representations of the divine perfections and sovereignty, as exercised in the government of the world. Calvinists have always contended that their doctrine of predestination is involved in, or clearly deducible from, the views which are presented, both by reason and revelation, concerning what are called the natural attributes of God,—His infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom,—and the supreme and sovereign dominion which He exercises, and must exercise, over all His creatures; and it is on this account that some of the fundamental principles bearing upon the subject of predestination are often discussed, in systems of theology, under the head " De Deo," in giving an account of the

divine attributes and perfections, and especially in considering the subject of God's will,—that is. His power of volition,—the principles which regulate, and the results which flow from, its exercise. The substance of the argument is this,—that the Arminian system of theology, in several ways, ascribes to God what is inconsistent with His infinite perfections, and represents Him as acting and conducting His government of the world in a manner which cannot be reconciled with the full exercise of the attributes or perfections which He undoubtedly possesses; whereas the Calvinistic doctrine not only leaves full scope for the exercise of all His perfections in the government of the world, so as to be free from all objection on that ground, but may be directly and positively deduced from what we know concerning their nature and exercise. The two principal topics around which the discussion of the points involved in the investigation of this department has been gathered, are the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty.

God knows all things, possible and actual; and Arminians, as distinguished from Socinians, admit that God's omniscience includes all the actions which men ever perform,—that is, that He from eternity foresaw—and this not merely probably and conjecturally, but certainly and infallibly—every event that has occurred or will occur,—every action which men have performed or will perform; so that from eternity He could have infallibly predicted every one of them, as He has, in fact, predicted many which have occurred just as He had foretold. Now, when we dwell upon this truth,—which Arminians concede,—and realize what is involved or implied in it, we can scarcely fail to see that it suggests considerations which disprove the Arminian, and establish the Calvinistic, doctrine of predestination. God's foreknowledge of all events, implies that they are fixed and certain; that from some cause or other, it has already become a certain thing—a thing determined and unalterable—that they shall take place—a proposition asserting that they shall come to pass being already, even from eternity, a true proposition. This is inconsistent with that contingency which the principles of the Arminians require them to ascribe to the actions of men. And it is to



no purpose to allege, as they commonly do, that certainty is not a quality of the events themselves, but only of the mind contemplating them;<sup>33</sup> for, even though this were conceded as a mere question of definition, or of exactness in the use of language, it would still hold true, that the certainty with which the divine mind contemplates them as future, affords good ground for the inference that they; are not contingent or undetermined, so that it is just as possible that they may not take place as that they may; but that their future occurrence is already—that is, from eternity—a fixed and settled thing; and if so, nothing can have fixed or settled this except the good pleasure of God,—the great First Cause,—freely and unchangeably fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass.<sup>34</sup> So much for the bearing of God's certain foreknowledge of all future events upon the character and causes of the events themselves.

But there is another question which has been broached upon this subject,—namely. How could God foresee all future events except on the ground of his having fore-ordained them, or decreed to bring them to pass? The question may seem a presumptuous one: for it must be admitted that, in order to derive an argument in favour of Calvinism from this consideration, we must assert that it is not possible that God could have certainly foreseen all future events, unless He had fore-ordained them; and it is not commonly warrantable or safe to indulge in dogmatic assertions, as to what was or was not possible to God, unless we have His own explicit declaration to this effect,—as we have in Scripture in some instances,—to authorize the assertion. Still this consideration is not altogether destitute of weight, as an argument in favour of Calvinism. We are fully warranted in saying that we are utterly unable to form any conception of the possibility of God's foreseeing certainly future events, unless He had already—that is, previously in the order of nature, though, of course, not of time—fore-ordained them. And in saying this, we have the support of the Socinian section of our opponents, who have conceded, as I formerly noticed, that if the infallible foreknowledge of all future events be admitted, the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination cannot be refuted; and who

were accustomed, when pressed with the proof that God had foretold certain particular actions of men, to take refuge in the position, that, if so, He must have fore-ordained these particular actions, and was thus enabled to predict them; while they denied that this holds true of future actions in general. We are not, indeed, entitled to make our inability to conceive how God could have foreseen all events without having fore-ordained them, a proof of the impossibility of His having done so; but still this inability entitled to some weight in the absence of any conclusive evidence on the other side ; and this use, at least, we are fully warranted to make of it,—namely, that we may fairly regard it as neutralizing or counterbalancing the leading objection against the Calvinistic scheme, derived from the alleged impossibility of conceiving how God could fore-ordain whatsoever comes to pass, and yet man be responsible for his actions. There is just as much difficulty in conceiving how God could have foreknown all events unless He fore-ordained them, as in conceiving how man can be responsible for his actions, unless God has not fore-ordained them; and the one difficulty may be fairly set over against the other.

Arminians, in dealing with the arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, derived from God's omniscience, are accustomed to enlarge upon the difference between foreknowledge and fore-ordination, to show that the knowledge which another being may possess that we will perform certain actions, does not interfere with our freedom or exert any influence or efficiency in bringing these actions to pass; while fore-ordination does. Now this mode of arguing does not really touch the point at present in dispute. It may affect the question, how far God's fore-ordination of all events exempts men from the responsibility of their sins, and involves Him in it; but it does not touch the argument by which, from foreknowledge, we infer fore-ordination;<sup>35</sup> and that is the only point with which we have at present to do. The mere knowledge which another being may possess, that I shall perform certain actions, will not of itself exert any influence upon the production of these actions; but it may, notwithstanding, afford a satisfactory proof in the way of inference, that these actions, yet future, are fixed and determined;

that provision has been made, in some way or other, for effecting that they shall take place; and that, with this provision, whatever it may be, the foreknowledge of them, when traced back to its original source, must be inseparably connected. There is no fair analogy—though this is really the leading argument of Arminians upon the subject—between the foreknowledge that may have been communicated to the mind of another being of my future actions, and that foreknowledge of them, existing in the divine mind, from which all certain foreknowledge of them must have been derived. The certain foreknowledge of future events belongs, originally and inherently, only to God, and must be communicated by Him to any other beings who possess it. He may have communicated the knowledge of some future actions of men to an angel, and the angel may have communicated it to one of the prophets. At neither of these stages, in the transmission, is there anything to exert any influence upon the production of the result; but still the certainty of the knowledge communicated and possessed affords good ground for the inference that the events must have been fixed and determined. And when we trace this knowledge up to its ultimate source, in the divine mind, and contemplate it as existing there from all eternity, we are constrained, while we still draw the same inference as before,—namely, that the foreknowledge affords proof that the events were fixed and settled,—to ascribe the determination of them, or the provision securing that they shall take place, to the only existing and adequate cause,—namely, the eternal purpose of God, according to the counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably fore-ordaining whatsoever is to come to pass.

The doctrine of God's omniscience has been employed by Calvinists, not only as affording a direct and positive proof or evidence of His having fore-ordained all events, but also as affording a satisfactory answer to some of the objections which are adduced by Arminians against the doctrine. There are not a few of the arguments which Arminians adduce, both from reason and Scripture, against the doctrine of predestination, founded on facts or statements alleged to be inconsistent with its truth, and therefore disproving it, with

respect to which it is easy to show that, if valid, they would equally disprove God's having foreseen all events. And when this can be established, then the right conclusion is, that, as they prove too much, they prove nothing. I will not enlarge upon this point, but content myself with simply mentioning it, as one important topic to be attended to in the study of this controversy.

After this explanation of the way and manner in which the doctrine of God's omniscience bears upon the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians on the subject of predestination, we need not be surprised at a statement I formerly made,—namely, that while Arminians in general have not ventured to follow the Socinians in denying that God foresees all future events, some of them have made it manifest that they would very willingly deny the divine foreknowledge, if they could, or dared. As this is an important fact in the history of theological discussion, and well fitted to afford instruction and warning, it may be proper to refer some of the evidences on which it rests. Arminius himself maintained—as the sounder portion of those who have been called after his name have generally done—that God certainly foresees all future events, and that the election of individuals to life was founded upon this foresight. But his followers soon found that this admission of the divine foreknowledge involved them in difficulties from which they could not extricate themselves; and they, in consequence, began to omit it altogether in their exposition of their views, and then to talk doubtfully, first of its importance, and then of its truth. In their *Acta et Scripto Synodalia*, published in 1620, they omit all reference to God's, foreknowledge, and declare it to be their opinion, that the object of election to glory, is all those men, and those only, who, by divine assistance, believe in Christ, and persevere and die in true faith,<sup>36</sup>— just as if God Himself did not know certainly whether a particular individual would be saved until He actually saw the termination of his life. They followed the same course in the Confession written by Episcopius, but published in 1622 in the name of the whole body; and when they were challenged for this, in an answer to the Confession, written by the professors of theology at

Leyden, entitled *Censura in Confessionem*, and called upon to declare their sentiments openly upon this important subject, they, in their *Apologia pro Confessione*, in reply to the Censure,—a work written also by Episcopius, in the name of them all,—evaded the demand, and refused to make any declaration of their sentiments<sup>37</sup> upon the subject, attempting to escape by a sophistical, quibbling retort upon their opponents. Episcopius and Limborch, in their own works, have both spoken doubtfully or disparagingly of the doctrine of the divine foreknowledge, and have intimated that, in their opinion, it was not of much importance whether men believed it or not. Nay, they almost, in so many words, admit that they have been obliged to concede reluctantly the truth of this doctrine; because they have not been able to devise any plausible mode of evading or disposing of the fact, that the Scripture contains predictions of the future actions of free responsible beings. And Curcellaeus has gone so far as to tell us plainly, that men had much better reject foreknowledge than admit fore-ordination. His words are: "Non dubitabo hic asserere, minus illum in Deum esse injurium, qui futurorum contingentium Praescientiam ipsi prorsus adimit; quam qui statuit Deum, ut illa certo praescire possit, in alterutram partem decreto suo prius determinare."<sup>38</sup>

Some Arminian divines have indicated the same leaning and tendency,—though in a somewhat different form,—by suggesting that God's omniscience may imply merely that He can know all things, if He chooses,—just as His omnipotence implies that He can do all things, if He chooses. This notion has been advocated even by some of the more evangelical Arminians, such as the late celebrated Wesleyan commentator, Dr. Adam Clarke; but it only shows that they feel the difficulty, without affording them any fair means of escape. There is no fair analogy between the omniscience and the omnipotence of God in this matter: for future events—that is, events which are certainly to be—are not merely possible things, but actual realities, though yet future; and therefore, to ascribe to God actual ignorance of any of them, even though it is conceded that He might know them if He chose, is plainly and palpably to deny to Him the

attribute of omniscience. And men who hold this notion would act a more consistent and creditable part, if they would at once avow the Socinian doctrine upon this subject; for they, too, admit that God can foreknow all future events if He chooses,—that is, by fore-ordaining them.

Another attempt has been made by Arminians to dispose of the arguments in favour of Calvinism, derived from the divine omniscience, and indeed from the divine attributes and perfections generally. It was fully expounded and applied by Archbishop King, in his celebrated sermon, entitled "Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge consistent with the Freedom of Man's Will;" and it has been adopted by some of the most eminent anti-Calvinistic writers of the present day,—as Archbishop Whately and Bishop Copleston. It consists substantially—for I cannot enter into any detailed explanation of it—in maintaining that we know too little about God, and the divine attributes and perfections, to warrant us in drawing conclusions from them as to the divine procedure,—that the divine attributes, though called by the same names, are not the same in kind as those which we ourselves possess, even while infinitely superior in degree; but that our knowledge of them is altogether analogical, and that we are not entitled to draw inferences or conclusions,—from the divine knowledge or wisdom, for instance, — as we would from the same qualities—that is, knowledge and wisdom—in men. We do not dispute that there is a large measure of truth in this general view of the subject; and it would have been well if Arminians had acted somewhat more fully upon the practical lessons which it suggests. Their principal arguments against Calvinism have always been derived from its alleged inconsistency with the moral attributes of God,—His goodness, justice, and holiness; and if they are to be deprived, by a sounder philosophy upon this subject, of their arguments derived from these topics, they will have little else to say. The principle, in so far as it is sound and just, overturns the great body of the common Arminian objections against Calvinism; and Archbishop Whately candidly and consistently abandons, virtually, as unwarrantable and unphilosophical, the objections

against Calvinism, on which Arminians have been accustomed to rest their chief confidence, derived from its alleged inconsistency with the moral perfections of God. The principle, however, does seem to be carried too far, when it is laid down so absolutely that our knowledge of God's attributes is wholly analogical, and does not warrant any inferences as to the mode of the divine procedure. The incomprehensibility of Jehovah—the infinite distance between a finite and an infinite being—should ever be fully recognised and acted on. But Scripture and right reason seem plainly enough to warrant the propriety and legitimacy of certain inferences or conclusions as to God's procedure, derived from the contemplation of His attributes,—especially from what are called His natural, as distinguished from His moral, attributes. The arguments in favour of Calvinism have been derived from His natural attributes,—His power and supremacy,—His knowledge and wisdom; while the objections against it have been commonly derived from His moral attributes,—His goodness, justice, and holiness. And there is one important distinction between these two classes of attributes, which furnishes a decided advantage to Calvinism, by showing that inferences as to the divine procedure, derived from the natural, may be more warrantable and certain than inferences derived from the moral, attributes of God. While we ought never to forget, that in all God does He acts in accordance with all the perfections of His nature; still it is plain that His moral attributes—if each were fully carried out and operating alone—would lead to different and opposite modes of dealing with His creatures,—that while His goodness might prompt Him to confer happiness. His holiness and justice might prompt Him to inflict pain as punishment for sin. His mercy and compassion may be exercised upon some sinners, and His holiness and justice upon others; so that we cannot, from His moral attributes merely, draw any certain conclusions as to whether He would save all sinners, or none, or some; and if some, upon what principles He would make the selection. God's moral attributes are manifested and exercised in purposing and in bringing to pass the ultimate destiny, both of those who are saved and of those who perish. The one class, to use the language of our Confession, "He predestinates to everlasting life,—to

the praise of His glorious grace; the other class He passes by, and ordains to dishonour and wrath for their sin,—to the praise of His glorious justice."

Now there is nothing analogous to this diversity, or apparent contrariety, in regard to God's natural attributes. No purpose, and no procedure, can be warrantably ascribed to God, which would imply any defect or limitation in His power, knowledge, or supremacy. There is nothing which we can fix upon and establish as limiting or modifying the exercise of these attributes. It is true that God cannot exercise His power and supremacy in a way inconsistent with His moral perfections. But still the distinction referred to shows that we may be proceeding upon much more uncertain and precarious grounds, when we assert that any particular mode of procedure ascribed to God is inconsistent with His infinite goodness, holiness, and justice, than when we assert that it is inconsistent with His infinite power, knowledge, wisdom, and sovereign supremacy. In short, I think it would be no difficult matter to show that we are fully warranted in accepting the actual concession of Archbishop Whately as to the precarious and uncertain character of the arguments against Calvinism, from the alleged inconsistency with God's moral attributes; while at the same time we are not bound to renounce the arguments in favour of Calvinism, and in opposition to Arminianism, derived from the consideration of God's natural attributes. This topic is one of considerable importance, and of extensive application, for its bearings not only upon the direct and positive arguments in favour of Calvinism, but also upon the leading objections which Arminians have been accustomed to adduce against it.

#### Sec. 11. Predestination and the Sovereignty of God.

The leading scriptural doctrines concerning God which have been employed as furnishing arguments in favour of Calvinism, are those of the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty. The doctrine of the divine sovereignty may be regarded as comprehending the topics usually discussed under the heads of the divine will and the divine



efficiency,—or the agency which God in providence, exerts in determining men's character, actions, and destiny. That God is the supreme ruler and governor of the universe,—that, in the exercise and manifestation of His perfections, He directs and controls all events, all creatures, and all their actions,—is universally admitted; and we contend that this truth, when realized and applied, under the guidance of the information given us concerning it in Scripture, affords materials for establishing Calvinistic and for disproving Arminian views. In the general truth, universally admitted, that God is the Great First Cause of all things,—the Creator and the constant Preserver of everything that exists,—the sovereign Ruler and Disposer of all events,—seems to be fairly involved this idea—that He must have formed a plan for regulating all things; and that in all that He is doing in providence, in the wide sense in which we formerly explained this word, or in the whole actual government of the world, and all the creatures it contains, He is just carrying into effect the plan which He had formed; and if so, must be accomplishing His purposes, or executing His decrees, in all that is taking place,—in whatsoever cometh to pass. The general representations of Scripture describe God as ruling and directing all things according to the counsel of His own will; and this is fully accordance with the conceptions which we are constrained to form of the agency or government of a Being who is infinite in every perfection, and who is the First Cause and Supreme Disposer of all things.

In ascribing absolute supremacy or sovereignty to God in the disposal of all things, Calvinists do not mean, as their opponents commonly represent the matter, that He decrees and executes His decrees or purposes, and acts arbitrarily, or without reasons.<sup>39</sup> They hold that, in everything which God purposes and does, He acts upon the best reasons, in the exercise of His own infinite wisdom, and of all His moral perfections; but they think that He purposes and acts on reasons which He has not thought proper to make known to us,—which are not level to our comprehension,—and which, therefore, we can resolve only into His own unsearchable perfections,—into the counsel of His own will; whereas Arminians virtually undertake to

explain or account for all that God does in His dealings with men,—to assign the causes or reasons of His purposes and procedure. This, indeed, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the two systems,—that the Arminians virtually deny God's sovereignty, by undertaking and professing to assign the reasons of all His dealings with men; while Calvinists resolve them, principally and ultimately, into the counsel of His own will,—a view which seems much more accordant with scriptural representations of His perfections, of the relation in which He stands to His creatures, and of the supremacy which He exercises over them. The sovereignty ascribed to God in Scripture, and involved in all worthy conceptions of Him, seems plainly to imply that His purposes, volitions, and acts must be ascribed ultimately to the essential perfections of His own nature; while it also seems to imply that His purposes and volitions must be, in some sense, the causes or sources of all that takes place in His administration of the affairs of the world; and if these principles well founded, they plainly afford clear and certain grounds or conclusions which form the sum and substance of Calvinistic theology,—namely, that God, according to the counsel of His own will, hath fore-ordained whatsoever cometh to pass, and hath predetermined the everlasting destiny of all His creatures.

There have been very long and intricate discussions upon the abject of the will of God,—*voluntas Dei*,—His power of volition, including His actual volitions, and the principles by which they are regulated; and the investigation of this subject forms an essential part of the argument in the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians. It is of course universally admitted, that God has revealed to men a law for the regulation of their character and conduct,—that this law indicates and expresses the divine will as to what they should be and do, and unfolds what will, in point of fact, be the consequences, upon their fate and ultimate destiny, of compliance or non-compliance with the divine will thus revealed to them. On this point—on all that is involved in these positions—there is no dispute. But in the great truth that God rules and governs the world, exercising supreme dominion over all the actions and concerns of men, there is plainly

involved this general idea,—that events, the things which are actually taking place, are also, in some sense, the results, the expressions, the indications, of the divine will, or of what God desires and purposes should exist or take place. It is admitted that everything that takes place—including all the actions which men perform, and of course including their ultimate fate or destiny—was foreseen by God; and that His providence is, in some way or other, concerned in the ordering of all events. It cannot be disputed, without denying God's omnipotence, that He could have prevented the occurrence of anything, or everything, that has taken place, or will yet take place, if He had so chosen,—if this had been His will or pleasure; and therefore everything that cometh to pass—including the actions and the ultimate destiny of men—must be, in some sense, in accordance with His will,—with what He has desired and purposed. The question of Augustine is unanswerable: "Quis porro tam impie desipiat, ut dicat Deum malas hominum voluntates quas voluerit, quando voluerit, ubi voluerit, in bonum non posse convertere?"<sup>40</sup> Many of the events that take place—such as the sinful actions of men—are opposed to, or inconsistent with. His will as revealed in His law, which is an undoubted indication of what He wished or desired that men should do. Here, therefore, there is a difficulty,—an apparent contrariety of wills in God; and of course either one or other of these things,—namely, the law and event must be held not to indicate the will of God; or else, some distinctions must be introduced, by which the whole of what is true, and is proved, upon this subject may be expressed.

It is unquestionable that the law is an expression of the divine will, and indicates that, in some sense, God wishes, as He commands and enjoins, that all His rational creatures should ever walk in the ways of holiness; and that all men, doing so, should be for ever blessed. Arminians virtually contend that this is the only true and real indication of the mind and will of God, and that actual events, simply as such, are not to be regarded as expressing, in any sense, the divine will,—indicating at all what God wished or desired,—what He purposed or has effected; while Calvinists contend that events,

simply as such,—and of course all events,—do, as well as His law, in some sense express or indicate God's will; and hold this position to be certainly involved in the doctrine of the supreme dominion which He exercises over all the actions and concerns of men; and in the obvious and undeniable consideration, that He could have prevented the occurrence of everything that has occurred, or will occur, and would have done so, if it had not been, in some sense, accordant with His will, and fitted to accomplish His purposes,—that He could, if He had thought proper, have prevented the sin and the final destruction of all His rational creatures. As the Arminians do not regard the events that take place—the actions which are performed, viewed simply as such—as at all indicating or expressing any will of God, they are, of course, obliged to admit that many things come to pass—such as men's sinful actions—which are altogether, and in every sense, opposed to God's will. And as this statement, nakedly put, seems scarcely consistent with God's omnipotence and supremacy, they are obliged, as well as the Calvinists, to introduce some distinctions into the exposition of this subject. The controversy upon this point really resolves very much into this general question,—whether the Calvinistic or the Arminian distinctions, or sets of distinctions, on the subject of the will of God, are the more accordant with right views of the divine perfections and character, as they are revealed to us in Scripture.

The distinctions which the Calvinists commonly employ in expounding and discussing this subject are chiefly these: They say there is a *voluntas decreti* and a *voluntas praecepti*, or a will of decree, and a will of precept or command, or a secret and a revealed will; and these two wills they call by a variety of names, all of them suggested by something that is said or indicated upon the subject in Scripture. God's will of decree, or His secret will, they call also His *voluntas euvdoki,aj*, and *voluntas beneplaciti*; while His will of precept. His revealed will, they call also His *voluntas euvaresti,aj*, and *voluntas signi*. Now these terms are really nothing more than just descriptions of what maybe called matters of fact, as they are set before us in Scripture. There is a will of God regulating or

determining events or actions, and indicated by the events which take place,—the actions which are performed. To deny this, is just to exclude God from the government of the world,—to assert that events take place which He does not direct and control, and which are altogether, and in every sense, inconsistent with, or opposed to, His will, or at least wholly uninfluenced by it. This, His will of decree, determining events, is secret, because utterly unknown to us until the event occurs, and thereby declares it. Every event that does occur reveals to us something concerning the will of God—that is, concerning what God had purposed,—had resolved to bring to pass, or at least to permit—of which we were previously ignorant. There is nothing in these distinctions, the *voluntas decreti, arcana, euvdoki,aj, beneplaciti* (all these four expressions being, according to the *usus loquendi* that prevails among Calvinistic divines, descriptions, or just different designations, of one and the same thing,—namely, of the will by which God determines events or results), and the *voluntas praecepti, revelata, euvaresti,aj, and signi* (these four contrasting respectively with the preceding, and being all likewise descriptive of one and the same thing,—namely, of the will by which He determines duties);—there is nothing in these two sets of distinctions but just the embodying in language—technical, indeed, to some extent, but still suggested and sanctioned by Scripture—of two doctrines, both of which we are constrained to admit. In no other way could we bring out, and express, the whole of what Scripture warrants us to believe upon this subject; because, as has been said, the only alternative is, to maintain that the events which take place—including the actions and the ultimate fate of men—are in no sense indications of the divine will; in other words, have been brought about altogether independently of God, and of His agency. That there are difficulties in the exposition of the matter—difficulties which we cannot fully solve—is not disputed; but this affords no sufficient ground for rejecting, or refusing to admit, whatever is fully sanctioned by the sacred Scriptures, and confirmed by the plain dictates of reason.

There are no such difficulties attaching to the Calvinistic, as to the Arminian, doctrines upon this subject. Not only is their general position—that events or results, simply as such, are not, in any sense, expressions or indications of the will of God—plainly inconsistent with right views of the divine omnipotence and supremacy; but, in the prosecution of the subject, they need to have recourse to distinctions which still further manifest the inconsistency of their whole system with right views of the divine perfections and government. The great distinction which they propose and urge upon this subject, is that between the antecedent and the consequent will of God; or, what is virtually the same thing, the inefficacious or conditional, and the efficacious or absolute, will of God. These distinctions they commonly apply, not so much to the purposes and decrees of God in general, and in all their extent, in their bearing upon whatsoever comes to pass, but only to the ultimate fate or destiny of men. They ascribe to God an antecedent will to save all men, and a consequent will—a will or purpose consequent upon, and conditioned by, their conduct, actual or foreseen—to save those, and those only, who believe and persevere, and to consign to misery those who continue in impenitence and unbelief. This antecedent will is of course not absolute, but conditional,—not efficacious, but inefficacious. And thus they represent God as willing what never takes place, and what, therefore, He must be either unable or unwilling to effect. To say that He is unable to effect it, is to deny His omnipotence and supremacy. To say that He is unwilling to effect it, is to contradict themselves, or to ascribe to God two opposite and contrary wills,—one of which takes effect, or is followed by the result willed, and the other is not. To ascribe to God a conditional will of saving all men, while yet many perish, is to represent Him as willing what He knows will never take place,—as suspending His own purposes and plans upon the volitions and actions of creatures who live and move and have their being in Him,—as wholly dependent on them for the attainment of what He is desirous to accomplish; and all this, surely, is plainly inconsistent with what we are taught to believe concerning the divine perfections and government,—the relation in

which God stands to His creatures, and the supremacy which He exercises over them.<sup>41</sup>

If God's decrees or purposes concerning the salvation of individual men are founded—as Arminians teach—solely upon the foresight of their faith and perseverance, this represents Him as wholly dependent upon them for the formation of His plans and purposes; while it leaves the whole series of events that constitute the moral history of the world, and, in some sense, determine men's everlasting destiny, wholly unexplained or unaccounted or,—entirely unregulated or uncontrolled by God. The highest, and indeed the only, function ascribed to Him with respect to men's actions and fate, is that simply of foreseeing them. He does this, and He does nothing more. What it was that settled or determined their futurity—or their being to be—is left wholly unexplained by the Arminians; while Calvinists contend that this must be ascribed to the will of God, exercised in accordance with all the perfections of His nature. Their specific character, with their consequent results, in their bearing upon men's eternal destiny, is really determined by men themselves; for, while Arminians do not dispute that God's providence and grace are, somehow, exercised in connection with the production of men's actions, they deny that He exercises any certainly efficacious or determining influence in the production of any of them. Whatever God does, in time, in the administration of the government of the world, He purposed or resolved to do from eternity. Arminians can scarcely deny this position; but then the admission of it only makes them more determined to limit the extent and efficacy of His agency in the production of events or results, and to withhold from Him any determining influence in the production even of good characters and good actions. Calvinists apply the principle of God's having decreed from eternity to do all that He actually does in time, in this way. The production of all that is spiritually good in men,—the production of faith and regeneration,—are represented in Scripture as the work of God; they are ascribed to His efficacious and determining agency. Faith and regeneration are inseparably connected, according to God's arrangements, in each case, with salvation. If the general

principle above stated be true, then it follows, that whenever God produces faith and regeneration, He is doing in time what He purposed from eternity to do; and He is doing it, in order to effect what He must also have resolved from eternity to effect,—namely, the everlasting salvation of some men,—that is, of all to whom He gives faith and regeneration. Hence it will be seen how important, in this whole controversy, is the subject of the certain or determining efficacy of divine grace in the production of faith and regeneration; and how essentially the whole Arminian cause is bound up with the ascription of such a self-determining power to the human will, as excludes the certain and unfrustrable efficacy of God's grace in renovating and controlling it. The production of faith and regeneration is a work of God, wrought by Him on some men and not on others,—wrought upon them in accordance, indeed, with the whole principles of their mental constitution, but still wrought certainly and infallibly, whenever the power that is necessary for the production of it—without the exercise of which it could not be effected—is actually put forth.

If this be the agency by which faith and regeneration are in each case produced,—if the production of them is, in this sense, to be ascribed to God,—then He must have decreed or purposed from eternity to produce them, whenever they are produced; and, of course, to effect the ultimate and permanent results with which their existence stands inseparably connected,—namely, deliverance from guilt, and everlasting happiness. Were the production of faith and regeneration left dependent, in each case, upon the exercise of men's own free will,—that being made the turning-point,—and divine grace merely assisting or co-operating, but not certainly determining the result, then it is possible, so far as this department of the argument is concerned, that God might indeed have decreed from eternity what He would do in the matter, but still might, so far as concerned the actual production of the result, merely foresee what each man would do in improving the grace given him, and might be wholly regulated by this mere foresight in anything He might purpose with respect to men's ultimate fate. Whereas, if God produces faith and



regeneration,—if it be, indeed. His agency that determines and secures their existence wherever they come to exist,—then, upon the general principle, that God resolved to do from eternity whatever He does in time, we are shut up to the conclusion, that He chose some men to faith and regeneration,—that He did so in order that He might thereby save them,—and that thus both the faith and the salvation of those who believe and are saved, are to be ascribed wholly to the good pleasure of God, choosing them to be the subjects of His almighty grace and the heirs of eternal glory.

Results, or events, are, of course, expressions or indications of God's will, only, in so far as He is concerned in the production of them. The general views taught, both by reason and Scripture, about God's perfections, supremacy, and providence, fully warrant as in believing that His agency is, in some way, concerned in the production of all events or results whatever, since it is certain that He could have prevented any of them from coming to pass if He had so chosen, and must, therefore, have decreed or purposed either to produce, or, at least, to permit them. God's agency is not employed in the same manner, and to the same extent, in the production of all events or results; and the fulness and clearness with which different events and results express or indicate the divine will, depend upon the kind and degree of the agency which He exerts—and of course purposed to exert—in the ordering of them. This agency is not exerted in the same manner, or in the same degree, in the permission of the bad, as in the production of the good, actions of men. In the good actions of men, God's *voluntas decreti* and His *voluntas praecepti*—His secret and His revealed will—concur and combine; in their sinful actions they do not; and therefore these latter do not express or indicate the divine will in the same sense, or to the same extent, as the former. Still we cannot exclude even them wholly from the *voluntas decreti*, as they are comprehended in the general scheme of His providence,—as they are directed and overruled by Him for promoting His wise and holy purposes,—and as He must, at least, have decreed or resolved to permit them, since He could have prevented them if He had chosen.

Arminians base their main attempt to exclude or limit the application of these principles upon the grand peculiarity of free agency as attaching to rational and responsible beings. We formerly had occasion, in discussing the subject of the efficacy of grace, to advert to the considerations by which this line of argument was to be met,—namely, by showing the unreasonableness of the idea that God had created any class of beings who, by the constitution He had given them, should be placed absolutely beyond His control in anything affecting their conduct and fate; and by pointing out the impossibility of proving that anything which Calvinists ascribe to God's agency in ordering or determining men's actions, character, and destiny, necessarily implies a contravention or violation of anything attaching to man as man, or to will as will. And while this is the true state of the case in regard to God's agency in the production of men's actions generally, and the limitation which free-will is alleged to put upon the character and results of this agency, we have full and distinct special information given us in Scripture in regard to by far the most important department at once of God's agency and men's actions,—namely, the production and the exercise of faith and conversion, which are inseparably connected in each case with salvation; and this information clearly teaches us that God does not leave the production of faith and conversion to be dependent upon any mere powers or capacities of the human will, but produces them Himself, wherever they are produced, certainly and infallibly, by His own almighty power; and of course must, upon principles already explained, have decreed or purposed from eternity to put forth in time this almighty power, wherever it is put forth, to effect the result which it alone is sufficient or adequate to effect, and to accomplish all the ultimate results with which the production of these effects stands inseparably connected. If this be so, then the further conclusion is unavoidable,—that, in regard to all those in whom God does not put forth this almighty power to produce faith and conversion, He had decreed or purposed, from eternity, to pass by these men, and to leave them to perish in their natural state of guilt and depravity, to the praise of His glorious justice.

## Sec. 12. Scripture Evidence for Predestination

We have illustrated some of the leading arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, derived from other principles and doctrines, which are taught at once by Scripture and reason, and which either actually involve or include this doctrine, or can be shown to lead to it by necessary consequence,—especially the doctrines of God's omniscience, including His foreknowledge of all future events, and of His sovereignty or supremacy, or of His right to regulate, and His actually regulating, all things according to the counsel of His own will; more particularly as exhibited in the bestowal of the almighty or infallibly efficacious grace, by which faith and regeneration—the inseparable accompaniments of salvation—are produced in some men, to the pretention or exclusion of others. These great doctrines of the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty are taught by natural as well as by revealed religion; and if it be indeed true, as we have endeavoured to prove, that they afford sufficient materials for establishing the doctrines that God has fore-ordained whatsoever cometh to pass, and that He determines the everlasting destinies of all His creatures, then must the Calvinistic scheme of theology not only be consistent with, but be required by, all worthy and accurate conceptions which, from any source, we are able to form concerning the divine perfections and supremacy. There are other principles or doctrines clearly revealed in Scripture, that afford satisfactory evidence in support of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination,—principles and doctrines connected with topics which are matters of pure revelation, as entering more immediately into the character and provisions of the scheme which God has devised and executed for the salvation of sinners, for delivering men from their natural state of guilt and depravity, and preparing them for the enjoyment of eternal blessedness. This general head may be said to comprehend all indications given us in Scripture of God's having a peculiar or chosen people, as distinguished from the mass of the human race,—of His having given His Son to be the Redeemer and the Head of a chosen or select company from among men,—of His having given some men to Christ in covenant as the objects of

His peculiar care and kindness,—and of the way and manner in which all this is connected, in point of fact, with the ultimate salvation of those who are saved.

Everything which is either asserted or indicated in Scripture concerning the end for which Christ was sent into the world, and the purposes which His humiliation, sufferings, and death were intended to effect, and do effect, in connection with the fall and the salvation, the ruin and the recovery, of men, is in fullest harmony with the principle that God has, out of His mere good pleasure, elected some men to eternal life, and has unchangeably determined to save these men with an everlasting salvation, and is indeed consistent or reconcilable with no other doctrine upon this subject. The general tenor of Scripture statement upon all these topics can be reconciled with no scheme of doctrine which does not imply that God from eternity selected some men to salvation, without anything of superior worth foreseen in them, as a condition or cause moving Him thereunto,—that this choice or election is the origin or source of everything in them which conduces or contributes to their salvation,—and implies that effectual provision has been made for securing that result. In short, all that is stated in Scripture concerning the lost and ruined condition of men by nature, and the provision made for their deliverance and salvation,—all that is declared or indicated there concerning the divine purpose or design with respect to ruined men,—the object or end of the vicarious work of the Son,—the efficacious agency of the Spirit in producing faith and conversion, holiness and perseverance,—is perfectly harmonious, and, when combined together, just constitutes the Calvinistic scheme of theology,—of God's electing some men to salvation of His own good pleasure,—giving them to Christ to be redeemed by Him,—sending forth His Spirit to apply to them the blessings which Christ purchased for them,—and thus securing that they shall enjoy eternal blessedness, to the praise of the glory of His grace. This is the only scheme of doctrine that is really consistent with itself, and the only one that can be really reconciled with the fundamental principles that most thoroughly pervade the whole word of God with respect to

the natural condition and capacities of men, and the grace and agency of God as exhibited in the salvation of those of them who are saved.

But I need not dwell longer upon the support which the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derives from the great general principles, or from other particular doctrines, taught in Scripture concerning God's perfections and supremacy, and the leading provisions and arrangements of the scheme of salvation,—of the covenant of grace; and will now proceed, according to the division formerly intimated, to make a few observations upon the way in which the scriptural evidence of this doctrine has been discussed, in the more limited sense of the words, as including the investigation of the meaning of those scriptural statements that bear more directly and immediately upon the precise point in dispute. I do not mean to expound the evidence, or to unfold it, but merely to suggest some such observations concerning it as may be fitted to assist in the study of the subject.

Though the subject, as thus defined and limited, may be supposed to include only those scriptural statements which speak directly and immediately of predestination, or election to grace and glory, yet it is important to remember that any scriptural statements which contain plain indications of a limitation or specialty in the destination of Christ's death as to its personal objects, and of a limitation or specialty in the actual exercise or forth-putting of that gracious agency which is necessary to the production of faith and regeneration, may be regarded as bearing directly, rather than in the way of inference or implication, upon the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. The connection between the doctrines of absolute personal election to life—particular redemption—and special distinguishing efficacious grace in conversion, is so clear and so close, as scarcely to leave any room for inference or argumentation. They are, indeed, rather parts of one great doctrine; and the proof of the truth of any one of them directly and necessarily establishes the truth of the rest. The Arminian scheme—that is, in its

more Pelagian, as distinguished from its more evangelical, form—may be admitted to be equally consistent with itself in these points, though consistent only in denying the whole of the fundamental principles taught in Scripture with respect to the method of salvation. And, accordingly, the old Arminians were accustomed to found their chief scriptural arguments against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination upon the proof they professed to produce from the word of God, that Christ died for all men,—that is, pro omnibus et singulis,—and that God gives to all men, or at least to all to whom the gospel is preached, grace sufficient to enable them to repent and believe. There is not the same consistency or harmony in the representation of the scheme of Christian doctrine given by some of the more evangelical Arminians; for, by their views of the entire depravity of mankind, and of the nature of the work of the Spirit in the production of faith and regeneration, they make concessions which, if fully followed out, would land them in Calvinism. Neither is there full consistency in the views of those men who hold Calvinistic doctrines upon other points, but at the same time maintain the universality of the atonement; for their scheme of doctrine, as we formerly showed, amounts in substance to this,—that they at once assert and deny God's universal love to men, or His desire and purpose of saving all men,—assert it by maintaining the universality of the atonement, and deny it by maintaining the specialty of efficacious grace bestowed upon some men, in the execution of God's eternal purpose or decree. But while it is thus important to remember that scriptural statements, which establish the doctrine of particular redemption and of special distinguishing efficacious grace in conversion, may be said directly, and not merely in the way of inference, to prove the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, yet, as we have already considered these great doctrines, we intend now to confine our observations to the discussions which have been carried on with regard to the meaning and import of those scriptural statements which speak still more directly and immediately of predestination or election,—that is, the passages where the words *proginw,skw*, *proori,zw*, *proti,qhmi*, *proetoima,zw*, *evkle,gw*, and

their cognates, occur in connection with the character and the ultimate destiny of man.

That the different passages where these words occur do, in their natural and literal import, favour the Calvinistic doctrine, is too obvious to admit of dispute. I have had occasion to advert to the fact, that it is no common thing now-a-days for German rationalists—differing in this from the older Socinians—to concede plainly and distinctly that the apostles believed, and intended to teach, evangelical and Calvinistic doctrine, and that their statements, in accordance with the fair application of the principles and rules of philology and criticism, cannot admit of any other interpretation; while, of course, they do not consider themselves bound to believe these doctrines upon the authority of any apostle. An instance of this occurs in regard to the topic we are at present considering, which it may be worth while to mention. Wegscheider, late one of the professors of theology at Halle, in his *Institutiones Theologiae Christianae Dogmaticae*<sup>42</sup>—usually esteemed the text-book of rationalistic theology,—admits that these words naturally and properly express a predestination or election of men by God to eternal happiness, and adds, "nec nisi neglecto Scripturarum sacrarum usu loquendi aliae significationes, mitiores quidem, illis subjici possunt." He ascribes the maintenance of this doctrine by the apostle to the erroneous notions of a crude and uncultivated age concerning divine efficiency, and to the Judaical particularism from which the apostles were not wholly delivered, and asserts that it is contradicted in other parts of Scripture; but this does not detract from the value of his testimony that the Apostle Paul believed and taught it, and that his words, critically investigated, do not admit of any other sense.

The passages which have been referred to, seem plainly fitted to convey the ideas that God had beforehand chosen, or made a selection of, some men from among the rest of men,—intending that these men, thus chosen or selected, should enjoy some peculiar privilege, and serve some special end or purpose. Even this general

idea, indicated by the natural meaning of these words taken by themselves, is inconsistent with the Arminian doctrine, which, I as we formerly explained, does not admit of a real election at all; and when it further appears, from the connection in which these words are employed,—first, that this predestination or election is not founded upon anything in the men chosen, as the cause or reason why God chooses them, but only on His own good pleasure; secondly, that it is a predestination or election of individuals, and not merely of bodies or masses of men; and, thirdly, that the choice or selection is directed to the object of effecting their eternal salvation, and does certainly issue in that result,—then the Calvinistic doctrine upon the subject is fully established. Calvinists, of course, maintain that all these three positions can be established with regard to the election which God, in Scripture, is represented as making among men; while Arminians deny this. And on this point hinges most of the discussion that has taken place in regard to the meaning of those scriptural statements in which God's act in predestinating or electing is spoken of.

Now, with respect to the first of these positions,—namely, that the election ascribed to God is not founded upon anything in those chosen, as the cause or reason why He chooses them, but only on His own good pleasure,—this is so clearly and explicitly asserted in Scripture—especially in the ninth chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans—that the Arminians scarcely venture to dispute it. This statement may, at first sight, appear surprising. Knowing, as we do, that the founding of election upon a foresight of men's faith and perseverance is a prominent part of the Arminian scheme, as usually set forth, it might be supposed that, if they do not dispute this position, they are abandoning their whole cause. But the explanation lies here. When they maintain the position, that election is founded upon a foresight of faith and perseverance, they use the word election in a sense in some measure accommodated to that in which it is employed by their opponents, and not in the sense in which they themselves generally maintain that it is used in Scripture; and, by saying that it is founded upon a foresight of faith and perseverance,



they virtually, as we have already explained, deny that it is election at all. The true and proper Arminian doctrine, as set forth by Arminius and his followers in opposition to Calvinism, is this,—that the whole of the decree of election—meaning thereby the only thing that bears any resemblance to the general idea Calvinists have of a decree of election—is God's general purpose to save all who shall believe and persevere, and to punish all who shall continue in impenitence and unbelief; so that, if there be anything which may be called an election of God to salvation, having reference to men individually, it can be founded only upon a foresight of men's faith and perseverance. Now there is nothing in this necessarily inconsistent with conceding that there is an election of God spoken of in Scripture, which is founded only upon His own good pleasure, and not upon anything in the men chosen, so long as they maintain that this is not the personal election to eternal life which the Calvinists contend for,—that is, so long as they deny one or other of the two remaining positions of the three formerly stated,—or, in other words, so long as they assert that the election of God which is spoken of in Scripture is not an election of individuals, but of nations or bodies of men; or, that it is not an election to faith and salvation, but merely to outward privileges, which men may improve or not as they choose.

It is true that, amid the confusion usually exhibited when men oppose truth, and are obliged to try to pervert the plain and obvious meaning of scriptural statements, some Arminians have tried to show that even the election of God, described in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is not founded upon God's good pleasure, but upon something foreseen or existing in men themselves. But these have not been the most respectable or formidable advocates of error; and as the most plausible defenders of the Arminian scriptural argument concede this point, it is proper to explain where the main difficulty really lies, and what they can still maintain, notwithstanding this concession. Archbishop Whately, in his Essay upon Election, which is the third in his work entitled Essays on some of the Difficulties in the Writings of St. Paul, distinctly admits that the word elect, as used in Scripture, "relates in most instances to an

arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree;"[43](#) and shows that those Arminians who endeavour to answer the Calvinistic argument, founded upon the passages of Scripture where this word is used, by denying this, are not able to maintain the position they have assumed.

The two other positions which were mentioned, as necessary to be proved in order to establish from Scripture the Calvinistic argument, are,—first, that there is an election ascribed to God, which is a choice or selection of some men individually, and not of nations, or masses of men; and, secondly, that it is an election of these men to faith and salvation, and not merely to outward privileges. The Arminians deny that there is any such election spoken of in Scripture; and maintain that the only election ascribed to God is a choice,—either, first, of nations or bodies of men, and not of individuals; or, secondly, an election of men to the enjoyment of outward privileges, or means of grace, and not to faith and salvation. Some Arminians prefer the one, and some the other, of these methods of answering the Calvinistic argument, and evading the testimony of Scripture; while others, again, think it best to employ both methods, according to the exigencies of the occasion. There is not, indeed, in substance, any very material difference between them; and it is a common practice of Arminians to employ the one or the other mode of evasion, according as the one or the other may seem to them to afford the more plausible materials, for turning aside the argument in favour of Calvinism, derived from the particular passage which they happen to be examining at the time. The ground taken by Dr. Whately is, that the election ascribed to God in Scripture, which he admits to relate, in most instances, to an arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree, is not an election to faith and salvation; but only to external privileges or means of grace, which men may improve or not as they choose. Dr. Sumner, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his work on Apostolical Preaching, takes the other ground, and maintains that it is an election, not of individuals, but of nations.[44](#)

These questions, of course, can be decided only by a careful examination of the particular passages where the subject is spoken of, by an investigation of the exact meaning of the words, and of the context and scope of the passage. It is to be observed, in regard to this subject in general, that Calvinists do not need to maintain—and do not in fact maintain—that wherever an election of God is spoken of in Scripture, it is an election of individuals, and an election of individuals to faith and salvation,—or, that there is nothing said in Scripture of God's choosing nations, or of His choosing men to outward privileges, and to nothing more. God undoubtedly does choose nations, to bestow upon them some higher privileges, both in regard to temporal and spiritual matters, than He bestows upon others. The condition, both of nations and of individuals, with respect to outward privileges and the means of grace, is to be ascribed to God's sovereignty, to the counsel of His own will; and Calvinists do not dispute that this doctrine is taught in Scripture,—nay, they admit that it is the chief thing intended, in some of the passages, where God's election is spoken of. But they maintain these two positions, which, if made out, are quite sufficient to establish all that they contend for,—namely, first, that in some cases, where an election of nations, or an election to outward privileges, is spoken of, or at least is included, there is more implied than is expressly asserted; or that the argument, either in its own nature, or from the way in which it is conducted, affords sufficient grounds for the conclusion, that the inspired writer believed or assumed an election of individuals to faith and salvation;—and, secondly, and more particularly, that there are passages in which the election spoken of is not an election of nations, or an election to outward privileges, at all; but only, and exclusively, an election of individuals, and an election of individuals to sanctification and eternal life, or to grace and glory.

\*\*\*479 The principal passage to which the first of these positions has been applied by some Calvinists, though not by all, is the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Komans. In this passage it is conceded by some, that one thing comprehended in the apostle's statements

and arguments is an election of nations to outward ; privileges ; while they also think it plain, from the whole scope of his statements, that he did not confine himself to this point, — ? that this was not the only thing he had in view,—and that, in his exposition of the subject of the rejection of the Jews as the peculiar people of God, and the admission of the Gentiles to all the •privileges of the church, he makes statements, and lays down principles, which clearly involve the doctrine, that God chooses men to eternal life according to the counsel of His own will. The principle of the divine sovereignty is manifested equally in both cases. There is an invariable connection established, in God's government of the world, between the enjoyment of outward privileges, or the means of grace, on the one hand, and faith and salvation on the other ; in this sense, and to this extent, that the legation of the first implies the negation of the second. We are warranted, by the whole tenor of Scripture, in maintaining that where God, in His sovereignty, withholds from men the enjoyment of the means of grace, —an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only way of salvation,—He at the same time, and by the same means, or ordination, withholds from them the opportunity and the power of believing and being saved. These two things are based upon the same general principle ; and thus far are directed to the same end. It is not, therefore, in the least to be wondered at, that the apostle, in discussing the one, should also introduce the other. The truth is, that no exposition could be given of God's procedure, in bestowing or withholding outward privileges, without also taking into account His procedure in enabling men to improve them ; and the apostle, accordingly, in the discussion of this subject, has introduced a variety of statements, which cannot, without the greatest force and straining, be regarded as implying less than this, that as God gives the means of grace to whom He will,—not from anything in them, as distinguishing them from others, but of His own good pleasure, —so He gives to whom He will, according to an election which He has made,—not on the ground of any worth of theirs, but of His own good pleasure, —the power or capacity of improving aright the means of grace, and of thereby attaining to salvation. The truth is, that in the course of the discussion contained

in this chapter, the apostle makes statements which far too plainly and explicitly assert the Calvinistic doctrine of the election of individuals to eternal life, to admit of their being evaded or turned aside by any vague or indefinite considerations derived from the general object for which the discussion is supposed to be introduced,—even though there was clearer evidence than there is, that his direct object in introducing it, was merely to explain the principles connected with the rejection of the Jews from outward privileges, and the admission of the Gentiles to the enjoyment of them. All this has been fully proved, by an examination of this important portion of Holy Writ ; and nothing has yet been devised,— though much ingenuity has been wasted in attempting it, —that is likely to have much influence, in disproving it, upon men who are simply desirous to know the true meaning of God's statements, and are ready to submit their understandings and their hearts to whatever He has revealed. The apostle, in this passage, not only makes it manifest that he intended to assert the doctrine which is held by Calvinists upon the subject of election ; but, further, that he expected that his readers would understand his statements, just as Calvinists have always understood them, by the objections which he puts into their mouths,— assuming that, as a matter of course, they would at once allege, in opposition to what he had taught, that it represented God as unrighteous, and interfered with men's being responsible, and justly blameable for their actions. These are just the objections which, at first view, spring up in men's minds, in opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, —the very objections which, to this day, are constantly urged against it, —but which have not even a prima facie plausibility, as directed against the Arminian doctrine, of God's merely choosing men to outward privileges, and then leaving everything else connected with their ultimate destiny to depend upon the improvement which they choose to make of them. A doctrine which does not afford obvious and plausible grounds for these objections, cannot be that which the apostle taught ; and this—were there nothing else—is sufficient to disprove the interpretation put upon the passage by our opponents. Arminians, indeed, profess to find an inscrutable mystery —such as might have suggested these

objections—in the different degrees in which outward privileges are communicated by God to different nations and to different individuals. But although they assert this, when pressed with the consideration, i that the objections which the apostle intimates might be adduced against his doctrine implied that there was some inscrutable J mystery attaching to it,— they really do not leave any mystery in t the matter which there is any great difficulty in solving. There us no great mystery ixi the unequal distribution of outward privi- i leges, unless there be an invariable connection between the posses- \*sion of outward privileges and the actual attainment of salvation, at least in the sense formerly explained, — namely, that the nega- tion of the first implies the negation of the second. If Arminians were to concede to us this connection, this would no doubt imply such a mystery as might naturally enough be supposed to suggest nich objections as are mentioned by the apostle. But their neral principles will not allow them to concede this ; for they nust maintain that, whatever differences there may be in men's )utward privileges, all have means and opportunities sufficient to ead, when duly improved, to their salvation. Accordingly, Limborch—after attempting to find, in the in- equality of men's outward privileges, something that might natu- ally suggest these objections to men's minds, and warrant what he apostle himself says about the inscrutable mystery involved n the doctrine which he had been teaching—is obliged, in con- istency, to introduce a limitation of this inequality and of its lecessary results,—a limitation which really removes all appearance of unrighteousness in God, and supersedes the necessity of appealing to the incomprehensibleness of His judgments, by as- serting of every man, that "• licet careat gratia salvijica" — by which \* he just means the knowledge of the gospel revelation,— " non ' tamen ilia gratise mensura destitutus est, quin si ea recte utatur sensim in meliorem statum transferri possit, in quo ope gratiae salutaris ad salutem pervenire queat." \* Arminians are unable to escape from inconsistency in treating of this subject. When they are dealing with the argument, that the condition of men who are left, in providence, without the knowledge of the gospel, and without the means of grace, virtually involves the principle of the

Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, they labour to establish a distinction between the cases, and thus to evade the argument by denying a connection between the knowledge of the gospel and salvation, and try to explain the inequality by something in the conduct of men themselves, instead of resolving it into God's sovereignty ; and have thus cut away the only plausible ground for maintaining that this inequality in the distribution of the means of grace is the inscrutable mystery of which the apostle speaks, as involved in his doctrine of election. Having laid the foundations of their whole scheme in grounds which exclude mystery, and make everything in the divine procedure perfectly comprehensible, they are unable to get up a mystery, even when they are compelled to make the attempt, in order to escape from the inferences which the apostle's statements so plainly sanction. In short, Arminians must either adopt the Calvinistic principle of the invariable connection, negatively, between the enjoyment of the means of grace and the actual attainment of salvation, or else admit that there is no appearance of ground for adducing against their doctrine the objections which the apostle plainly intimates that his doctrine was sure to call forth ; and in either case, their attempt to exclude the Calvinistic doctrine of the absolute election of individuals to faith and salvation, from the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, can be conclusively proved to be wholly unsuccessful. Thus it appears that, even if we concede, as some Calvinists have done, that the more direct object of the apostle, in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is to unfold the principles that regulate the rejection of the Jews from outward privileges, and the admission of the Gentiles to the enjoyment of them,— this is altogether insufficient to show that he has not here also plainly and fully asserted, as virtually identical in principle, the sovereignty of God in choosing some men, according to His mere good pleasure, to everlasting life, and in leaving the rest, not worse or more unworthy in themselves, to perish in their natural condition of guilt and depravity. I shall now only again advert to the second position formerly mentioned, as maintained by Calvinists, — namely, that while there are passages in Scripture which refer to God's electing nations, and choosing men to the enjoyment of

external privileges or means of grace, there are also many passages which there is no plausible pretence for evading in this way,— passages which plainly teach that God—uninfluenced by anything in men them- selves, or by anything, so far as we know or can know, but the counsel of His own will—elects some men to faith and holiness, to perseverance in them and everlasting life, to be conformed to the image of His Son, and to share at length in His glory. These passages are to be found not only—as is sometimes alleged—in the writings of Paul, but in the discourses of our Saviour Himself, and in the writings of the Apostles Peter and John. It is our duty to be acquainted with them, and to be able to state and de- fend the grounds on which it can be shown that, when carefully examined and correctly understood, they give the clear sanction of God's word to the doctrines which we profess to believe. The Calvinistic doctrine of election is stated in Scripture expressly and by plain implication,— formally and incidentally,—dogmatically and historically, —as a general truth, unfolding the principle that regulates God's dealings with men, and also as affording the true explanation of particular events which are recorded to have taken place; and thus there is the fullest confirmation given to all that is suggested upon this subject by the general views presented to us concerning the perfections and supremacy of God,—the end or object of Christ in coming into the world to seek and to save lost sinners,—and the agency of the Holy Ghost, in applying to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them, by working faith in them, and thereby uniting them to Christ in their effectual calling, and in preserving them in safety unto His everlasting kingdom.

### Sec. 13. Objections against Predestination.

We now proceed to make some observations upon the objections which have been commonly adduced against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, and the way in which these objections have been, and should be, met. There is no call to make such a division of the objections against Calvinism as we have made of the arguments in support of it,—namely, into, first, those which are derived from



general principles, or from other connected doctrines, taught in Scripture; and, secondly, those derived from particular scriptural statements bearing directly and immediately upon the point in dispute: for it is an important general consideration, with reference to the whole subject of the objections against the Calvinistic doctrine, that the Arminians scarcely profess to have anything to adduce against it, derived from particular or specific statements of Scripture, as distinguished from general principles, or connected doctrines, alleged to be taught there. We have shown that, in favour of Calvinistic predestination, we can adduce from Scripture not only general principles which plainly involve it, and other doctrines which necessarily imply it, or from which it can be clearly and certainly deduced, but also specific statements, in which the doctrine itself is plainly, directly, and immediately taught. Arminians, of course, attempt to answer both these classes of arguments, and to produce proofs on the other side. But they do not allege that they can produce passages from Scripture which contain, directly and immediately, a negation of the Calvinistic or an assertion of the Arminian view, upon the precise point of predestination. Their objections against our views, and their arguments in favour of their own opinions, are wholly deduced, in the way of inference, from principles and doctrines alleged to be taught there; and not from statements which even appear to tell us, plainly and directly, that the Calvinistic doctrine upon this subject is false, or that the Arminian doctrine is true. We profess to prove not only that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is necessarily involved in, or clearly deducible from, the representations given us in Scripture concerning the divine perfections and the divine sovereignty, as manifested in the government of the world, and especially in the production of faith and regeneration in all in whom they are produced, but also that there are statements which, rightly interpreted, plainly and directly tell us that God made an election or choice among men, not founded upon anything in the men elected, but on the counsel of His own will; and that this was an election of some men individually to faith, holiness, and eternal life, and was intended and fitted to secure these results in all who are comprehended under it. Arminians, of course,

allege that the passages in which we find this doctrine do not really contain it; and they allege further, that there are passages which convey representations of the perfections and providence of God,—of the powers and capacities of men,—and of the principles that determine their destiny,—which are inconsistent with this doctrine, and from which, therefore, its falsehood may be deduced in the way of inference; but they do not allege that there are any passages which treat directly of the subject of election, and which expressly, or by plain consequence from these particular statements themselves, tell us that there is no such election by God as Calvinists ascribe to Him,—or that there is such an election, falsely so called, as the Arminians ascribe to Him. In short, their objections against Calvinistic predestination, and their arguments in support of their own opinions, are chiefly derived from the general representations given us in Scripture concerning the perfections and moral government of God, and the powers and capacities of men, and not directly, from what it tells us, upon the subject of predestination itself.

Arminians, indeed, are accustomed to quote largely from Scripture in opposition to our doctrine and in support of their own, but these quotations only establish directly certain view in regard to the perfections and moral government of God, and the capacities and responsibilities of men; and from these views, thus established, they draw the inference that Calvinistic predestination cannot be true, because it is inconsistent with them. We admit that they are perfectly successful in establishing from Scripture that God is infinitely holy, just, and good,—that He is not the author of sin, and that He is not a respecter of persons,—and that men are responsible for their actions,—that they are guilty of sin, and justly punishable in all their transgressions of God's law, in all their shortcomings of what He requires of them,—that they are guilty of peculiarly aggravated sin, in every instance in which they refuse to comply with the invitations and commands addressed to them to come to Christ, to repent and turn to God, to believe in the name of His Son,—and are thus justly responsible for their own final perdition. They prove all this abundantly from Scripture, but they prove nothing more; and the

only proof they have to adduce that God did not from eternity choose some men to everlasting life of His own good pleasure, and that He does not execute this decree in time by giving to these men faith, holiness, and perseverance, is just that the Calvinistic doctrine thus denied can be shown, in the way of inference and deduction, to be inconsistent with the representations given us in Scripture of God's perfections, and of men's capacities and responsibilities.

There is a class of texts appealed to by Arminians, that may seem to contradict this observation, though, indeed, the contradiction is only in appearance. I refer to those passages, often adduced by them, which seem to represent God as willing or desiring the salvation of all men, and Christ as dying with an intention of saving all men. It will be recollected that I have already explained that the establishment of the position, that God did not will or purpose to save all men, and that Christ did not die with an intention of saving all men,—that is, *omnes et singulos*, or all men collectively, or any man individually (for of course we do not deny that, in some sense, God will have all men to be saved, and that Christ died for all),—proves directly, and not merely in the way of deduction or inference, the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. And it might seem to follow, upon the ground of the same general principle,—though by a converse application of it,—that the proof, that God desired and purposed the salvation of all men, and that Christ died with an intention of saving all men, directly, and not merely by inference, disproves the Calvinistic, and establishes the Arminian, view of predestination. We admit that there is a sense in which these positions might be taken, the establishment of which would directly effect this. But then the difference between the two cases lies here, that the Arminians scarcely allege that they can make out such a sense of these positions, as would establish directly their main conclusion, without needing to bring in, in order to establish it, those general representations of the perfections and moral government of God, and of the capacities and responsibilities of men, which we have described as the only real support of their cause. So far as concerns the mere statements, that God will have all men to be saved, and that

Christ died for all, they could scarcely deny that there would be some ground —did we know nothing more of the matter—for judging, to some extent, of their import and bearing from the event or result; and upon the ground that all men are not saved, in point of fact, while God and Christ are possessed of infinite knowledge, wisdom, and power, inferring that these statements were to be understood with some limitation, either as to the purpose or the act,—that is, as to the will or intention of God and Christ,—or as to the objects of the act, that is, the all. Now, in order to escape the force of this very obvious consideration, and to enable them to establish that sense of their positions, which alone would make them available, as directly disproving Calvinistic, and establishing Arminian, doctrines upon the subject of predestination, they are obliged, as the whole history of the manner in which this controversy has been conducted fully proves, to fall back upon the general representations given us in Scripture, with respect to the perfections and moral government of God, and the capacities and responsibilities of men. Thus we can still maintain the general position we have laid down,—namely, that the scriptural evidence adduced against Calvinism, and in favour of Arminianism, upon this point, does not consist of statements bearing directly and immediately upon the precise point to be proved, but of certain general representations concerning God and man, from which the falsehood of the one doctrine, and the truth of the other, are deduced in the way of inference. It is of some importance to keep this consideration in remembrance, in studying this subject, as it is well fitted to aid us in forming a right conception of the true state of the case, argumentatively, and to confirm the impression of the strength of the evidence by which the Calvinistic scheme of theology is supported, and of the uncertain and unsatisfactory character of the arguments by which it is assailed.

The evidence adduced by the Arminians from Scripture just proves that God is infinitely holy, just, and good,—that He is not the author of sin,—that He is no respecter of persons,—and that a man is responsible for all his actions;—that he incurs guilt, and is justly punished for his disobedience to God's law, and for his refusal to

repent and believe the gospel. They infer from this, that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is false; while we maintain—and we are not called upon to maintain more, at this stage of the argument—that this inference cannot be established; and that, in consequence, the proper evidence, direct and inferential, in favour of the Calvinistic argument, stands unassailed, and ought, in right reason, to compel our assent to its truth.

While the objections to the Calvinistic doctrine, from its alleged inconsistency with the divine perfections and moral government, and from men's capacities and responsibilities, are the only real arguments against it, the discussion of these does not constitute the only materials to be found in the works which have been written upon the subject. Calvinists have had no small labour, while conducting the defence of their cause, in exposing the irrelevancy of many of the objections which have been adduced on the other side, and the misapprehensions and misstatements of their doctrine, on which many of the common objections against it are based; and it may be proper to make some observations upon these points, before we proceed to advert to the method in which the true and real difficulties of the case ought to be met.

Under the head of pure irrelevancies, are to be classed all the attempts which have been made by Arminian writers to found an argument against Calvinism upon the mere proof of the unchangeable obligation of the moral law, the universal acceptableness to God of holiness, and its indispensable necessity to men's happiness,—the necessity of faith and repentance, holiness and perseverance, in order to their admission into heaven. There is nothing, in these and similar doctrines, which even appears to be at variance with any of the principles of the Calvinistic system. We do not deny, or need to deny, or to modify, or to throw into the background, any one of these positions. The question is not as to the certainty and invariableness of the connection between faith and holiness on the one hand, and heaven and happiness on the other. This is admitted on both sides; it is assumed and provided for upon

both systems. The question is only as to the way and manner in which the maintenance of this connection invariably has been provided for, and is developed in fact; and here it is contended that the Calvinistic view of the matter is much more accordant with every consideration suggested by the scriptural representations of man's natural condition, and of the relation in which, both as a creature and as a sinner, he stands to God.

It is also a pure irrelevancy to talk, as is often done, as if Calvinistic doctrines implied, or produced, or assumed, any diminution of the number of those who are ultimately saved, as compared with Arminianism. A dogmatic assertion as to the comparative numbers of those of the human race who are saved and of those who perish, in the ultimate result of things, forms no part of Calvinism. The actual result of salvation, in the case of a portion of the human race, and of destruction in the case of the rest, is the same upon both systems, though they differ in the exposition of the principles by which the result is regulated and brought about. In surveying the past history of the world, or looking around on those who now occupy the earth, with the view of forming a sort of estimate of the fate that has overtaken, or yet awaits, the generations of their fellow-men (we speak, of course, of those who have grown up to give indications of their personal character; and there is nothing to prevent a Calvinist believing that all dying in infancy are saved), Calvinists introduce no other principle, and apply no other standard, than just the will of God, plainly revealed in His word, as to what those things are which accompany salvation; and consequently, if, in doing so, they should form a different estimate as to the comparative results from what Arminians would admit, this could not arise from anything peculiar to them, as holding Calvinistic doctrines, but only from their having formed and applied a higher standard of personal character—that is, of the holiness and morality which are necessary to prepare men for admission to heaven—than the Arminians are willing to countenance. And yet it is very common among Arminian writers to represent Calvinistic doctrines as leading, or tending to lead, those who hold them, to consign to everlasting misery a large portion of

the human race, whom the Arminians would admit to the enjoyment of heaven. But it is needless to dwell longer upon such manifestly irrelevant objections as these.

It is of more importance to advert to some of the misapprehensions and misstatements of Calvinistic doctrine, on which many of the common objections to it are based. These, as we have had occasion to mention in explaining the state of the question, are chiefly connected with the subject of reprobation,—a topic on which Arminians are fond of dwelling,—though it is very evident that the course they usually pursue in the discussion of this object, indicates anything but a real love of truth. I have already illustrated the unfairness of the attempts they usually make, to give priority and prominence to the consideration of reprobation, as distinguished from election; and have referred to the fact that the Arminians, at the Synod of Dort, insisted on beginning with the discussion of the subject of reprobation, and complained of it as a great hardship, when the synod refused to concede this.<sup>45</sup> And they have continued generally to pursue a similar policy. Whitby, in his celebrated book on the Five Points,—which has long been a standard work among Episcopalian Arminians, though it is not characterized by any ability,—devotes the first two chapters to the subject of reprobation. And John Wesley, in his work entitled *Predestination Calmly Considered*,<sup>46</sup> begins with proving that election necessarily implies reprobation, and thereafter confines his attention to the latter topic. Their object in this is very manifest. They know that reprobation can be more easily misrepresented, and set forth in a light that is fitted to prejudice men's feelings against it. I have already illustrated the unfairness of this policy, and have also taken occasion to advert to the difference between election and reprobation,—the nature and import of the doctrine we really hold on the latter subject,—and the misrepresentations which Arminians commonly make of our sentiments regarding it.

We have now to notice the real and serious objections against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derived from its alleged

inconsistency,—first, with the holiness, justice, and goodness of God; and, secondly, with men's responsibility for all their acts of disobedience or transgression of God's law, including their refusal to repent and believe the gospel, and being thus the true authors and causes of their own destruction,—the second of these objections being, in substance, just the same as that which is founded upon the commands, invitations, and exhortations addressed to men in Scripture. The consideration of these objections has given rise to endless discussions on the most difficult and perplexing of all topics; but I shall limit myself to a few observations concerning it, directed merely to the object of suggesting some hints as to the chief things to be kept in view in the study of it.

First, there is one general consideration to which I have repeatedly had occasion to advert in its bearing upon other subjects, and which applies equally to this,—namely, that these allegations of the Arminians are merely objections against the truth of a doctrine, for which a large amount of evidence, that cannot be directly answered and disposed of, has been adduced, and that they ought to be kept in their proper place as objections. The practical effect of this consideration is, that in dealing with these allegations, we should not forget that the condition of the argument is this,—that the Calvinistic doctrine having been established by a large amount of evidence, direct and inferential, which cannot be directly answered, all that we are bound to do in dealing with objections which may be advanced against it,—that is, objections to the doctrine itself, as distinguished from objections to the proof,—is merely to show that these objections have not been substantiated,—that nothing has really been proved by our opponents, which affords any sufficient ground for rejecting the body of evidence by which our doctrine has been established. The onus probandi lies upon them; we have merely to show that they have not succeeded in proving any position which, from its intrinsic nature, viewed in connection with the evidence on which it rests, as sufficient to compel us to abandon the doctrine against which it is adduced. This is a consideration which it is important for us to keep in view and to apply in all cases to which it is truly and fairly



applicable, as being fitted to preserve the argument clear and unembarrassed, and to promote the interests of truth. It is specially incumbent upon us to attend to the true condition of the argument in this respect, when the objection is founded on, or connected with, considerations that have an immediate relation to a subject so far above our comprehension as the attributes of God, and the principles that regulate His dealings with His creatures. In dealing with objections derived from this source, we should be careful to confine ourselves within the limits which the logical conditions of the argument point out, lest, by taking a wider compass, we should be led to follow the objectors in their presumptuous speculations about matters which are too high for us. The obligation to act upon this principle, in dealing with objections with respect to the subject under consideration, may be said to be specially imposed upon us by the example of the Apostle Paul, who had to deal with the very same objections, and whose mode of disposing of them should be a guide and model to us.

We have already had occasion to advert to the fact—as affording a very strong presumption that Paul's doctrine was Calvinistic—that he gives us to understand that the doctrine which he taught in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans was likely, or rather certain, to be assailed with the very same objections which have constantly been directed against Calvinism,—namely, that it contradicted God's justice, and excluded man's responsibility for his sins and ultimate destiny,—objections which are not likely to have been ever adduced against Arminianism, but which naturally, obviously, and spontaneously, spring up in opposition to Calvinism in the minds of men who are not accustomed to realize the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and to follow out what these great truths involve; who, in short, are not in the habit, in the ordinary train of their thoughts and reflections, of giving to God that place in the administration of the government of His creatures to which He is entitled. But we have at present to do, not with the evidence afforded by the fact that these objections naturally suggested themselves against the apostle's doctrine, but with the lesson which his example

teaches as to the way in which they should be dealt with and disposed of. In place of formally and elaborately answering them, he just resolves the whole matter into the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and men's incapacity either of frustrating His plans or of comprehending His counsels. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" etc. The conduct of the apostle in this matter is plainly fitted to teach us that we should rely mainly upon the direct and proper evidence of the doctrine itself; and, when satisfied upon that point, pay little regard to objections, however obvious or plausible they may be, since the subject is one which we cannot fully understand, and resolves ultimately into an incomprehensible mystery, which our powers are unable to fathom. This is plainly the lesson which the conduct of the apostle is fitted to teach us; and it would have been well if both Calvinists and Arminians had been more careful to learn and to practise it. Arminians have often pressed these objections by very presumptuous speculations about the divine nature and attributes, and about what it was or was not befitting God, or consistent with His perfections, for Him to do; and Calvinists, in dealing with these objections, have often gone far beyond what the rules of strict reasoning required, or the apostle's example warranted,—and have indulged in speculations almost as presumptuous as those of their opponents. Calvinists have, I think, frequently erred, and involved themselves in difficulties, by attempting too much in explaining and defending their doctrines; and much greater caution and reserve, in entering into intricate speculations upon this subject, is not only dictated by sound policy, with reference to controversial success, but is imposed, as a matter of obligation, by just views of the sacredness and incomprehensibility of the subject, and of the deference due to the example of an inspired apostle. Instead of confining themselves to the one object of showing that Arminians have not proved that Calvinism necessarily implies anything inconsistent with what we know certainly concerning the perfections and moral government of God, or the capacities and responsibilities of man, they have often entered into speculations, by which they imagined that they could directly and positively vindicate their doctrines from all objections, and prove them to be

encompassed with few or no difficulties. And thus the spectacle has not unfrequently been exhibited, on the one hand, of some shortsighted Arminian imagining that he has discovered a method of putting the objections against Calvinism in a much more conclusive and impressive form than they had ever received before; and, on the other hand, of some shortsighted Calvinist imagining that he had discovered a method of answering the objections much more satisfactorily than any that had been previously employed; while, all the time, the state of the case continued unchanged,—the real difficulty having merely had its position slightly shifted, or being a little more thrown into the background at one point, only to appear again at another, as formidable as ever. The truth is, that no real additional strength, in substance, can be given to the objection, beyond what it had as adduced against the apostle, "Is there unrighteousness with God? why doth He yet find fault, for who hath resisted His will?" and that nothing more can be done in the way of answering it, than bringing out the ground which he has suggested and employed,—of resolving all into the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and the absolute dependence and utter worthlessness of man, and admitting that the subject involves an inscrutable mystery, which we are unable to fathom.

Secondly, it is important to remember that these objections—if they have any weight, and in so far as they have any—are directed equally against Calvinistic views of the divine procedure, as of the divine decrees,—of what God does, or abstains from doing, in time, in regard to those who are saved and those who perish, as well as of what He has decreed or purposed to do, or to abstain from doing, from eternity. Arminians, indeed, as I formerly explained, do not venture formally to deny that whatever God does in time, He decreed or purposed from eternity to do; but still they are accustomed to represent the matter in such a way as is fitted to convey the impression, that some special and peculiar difficulty attaches to the eternal decrees or purposes ascribed to God, different in kind from, or superior in degree to, that attaching to the procedure ascribed to Him in providence. And hence it becomes important—in order at

once to enable us to form a juster estimate of the amount of evidence in favour of our doctrine, and of the uncertain and unsatisfactory character of the objections adduced against it—to have our minds familiar with the very obvious, but very important, consideration, that Calvinists do not regard anything as comprehended in the eternal decrees or purposes of God, above and beyond what they regard God as actually doing in time in the execution of these decrees. If it be inconsistent with the perfections and moral government of God, and with the capacities and responsibilities of men, that God should form certain decrees or purposes from eternity in regard to men, it must be equally, but not more, inconsistent with them, that He should execute these decrees in time. And anything which it is consistent with God's perfections and man's moral nature that God should do, or effect, or bring to pass, in time, it can be no more objectionable to regard Him as having from eternity decreed to do.

The substance of the actual procedure which Calvinists ascribe to God in time—in connection with the ultimate destiny of those who are saved and of those who perish—is this, that in some men He produces or effects faith, regeneration, holiness, and perseverance, by an exercise of almighty power which they cannot frustrate or overcome, and which, certainly and infallibly, produces the result,—and that the rest of men He leaves in their natural state of guilt and depravity, withholding from them, or de facto not bestowing upon them, that almighty and efficacious grace, without which—as He, of course, well knows—they are unable to repent and believe,—the inevitable result thus being, that they perish in their sins. If this be the actual procedure of God in dealing with men in time, it manifestly introduces no new or additional difficulty into the matter to say, that He has from eternity decreed or resolved to do all this; and yet many persons seem to entertain a lurking notion—which the common Arminian mode of stating and enforcing these objections is fitted to cherish—that, over and above any difficulties that may attach to the doctrine which teaches that God does this, there is some special and additional difficulty attaching to the doctrine which

represents Him as having decreed or resolved to do this from eternity. To guard against this source of misconception and confusion, it is desirable, both in estimating the force of the evidence in support of Calvinism, and the strength of the Arminian objections, to conceive of them as brought to bear upon what our doctrine represents God as doing, rather than upon what it represents Him as decreeing to do; while, of course, the Arminians are quite entitled to adduce, if they can find them, any special objections against the general position which we fully and openly avow,—namely, that all that God does in time, He decreed from eternity do. The substance, then, of the objection, is really this,—that it is inconsistent with the divine perfections and moral government of God, and with the capacities and responsibilities of men, that God should certainly and effectually, by His almighty grace, produce faith and regeneration in some men, that He may thereby secure their eternal salvation, and abstain from bestowing upon others this almighty grace, or from effecting in them those changes, with the full knowledge that the inevitable result must be, that He will consign them to everlasting misery as a punishment for their impenitence and unbelief, as well as their other sins.

Thirdly, we observe that the direct and proper answer to the Arminian objections is this,—that nothing which Calvinists ascribe to God, or represent Him as doing, in connection with the character, actions, and ultimate destiny, either of those who are saved or of those who perish, can be proved necessarily to involve anything inconsistent with the perfections of God, or the principles of His moral government, or with the just rights and claims, or the actual capacities and responsibilities, of men. With respect to the alleged inconsistency of our doctrine with the perfections and moral government of God, this can be maintained and defended only by means of assertions, for which no evidence can be produced, and which are manifestly, in their general character, uncertain and presumptuous. It is a much safer and more becoming course, to endeavour to ascertain what God has done or will do, and to rest in the conviction that all this is quite consistent with His infinite

holiness, justice, goodness, and mercy, than to reason back from our necessarily defective and inadequate conceptions of these infinite perfections, as to what He must do, or cannot do.

It cannot be proved that we ascribe to God anything inconsistent with infinite holiness, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He is involved in the responsibility of the production of the sinful actions of men. It cannot be proved that we ascribe to Him anything inconsistent with His justice, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He withholds from any man anything to which that man has a just and rightful claim. It cannot be proved that we ascribe to Him anything inconsistent with His goodness and mercy, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He does not bestow upon men all the goodness and mercy which it consists with the combined glory of His whole moral perfections to impart to them, and because it is evidently unreasonable to represent anything as inconsistent with God's goodness and mercy which actually takes place under His moral government, when He could have prevented it if He had chosen. On such grounds as these, it is easy enough to show, as it has been often shown, that the allegation that Calvinism ascribes to God anything necessarily inconsistent with His moral perfections and government, cannot be substantiated upon any clear and certain grounds. This is sufficient to prove that the objection is possessed of no real weight. In consequence, probably, of the sounder principles of philosophizing now more generally prevalent in this country, the objection to Calvinism—on which its opponents used to rest so much, derived from its alleged inconsistency with the moral perfections of God—has been virtually abandoned by some of the most distinguished anti-Calvinistic writers of the present day,—such as Archbishop Whately and Bishop Copleston.<sup>47</sup>

It may seem, however, as if that branch of the objection had a stronger and firmer foundation to rest upon, which is based upon the alleged inconsistency of our doctrine with what is known concerning the capacities and responsibilities of men. Man is indeed better

known to us than God; and there is not the same presumption in arguing from the qualities and properties of man, as in arguing from the perfections and attributes of God. It is fully admitted as a great truth, which is completely established, and which ought never to be overlooked or thrown into the background, but to be constantly and strenuously enforced and maintained,—that man is responsible for all his actions,—that he incurs guilt, and is justly punishable whenever he transgresses or comes short of anything which God requires of men, and, more especially, whenever he refuses to comply with the command addressed to him, to repent and turn to God, and to believe in the name of His Son. All this is fully conceded; but still it is denied that any conclusive proof has ever been adduced, that there is anything in all this necessarily inconsistent with what Calvinists represent God as doing, or abstaining from doing, in connection with the character, actions, and destiny of men. God has so constituted man, and has placed him in such circumstances, as to make him fully responsible for his actions. He has made full provision in man's constitution, not only for his being responsible, but for his feeling and knowing that he is responsible; and this conviction of responsibility is probably never wholly extinguished in men's breasts. We doubt very much whether there ever was a man who firmly and honestly believed that he was not responsible for his violations of God's law. There have been men who professed to deny this, and have even professed to base their denial of their own responsibility upon views that resembled those generally entertained by Calvinists. And Arminians have been sometimes disposed to catch at such cases, as if they afforded evidence that the maintenance of Calvinistic doctrines, and the maintenance of a sense of personal responsibility, were incompatible with each other. But the cases have not been very numerous where men even professed to have renounced a sense of their own responsibility; and even where this profession has been made, there is good ground to doubt whether it really coincided with an actual conviction, decidedly and honestly held, and was not rather a hypocritical pretence, though mixed, it may be, with some measure of self-delusion.

It is admitted generally, that it is unsuitable to the very limited powers and capacities of man to make his perception of the harmony, or consistency, of doctrines, the test and standard of their actual harmony and consistency with each other; and that, consequently, it is unwarrantable for us to reject a doctrine, which appears to be established by satisfactory evidence, direct and appropriate, merely because we cannot perceive how it can be reconciled with another doctrine, which, when taken by itself, seems also to be supported by satisfactory evidence. We may find it impossible to explain how the doctrine of God's fore-ordination and providence—of His giving or withholding efficacious grace—can be reconciled, or shown to be consistent, with that of men's responsibility; but this is no sufficient reason why we should reject either of them, since they both appear to be sufficiently established by satisfactory proof,—proof which, when examined upon the ground of its own merits, it seems impossible successfully to assail. The proof adduced, that they are inconsistent with each other, is derived from considerations more uncertain and precarious than those which supply the proof of the truth of each of them, singly and separately; and therefore, in right reason, it should not be regarded as sufficient to warrant us in rejecting either the one or the other, though we may not be able to perceive and develope their harmony or consistency. Let the apparent inconsistency, or difficulty of reconciling them, be held a good reason for scrutinizing rigidly the evidence upon which each rests; but if the evidence for both be satisfactory and conclusive, then let both be received and admitted, even though the difficulty of establishing their consistency, or our felt inability to perceive and explain it, remains unaltered.

It is also to be remembered, that Calvinists usually maintain that it has never been satisfactorily proved that anything more is necessary to render a rational being responsible for his actions than the full power of doing as he chooses,—of giving full effect to his own volitions,—a power the possession and exercise of which does not even seem to be inconsistent with God's fore-ordination of all events, and His providence in bringing them to pass; and also that they



generally hold that men's inability or incapacity to will anything spiritually good is a penal infliction or punishment justly and righteously inflicted upon account of sin,—a subject which I have already discussed. On these various grounds, it has been shown that the validity of the Arminian objections cannot be established,—that their leading positions upon this subject cannot be proved,—and that, therefore, there is no sufficient reason, in anything they have adduced, why we should reject a doctrine so fully established by evidence which, on the ground of its own proper merits, cannot be successfully assailed.

Fourthly, There is one other important position maintained by Calvinists upon this subject, which completes the vindication of their cause, and most fully warrants them to put aside the Arminian objections as insufficient to effect the object for which they are adduced. It is this,—that the real difficulties connected with this mysterious subject are not peculiar to the Calvinistic system of theology, but apply almost, if not altogether, equally to every other,—that no system can get rid of the difficulties with which the subject is encompassed, or afford any real explanation of them,—and that, at bottom, the real differences among different theories merely mark the different positions in which the difficulties are placed, without materially affecting their magnitude or their solubility. It is very plain that God and men, in some way, concur or combine in forming man's character, in producing man's actions, and in determining man's fate. This is not a doctrine peculiar to any one scheme of religion professedly founded on the Christian revelation, but is common to them all,—nay, it must be admitted by all men who do not take refuge in atheism. It is very plain, likewise, that the explanation of the way and manner in which God and men thus combine or concur in producing these results, involves mysteries which never have been fully solved, and which, therefore, we are warranted in supposing, cannot be solved by men in their present condition, and with their existing capacities and means of knowledge. This difficulty consists chiefly in this, that when we look at the actual results,—including, as these results do, men's depravity

by nature, sinful actions, and everlasting destruction,—we are unable to comprehend or explain how God and man can both be concerned in the production of them, while yet each acts in the matter consistently with the powers and qualities which he possesses,—God consistently with both His natural and His moral attributes,—and man consistently with both his entire dependence as a creature, and his free agency as a responsible being. This is the great mystery which we cannot fathom; and all the difficulties connected with the investigation of religion, or the exposition of the relation between God and man, can easily be shown to resolve or run up into this. This is a difficulty which attaches to every system except atheism,—which every system is bound to meet and to grapple with,—and which no system can fully explain and dispose of; and this, too, is a position which Archbishop Whately has had the sagacity and the candour to perceive and admit.[48](#)

In the endless speculations which have been directed professedly to the elucidation of this mysterious subject, there has been exhibited some tendency to run into opposite extremes,—to give prominence to God's natural, to the comparative omission or disregard of His moral, attributes,—to give prominence to man's dependence as a creature, to the comparative omission or disregard of his free agency as a responsible being,—or the reverse. The prevailing tendency, however, has been towards the second of these extremes,—namely, that of excluding God, and exalting man,—of giving prominence to God's moral attributes, or rather those of them which seem to come least into collision with man's dignity and self-sufficiency, and to overlook His infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom, and His sovereign supremacy,—to exalt man's share in the production of the results in the exercise of his own powers and capacities, as if he were, or could be, independent of God. Experience abundantly proves that the general tendency of men is to lean to this extreme, and thus to rob God of the honour and glory which belong to Him. This, therefore, is the extreme which should be most carefully guarded against ; and it should be guarded against just by implicitly receiving whatever doctrine upon this subject seems to rest upon satisfactory

evidence,—however humbling it may be to the pride and self-sufficiency of man, and however unable we may be to perceive its consistency with other doctrines which we also believe.

The pride and presumption, the ignorance and depravity, of man, all lead him to exclude God, and to exalt himself, and to go as far as he can in the way of solving all mysteries; and both these tendencies combine in leading the mass of mankind to lean towards the Arminian rather than the Calvinistic doctrine upon this subject. But neither can the mystery be solved, nor can man be exalted to that position of independence and self-sufficiency to which he aspires, unless God be wholly excluded, unless His most essential and unquestionable perfections be denied, unless His supreme dominion in the government of His creatures be altogether set aside. The real difficulty is to explain how moral evil should, under the government of a God of infinite holiness, power, and wisdom, have been introduced, and have prevailed so extensively; and especially—for this is at once the most awful and mysterious department of the subject—how it should have been permitted to issue, in fact, in the everlasting misery and destruction of so many of God's creatures. It is when we realize what this, as an actual result, involves; and when we reflect on what is implied in the consideration, that upon any theory this state of things does come to pass under the government of a God of infinite knowledge and power, who foresaw it all, and could have prevented it all, if this had been His will, that we see most clearly and most impressively the groundlessness and the presumption of the objections commonly adduced against the Calvinistic scheme of theology; and that we feel most effectually constrained to acquiesce in the apostle's resolution of the whole matter, "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 given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever."[49](#)

## Sec. 14. Perseverance of Saints.

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, or of believers is to be regarded as an essential part of the Calvinistic scheme of theology. That it is so is plain, from the nature of the case,—the obvious necessary connection of the different doctrines of Calvinism with each other,—and also from the fact that the doctrine has been held by all Calvinists, and denied by almost all Arminians. There are two apparent exceptions to this historical statement; and it may be proper to advert to them, as they are the cases of two no less important persons than Augustine and Arminius.

Augustine seems to have thought that men who were true believers, and who were regenerated, so as to have been really brought under the influence of divine truth and religious principle, might fall away and finally perish; but then he did not think that those persons who might, or did, thus fall away and perish belonged to the number of those who had been predestinated, or elected, to life. He held that all those who were elected to life must, and did, persevere, and thus attain to salvation. It was of course abundantly evident, that if God chose some men, absolutely and unconditionally, to eternal life,—and this Augustine firmly believed,—these persons must, and would, certainly be saved. Whether persons might believe and be regenerated who had not been predestinated to life, and who, in consequence, might fall away, and thereby fail to attain salvation, is a distinct question; and on this question Augustine's views seem to have been obscured and perverted by the notions that then generally prevailed about the objects and effects of outward ordinances, and especially by something like the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which has been, perhaps, as powerful and extensive a cause of deadly error as any doctrine that Satan ever invented. Augustine's error, then, lay in supposing that men might believe and be regenerated who had not been elected to life, and might consequently fail of ultimate salvation; but he never did, and never could, embrace any notion so irrational and inconsequential, as that God could have absolutely chosen some even to life, and then permitted them to fall

away and to perish; and the negation of this notion, which Augustine never held, constitutes the sum and substance of what Calvinists have taught upon the subject of perseverance.

Arminius never wholly renounced the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all believers, even after he had abandoned all the other principles of Calvinism, but spoke of this as a point on which he had not fully made up his mind, and which, he thought, required further investigation,—thus virtually bearing testimony to the difficulty of disposing of the scriptural evidence on which the doctrine rests. His immediate followers, likewise, professed for a time some hesitation upon this point; but their contemporary opponents<sup>50</sup> do not seem to have given them much credit for sincerity in the doubts which they professed to entertain regarding it, because, while they did not for a time directly and explicitly support a negative conclusion, the whole current of their statements and arguments seemed plainly enough to indicate that they had already renounced the generally received doctrine of the Reformed churches upon this subject. They very soon, even before the Synod of Dort, openly renounced the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, along with the other doctrines of Calvinism; and I am not aware that any instance has since occurred, in which any Calvinist has hesitated to maintain this doctrine, or any Arminian has hesitated to deny it.

This doctrine is thus stated in our Confession of Faith:<sup>51</sup> " They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually 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." Little needs to be said in explanation of the meaning of these statements. The subject of the proposition is a certain class of persons who are marked out by two qualities,—namely, that God has accepted them in His Beloved, and that He has effectually called and sanctified them by His Spirit. This implies that they are persons on whose state and character an important change has taken place. As to their state, they have passed from that condition of guilt and condemnation in which all men lie by nature,

into a condition of favour and acceptance with God, so that their sins are pardoned, and they are admitted into God's family and friendship, upon the ground of what Christ has done and suffered for them. As to their character, they have been renewed in the spirit of their minds by the operation of the Holy Ghost; their natural enmity to God, and their depravity, have been subdued; holy principles have been implanted in their hearts; and they have entered upon a course of new obedience. These changes are manifestly represented in Scripture as being, wherever they have taken place, inseparably connected with faith in Christ Jesus; so that the persons here described are just true believers in Christ,—men who have been born again of the word of God, through the belief of the truth. Of all such persons it is asserted that they can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; that is, from the condition of acceptance with God, and of personal holiness, into which they have been brought, but shall certainly persevere therein,—that is, in the state or condition previously described,—and be eternally saved. It is asserted, not merely that none of these do, in point of fact, fall away, and that all of them, in point of fact, persevere and are saved; but that they cannot fall away,—some effectual and infallible provision having been made to prevent this result.

The statement, that they can neither totally nor finally fall away, has reference to a notion which has been broached, especially by some Lutheran writers, who taught that believers or saints might fall away totally, though not finally. The notion which these persons seem to have entertained was something of this sort,—that men who had once believed might sin so much as to forfeit and lose altogether the privileges of the condition, both as to state and character, into which they had been brought by believing,—so as to become, in so far as concerned the favour and acceptance with which God regarded them, and the moral principles by which, for the time, they were animated, as bad as they were before they believed; but that all such persons would be again brought, *de novo*, into a state of grace, and that thus they might fall away or apostatize, totally, but not finally. This notion of a total, but not final, falling away, is evidently derived much more

from observation of what sometimes takes place in the church, than from the study of God's word. Cases do sometimes occur, in which believers fall into heinous sins; and the persons to whose views we are now referring, seem to think that such cases cannot be explained, except upon the supposition that these sins imply, or produce, a total falling away from a state of grace, while they so far defer to the general strain of Scripture as to admit, that all in whom faith and regeneration have been once produced will certainly be recovered from their apostasy, and will be eternally saved. It was in opposition to this notion that our Confession asserted that believers cannot fall away totally any more than finally,—meaning thereby, that when a state of grace, as including both acceptance with God and the existence and operation of holy moral principles in a nature renewed, has been once produced, it is never again totally lost, so as that these persons are regarded and treated by God as aliens and enemies, like those who are still living in their natural condition of guilt, or ever become again as thoroughly depraved, in point of principle and motive,—as destitute of all holiness of nature and character,—as they once were, however heinous the particular sins into which they may have fallen.

This doctrine, of the perseverance of saints or believers, is evidently a necessary and indispensable part of the Calvinistic system of theology,—being clearly involved in, or deducible from, the other fundamental doctrines of the system, which we have already considered. If it be true that God has, from eternity, absolutely and unconditionally chosen some men, certain persons, to eternal life, these men assuredly will all infallibly be saved. If it be also true that He has arranged that no man shall be saved, unless upon earth he be brought into a state of grace, unless he repent and believe, and persevere in faith and holiness. He will assuredly give to all whom He has chosen to life faith and holiness, and will infallibly secure that they shall persevere therein unto the end. And as it is further taught by Calvinists, that God produces in some men faith and conversion in the execution of His decree of election, just because He has decreed to save these men,—and does so for the purpose of saving

them,—the whole of what they teach under the head of perseverance is thus effectually provided for, and thoroughly established,—faith and regeneration being never produced in any except those whose ultimate salvation has been secured, and whose perseverance, therefore, in faith and holiness must be certain and infallible. All this is too plain to require any illustration; and Calvinists must of course, in consistency, take the responsibility of maintaining the certain perseverance of all believers or saints,—of all in whom faith and holiness have been once produced. It is not quite so clear and certain that Arminians are bound, in consistency, to deny this doctrine,—though the general spirit and tendency of their system are adverse to it. They might perhaps, without inconsistency, hold that it is possible, that all who have been enabled to repent and believe will, in point of fact, persevere and be saved; but as they teach that men, in the exercise of their own free-will, can resist and frustrate the grace of God's Spirit, exerted in strength sufficient to produce faith and conversion, they could scarcely avoid maintaining the possibility, at least, of their throwing it off after it had taken possession of them, and thus finally falling away.

Their general practice is, to give much prominence, in discussion, to this subject of perseverance; and they think that this affords them a good opportunity of bringing out, in the most palpable and effective way, their more popular objections against the Calvinistic system in general, and also of supplying their lack of direct scriptural evidence upon the precise question of predestination, by adducing, in opposition to that doctrine, the proof they think they can bring forward from Scripture, that believers and saints—all of whom Calvinists regard as having been elected to life—may and do fall away, and perish.

We may advert to these two points,—namely, first, to the form in which, in connection with this doctrine, Arminians commonly put the objection against Calvinism generally; and, secondly, to the evidence against it which the scriptural statements upon this particular topic are alleged to furnish.



Their objection, of course, is, that if those who have been once brought into a state of grace cannot finally fall away and perish, then they may, and probably will—this being the natural tendency of such a doctrine—live in careless indifference and security, and be little concerned to avoid sin, since it cannot affect injuriously their everlasting condition. Now this objection is just a specimen of a general mode of misrepresentation, to which Arminians very commonly resort in this whole controversy,—that, namely, of taking a part of our doctrine, disjoining it from the rest, and then founding an objection upon this particular and defective view of it. The great general principle which we hold and teach, that the means are fore-ordained as well as the end, affords a complete answer to the objection. But we may now advert more particularly to the way in which this general principle bears upon the special aspect of the objection, as brought out in connection with the doctrine of perseverance. The perseverance which we contend for—and which, we say, is effectually provided for and secured—is just a perseverance in faith and holiness,—a continuing steadfast in believing, and in bringing forth all the fruits of righteousness. Perseverance is not merely continuing for some time upon earth after faith and regeneration have been produced, and then being admitted, as a matter of course, to heaven, without any regard to the moral history of the intervening period; it is a perseverance in the course on which men have entered,—a perseverance unto the end in the exercise of faith and in the practice of holiness. This, we say, has been provided for, and will be certainly effected. The case of a man who appeared to have been brought to faith and repentance, but who afterwards fell into habitual carelessness and sin, and died in this condition, is not a case which exhibits and illustrates the tendency and effects of our doctrine of perseverance, rightly understood, and viewed in all its extent; on the contrary, it contradicts it; and if it were clearly established to have become a real case of faith and conversion, it would, we admit, disprove it. In regard to all such cases, it is incumbent upon us, not merely from the necessity of defending our doctrine against objections, but from the intrinsic nature of the doctrine itself, to assert and maintain that true faith and

regeneration never existed, and therefore could not be persevered in. We simply look away from the partial and defective view of our doctrine given by our opponents,—we just take in the whole doctrine as we are accustomed to explain it; and we see at once, that the supposed case, and the objection founded upon it, are wholly irrelevant,—that our real doctrine has nothing to do with it. If our doctrine be true, then no such case could possibly occur, where true faith had once been produced, because that very doctrine implies that perseverance in this faith and in the holiness which springs from it, has been provided for and secured; and if a case of their falling away could be established with regard to a believer, then the fair inference would be, not that our doctrine produced, or tended to produce, such a result, but that the doctrine was unfounded.

As the objection derived from the alleged tendency of our doctrine thus originates in a partial or defective view of what the doctrine is, so, in like manner, any such abuse or perversion of the doctrine by those who profess to believe and to act upon it, must originate in the same source. They can abuse it, to encourage themselves in carelessness and sin, only when they look at a part of the doctrine, and shut out the whole,—when they forget that the means have been fore-ordained as well as the end,—that the thing which God has promised and provided for, is just perseverance in the exercise of faith and in the practice of holiness; and that He has provided for securing this, just because He has established an invariable connection between perseverance unto the end in faith and holiness, as a means, and eternal salvation, as the end. The true way to judge of the practical tendency and result of a doctrine, is to conceive of it as fully and correctly understood in its real character, in its right relations, and in its whole extent,—to conceive of it as firmly and cordially believed, and as judiciously and intelligently applied; and then to consider what effect it is fitted to produce upon the views, motives, and conduct of those who so understand, believe, and apply it. When the doctrine of the perseverance of believers is tested in this way, it can be easily shown, not only to have no tendency to encourage men in carelessness and indifference about the regulation

of their conduct, but to have a tendency directly the reverse. In virtue of the principle of the means being fore-ordained as well as the end, and of an invariable connection being thus established between perseverance in faith and holiness on the one hand, and salvation on the other, it leaves all the ordinary obligations and motives to steadfastness and diligence—to unshaken and increasing holiness of heart and life, and to the use of all the means which conduce to the promotion of this result,—to say the very least, wholly unimpaired, to operate with all the force which properly belongs to them. The position of a man who has been enabled by God's grace to repent and believe,—who is persuaded that this change has been effected upon him,—and who, in consequence, entertains the conviction that he will persevere and be saved, viewed in connection with other principles plainly revealed, and quite consistent with all the doctrines of Calvinism, is surely fitted to call into operation the strongest and most powerful motives derived from every consideration relating to God and to himself,—his past history, his present situation and prospects, all combining to constrain him to run in the way of God's commandments with enlarged heart. And then, it is further to be remembered, that the doctrine which he believes necessarily involves in it, as a part of itself,—or at least as an immediate consequence,—that he can have no good ground for believing that he is in a condition of safety, and warranted to entertain the assurance of eternal happiness, unless he is holding fast the profession of his faith without wavering,—unless he is continuing steadfast in the paths of new obedience, dying more and more unto sin, and living more and more unto righteousness.

The objection, about the tendency of this doctrine of the certain perseverance of believers to encourage them to live in carelessness and sin, on the ground that their eternal welfare has been secured, further assumes that believers—men who have been brought, by God's almighty power, from darkness to light,—whose eyes have been opened to behold the glory of God in the face of His Son,—who have been led to see and feel that they are not their own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of God's own Son—are still

wholly incapable of being influenced by any motives but those derived from a selfish and exclusive regard to their own safety and happiness. And even if we were to concede all this, and to descend, for the sake of argument, to the low moral level on which our opponents are accustomed to take their stand in discussing such questions, we could still present to believers sufficiently strong motives,—addressed exclusively to their selfishness,—to abstain from all sin, even without needing to urge that, by sinning, they would forfeit their eternal happiness; for our Confession teaches, in full accordance with the word of God, that though believers cannot totally and finally fall away, but shall certainly persevere and be saved, yet that "nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves,"[52](#)—a statement which is true, in some measure, of all the sins which believers commit, and not merely of the "grievous sins" into which they sometimes fall.

But we shall not dwell longer upon this topic, and proceed to notice the other points to which we referred,—namely, the scriptural evidence bearing directly and immediately upon this particular doctrine. Calvinists contend that this doctrine, besides being necessarily involved in, or clearly deducible from, the great truths which we have already considered and established, has its own proper, direct Scripture evidence, amply sufficient to establish it as a distinct and independent truth. They undertake to prove, by direct and appropriate Scripture evidence, the position that those who have been brought by faith and conversion into a state of grace, cannot finally fall away from it, but shall certainly persevere to the end, and be eternally saved; and if this can be proved as a distinct and independent truth, it manifestly tends very directly and very

powerfully to confirm the whole of the leading principles of the Calvinistic theology,—to swell the mass of evidence by which Calvinism is proved to be indeed the doctrine of the word of God. Arminians, however, as we have intimated, profess to produce from Scripture direct proof of the falsehood of our doctrine of perseverance, which, as we formerly explained, they scarcely profess to do in regard to the doctrine of election; and indeed they rest very much upon the proof they adduce of the falsehood of our doctrine of perseverance as the leading direct scriptural evidence they have to bring forward against the whole Calvinistic system. We are quite willing to concede to them, that if they can really prove from Scripture that any men who have once believed and been born again have fallen away and finally perished, or that they may fall away and perish,—no certain and effectual provision having been made by God to prevent this,—the doctrine that God, out of His own good pleasure, elected some men to everlasting life, must be abandoned; for we will not undertake to defend Augustine's position, that some men who believed and were converted might fall, though none who were elected could do so.

The Scripture evidence which Arminians produce in opposition to our doctrine, and in support of their own, upon this subject of perseverance, is much stronger than what they have been able to bring forward on any other topic involved in this whole controversy; and it must, in fairness, be allowed to possess considerable plausibility. There are passages in Scripture, which, taken in their most obvious sense, do seem to imply that men who once believed and were converted, did, or might, fall away and finally perish; and if these statements stood alone, they might perhaps be held sufficient to warrant the reception of this doctrine. We have, however, in Scripture, a large body of conclusive evidence in support of the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all believers,—evidence both direct and inferential,—evidence which cannot be answered and explained away,—evidence greatly superior in strength, extent, and explicitness, to any that can be adduced upon the other side. The proper question, of course, is, What is the doctrine which Scripture

really teaches upon this subject, when we take into account the whole of the materials which it furnishes, and embody the united substance of them all, making due allowance for every position which it really sanctions? Now, Calvinists undertake to establish the following propositions upon this subject: first, that Scripture contains clear and conclusive evidence of the certain, final perseverance of all who have ever been united to Christ through faith, and have been born again of His word,—conclusive evidence that they shall never perish, but shall have eternal life; secondly, that there is no sufficient scriptural evidence to warrant a denial of this doctrine, or to establish the opposite one; and that there is no great difficulty—no great force or straining being required for the purpose—in showing that the passages on which the Arminians found, may be so explained as to be consistent with our doctrine, while it is impossible—without the most unwarrantable and unnatural force and straining—to reconcile with their doctrine the scriptural statements which we adduce in support of ours.

I cannot notice the body of scriptural proof, derived at once from great general principles and from numerous and explicit statements, bearing directly and immediately upon the point in dispute, by which our doctrine is conclusively established; but I may briefly advert to the way in which we dispose of the evidence which is adduced by the Arminians on the other side, and which, at first sight, possesses considerable plausibility. It consists, of course, in general, of statements which seem to assert directly, or by plain implication, that men who have been brought into a state of grace,—under the influence of true faith and genuine holiness,—have fallen, or may fall, away from it, and finally perish. Now let it be remarked, what they are bound to prove in regard to any scriptural statements which they adduce for this purpose,—namely, first, that they clearly and necessarily imply that the persons spoken of were once true believers, had been really renewed in the spirit of their minds; and, secondly, that these persons did, or might, finally perish. They must prove both these positions; and if they fail in proving either of them, their argument falls to the ground. Both must be proved to apply, as

matter of fact, or at least of undoubted actual possibility, to the very same persons. In regard to some of the passages they adduce, we undertake to show that neither of these positions can be established in regard to the persons of whom they speak; but this is not necessary to our argument. It is quite sufficient if we can show that no conclusive evidence has been adduced, either that these persons were ever true believers, or else that they did or could finally perish. When either of these positions has been established, we are entitled to set the passage aside, as wholly inadequate to serve the purpose of our opponents,—as presenting no real or even apparent inconsistency with our doctrine. And, in this way, many of the passages on which the Arminians base their denial of the doctrine of perseverance, can be disposed of without difficulty.

There is, however, another class of passages from Scripture adduced by them, to which these considerations do not so directly apply. These are the warnings against apostasy, or falling away, addressed to believers, which, it is argued, imply a possibility of their falling away. Now we do not deny that there is a sense in which it is possible for believers to fall away,—that is, when they are viewed simply in themselves,—with reference to their own powers and capacities,—and apart from God's purpose or design with respect to them. Turretine, in explaining the state of the question upon this point, says: "Non quaeritur de possibilitate deficiendi a parte hominis, et in sensu diviso. Nemo enim negat fideles in se spectatos pro mutabilitate et infirmitate naturae suae, non tantum deficere posse, sed nihil posse aliud sibi relictos, accedentibus inprimis Satanae et mundi tentationibus. Sed a parte Dei, quoad ejus propositum, in sensu composito, et ratione ipsius eventus, quo sensu impossibilem dicimus eorum defectionem, non absolute et simpliciter, sed hypothetice et secundum quid."<sup>53</sup> It is only in this sense—which we admit, and which is not inconsistent with our doctrine—that a possibility of falling away is indicated in the passages referred to; their proper primary effect evidently being just to bring out, in the most impressive way, the great principle of the invariableness of the connection which God has established between perseverance, as

opposed to apostasy, as a means, and salvation as an end; and thus to operate as a means of effecting the end which God has determined to accomplish,—of enabling believers to persevere, or preserving them from apostasy; and to effect this in entire accordance with the principles of their moral constitution, by producing constant humility, watchfulness, and diligence.

In regard to apparent cases of the actual final apostasy of believers occurring in the church, we have no difficulty in disposing of them. The impossibility of men knowing with certainty the character of their fellow-men individually, so as to be thoroughly assured that they are true believers, is too well established, both by the statements of Scripture and by the testimony of experience, to allow us to hesitate about confidently applying the principle of the apostle, which indeed furnishes a key to solve many of the difficulties of this whole subject: " They went out from us, but they were not of us ; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us." [54](#)

The impossibility of believers falling away totally does not so directly result from principles peculiarly Calvinistic, which bear rather upon falling away finally, but from scriptural views of regeneration and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and of the relation into which they have been brought to God and Christ. To adopt the language of the Westminster Confession, "This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof." [55](#)

#### Sec. 15. Socinianism—Arminianism—Calvinism.

We have now completed the survey of the Arminian as well as the Socinian controversies; and in surveying these controversies, we have had occasion to direct attention to almost all the most



important departments of Christian theology. Socinianism is not only a denial of all that is most peculiar and fundamental in the system of revealed religion, but a positive assertion of a system of doctrine diametrically opposed to that which God has made known to us; while Arminianism is an attempt to set up a scheme intermediate between that which involves a rejection of almost all that the Bible was intended to teach, and the system of Calvinism, which alone corresponds with the scriptural views the guilt, depravity, and helplessness of man,—of the sovereign supremacy and the all-sufficient efficacious agency of God,—the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,—in the accomplishment of his salvation. There are some general considerations naturally suggested by the survey we have taken of these three schemes of doctrine,—the Socinian, the Arminian, and the Calvinistic,—which seem fitted to assist us in forming a right estimate of the different views of the schemes of theology that have been maintained by men who all professed to believe in the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures. There are chiefly three considerations of this sort to which I would advert.

They are these: first, that in the scheme of Christian theology there is a class of doctrines which occupy a higher platform, or are possessed of greater intrinsic importance, than what are commonly called the peculiarities of Calvinism; secondly, that Arminianism, in its more Pelagian form, differs little, practically, from Socinianism, and would be more consistent if it were openly to deny the divinity and atonement of Christ, and the necessity of the special agency of the Holy Spirit; and, thirdly, that Arminianism, in its more evangelical form, besides being chargeable with important errors and defects, is inconsistent with itself, since the important scriptural truths which it embodies cannot be held consistently, except in connection with the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. I shall merely make an observation or two in explanation of these three positions.

The first is, that in the scheme of Christian theology there is a class of doctrines which may be said to occupy a higher platform than what are commonly called the peculiarities of Calvinism. The doctrines

here referred to are, of course, those taught by orthodox Lutherans and by evangelical Arminians, as well as by Calvinists, concerning the depravity of man by nature,—the person and work of Christ,—and the agency of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration and sanctification. The Bible was given us mainly to unfold to us the lost and ruined state of man by nature, and the existence, character, and operation of that provision which God has made for saving sinners. Everything which is taught in Scripture it is equally incumbent upon us, as a matter of duty or obligation, to believe, as every statement rests equally upon the authority of God. But there is a great difference, in point of intrinsic importance, among the many truths of different kinds and classes taught us in Scripture; and the general measure of their relative importance—though we are very incompetent to apply it, and should be very careful lest we misapply it—is just the directness and immediateness of the relation in which they stand towards that which we have described as the great leading object of revelation,—namely, making known the ruin and the recovery of mankind. The doctrines which directly and immediately unfold these topics occupy a position, in point of intrinsic importance, which is not shared by any others; and these doctrines are just those which tell us of the universal guilt and entire depravity of man,—of the sovereign mercy of God, in providing for men's salvation,—of the person and work of the Son, and the way in which His vicarious work bears upon the justification of sinners,—and of the operation of the Holy Spirit, in applying to men individually the benefits which Christ purchased for them, and preparing them for heaven, by producing faith in them, and by regenerating and sanctifying their natures.

Now there can be no reasonable doubt that there have been, and that there are, men who have entertained views upon all these subjects, which we must admit to be scriptural and correct,—because, in the main, the same as we ourselves believe,—who yet have rejected the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. The substance of what we assert is this,—that men who agree with us in holding scriptural views upon these points, while they reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, do

agree with us on subjects that are more important and fundamental, and that ought to occupy a more prominent place in the ordinary course of public instruction than those in which they differ from us. They hold the truth upon those points which it was the great leading object of revelation to teach us,—which bear most directly and immediately upon the exposition of the way of a sinner's salvation,—which ought to occupy the most frequent and the most prominent place in the preaching of the gospel,—and which God most commonly blesses for the conversion of sinners. Their consistency, in holding scriptural doctrines upon these points, while they reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, is not at present the question; that will be adverted to afterwards: the fact that they do hold them is undoubted, and it ought to be fully admitted and fairly estimated. It is not, indeed, strictly correct to say that they hold purely scriptural views upon all these most important topics. We have had occasion, in regard to every one of them, to point out something erroneous, or at least defective, in their sentiments or impressions; and we have often asserted that everything, however apparently insignificant, which either transgresses or comes short of what Scripture teaches upon these points, is sinful and dangerous. Such, indeed, is the harmony subsisting among all the branches of scriptural doctrine, that truth or error in regard to any one of them almost unavoidably produces truth or error, in a greater or less degree, in regard to the rest,—that, in short, none but Calvinists hold views which are, in all respects, scriptural, in regard to any of the leading doctrines of Christianity. Still the views of the men to whom we refer are, in regard to these fundamental points, accordant, in their main substance, with the teaching of Scripture; and their defects and errors come out chiefly when we enter into some of the more minute and detailed explanations as to the bearings and consequences of the particular doctrine, and the more distant and less obvious conclusions that may be deduced from it,—so that, in regard to almost any statement which we would make, in explaining our sentiments upon these points, for the purpose of practical instruction, they would fully agree with us. Arminius held some erroneous views upon the subject of justification, which his followers afterwards expanded into a

subversion of the gospel method of salvation, and the establishment of justification by deeds of law. But he declared—and I have no doubt honestly—that he could subscribe to every statement in the chapter upon this subject in Calvin's Institutes. This, of course, affords no reason why anything that was really defective or erroneous in the sentiments of Arminius upon this point—however unimportant comparatively—should not be exposed and condemned; and still less does it afford any reason why we should not point out, in connection with this subject, the dangerous tendency of the admission of any error, however insignificant it may appear; but it surely affords good ground for the assertion, that Arminius himself agreed with Calvin in regard to the main substance and essential principles of his doctrine of justification.

Similar remarks might be made in regard to the views even of the soundest and most evangelical Arminians,—with respect to original sin,—the nature of the atonement of Christ,—and the operation of the Spirit in renovating and sanctifying men's hearts; and, indeed, we have had occasion to point out the errors and defects of their views upon all these topics, and their tendency to lead to still greater deviations from sound doctrine. But while all this is the case, and should not be forgotten or overlooked, it is also true that there are men who deny the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, and may therefore be called Arminians, who would concur in the main substance and the essential principles of the doctrines which we believe to be taught in Scripture,—upon the depravity of human nature,—the person and work of Christ,—and the agency of the Holy Spirit in converting and sanctifying. And these are doctrines to which greater intrinsic importance attaches, than to those on which they differ from us; just because they bear more directly and immediately upon the great objects of revelation, theoretical and practical,—namely, the exposition of the way of salvation,—the development of the truths which God ordinarily employs as His instruments in the conversion of sinners. I have pointed out, in the course of our discussions, all the defects and errors of Arminianism, even in its most evangelical form, as plainly and explicitly as I could, and with

at least enough of keenness and severity; but I would like also to point out the extent to which the soundest portion of those who reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism agree with us in our views of Christian theology, and to realize the paramount importance of the doctrines in regard to which this agreement is exhibited, and the special prominence to which they are entitled.

Secondly: The second observation which I wish to make is this,—that Arminianism, in its more Pelagian form, is practically little better than Socinianism, and would be more consistent if it renounced a profession of those doctrines concerning the person and work of Christ, and the agency of the Spirit, by which it appears to be distinguished from Socinianism. The Pelagian Arminians profess to believe in the divinity and atonement of Christ, and in the agency of the Spirit; but they practically omit these doctrines, or leave them wholly in the background, in the representations they usually give of the general substance and spirit of revealed truth, and of the way in which it bears upon the condition and character of men. Their ordinary views and sentiments upon the subject of the true nature and design of Christianity, and the representations they commonly give of it for the instruction and guidance of others, are scarcely affected, to any material extent, by their professed belief in the divinity and atonement of Christ, and in the agency of the Spirit. These doctrines with them are mere words, which have no real value or significance, and might, to all practical purposes, be just as well discarded. The cause of this is to be found mainly in the extent to which they have denied and corrupted the scriptural doctrine concerning the guilt and depravity of man, and his consequent inability to save himself, or to do anything that is really fitted to effect his own salvation. Their radically erroneous views upon this subject lead them practically to regard the atoning work of Christ and the regenerating work of the Spirit as unnecessary,—there being really no adequate object to be accomplished by such peculiar and extraordinary provisions. The merits of Christ and the assistance of the Spirit, are, with such persons, little or nothing more than mere words, introduced merely as if to round off a sentence, and to keep

up some show of admitting the great features of the Christian revelation; while, practically and substantially, the general strain of their representations of Christianity seems plainly to imply,—either, that man does not need anything that can be called salvation,—or, that whatever he may need in this matter he is able to effect or provide for himself. This is just practically Socinianism; and it is the form in which Socinianism—or a rejection of all that is peculiar and fundamental in Christianity—commonly appears among the mass of irreligious and careless men, living in a community where an open and formal denial of the divinity and atonement of Christ might subject them to some inconvenience or disapprobation.

The work of Christ for men, and the work of the Spirit in men,—rendered necessary by their natural condition of guilt, and depravity, and helplessness, if they are to be saved, and indispensable to their salvation,—constitute the essential features of the Christian system, as revealed in the Bible. The Socinians openly and formally deny these fundamental principles; and the Pelagian Arminians, while admitting them in words, deprive them of all real significance and value, by leaving them out in all their practical views and impressions, in regard to the way and manner in which sinners are saved. This was the sort of theology that prevailed very extensively in the Established Churches of this country during a large part of last century; and it is sure always to prevail wherever true personal religion has been in a great measure extinguished,—where the ministry is taken up as a mere trade,—and where men press into the priest's office for a bit of bread. Among such persons, the question, whether they shall retain or abandon a profession, in words, of the divinity and atonement of Christ, and of the personality and agency of the Holy Spirit, is determined more by their circumstances than by their convictions,—more by their courage than by their conscience. And it signifies little, comparatively, how this question is decided; for, whether they retain or abandon a profession, in words, of these great doctrines, they fundamentally corrupt the gospel of the grace of God, and wholly misrepresent the way of salvation.

This Pelagian form of Arminianism is usually found in connection with everything that is cold, meagre, and lifeless in practical religion,—in personal character,—or effort for the spiritual good of others. This, however, has not been always and universally the case; and we have had in our day, and among ourselves, a grossly Pelagian Arminianism, which manifested for a time a considerable measure of active and ardent zeal. These persons— popularly known by the name of Morrisonians—professed to have found out a great specific for the more rapid and extensive conversion of sinners; and they employed it with considerable zeal and activity, and with loud boastings of its extraordinary success. But their plan is as old at least as the time of Pelagius; for in itself it really differs in no material respect from that which he propounded, and which Augustine overthrew from the word of God. Pelagius did not deny either the atonement of Christ or the agency of the Spirit; but he practically left them out, or explained them very much away. And so it is with these modern heretics. The atonement, with them, is reduced to being little or nothing else oractically—however they may sometimes exalt it in words—than a mere exhibition and proof of God's love to men, fitted and intended to impress upon us the conviction that He is ready and willing to forgive; and it is supposed to operate mainly by impressing this conviction, and thereby persuading us to turn to Him; while the view they give of man's natural power to believe the gospel—to repent and turn to God,—or, what is virtually the same thing, in a somewhat more scriptural dress,—a so-called gracious assistance of the Spirit, imparted equally, or at least sufficiently, to all men—contradicts the plain doctrine of Scripture concerning the depravity of human nature, and practically supersedes the necessity of the special efficacious agency of the Holy Spirit in the production of faith and conversion. The system, in short, is manifestly Arminianism in its most Pelagian form; and though accompanied in this case with much zeal and activity,—while Pelagianism has been more usually accompanied with coldness or apathy,—this does not affect the true character and tendency of the scheme of doctrine taught; while the character of that doctrine, judged of both by the testimony of Scripture and the history of the church, warrants us in regarding

with great distrust the conversions which they profess to be making, and to cherish the suspicion that many are likely to prove like the stony-ground hearers, who had no root, who endured for a time, and then withered away.

Before leaving this general consideration, I would like to point out the lesson which it is fitted to teach as to the important influence which men's views about the guilt and depravity of human nature exert upon their whole conceptions of the scheme of divine truth, and the consequent necessity of rightly understanding that great doctrine, and being familiar with the scriptural grounds on which it rests. If doctrines so important and so peculiar in their character as the atonement of Christ and the special agency of the Spirit are admitted as true,—and we have not charged the Pelagian Arminians with conscious hypocrisy in professing to believe them,—it might be expected that they would exert a most extensive and pervading influence upon men's whole views of the scheme of divine truth, and the way of a sinner's salvation; and yet we see it abundantly established in the history of the church, that ignorance of the great doctrine of the universal guilt and entire depravity of men neutralizes practically all their influence, and leads those who admit their truth to conceive and represent the Christian system very much in the same way in which it is exhibited by those who believe Christ to be a mere man, and the Holy Ghost to have no existence. There are various gradations among Arminians,—as I have had occasion to point out,—from those who, in these important doctrines, substantially agree with Calvinists, down to those who differ little from the Socinians; but of all these various gradations, the distinguishing characteristic—the testing measure—may be said to be the degree in which the views of the different parties deviate from the doctrine of Scripture in regard to the universal guilt and entire depravity of man by nature,—the real feature in his actual condition which rendered necessary, if he was to be saved, a special interposition of God's mercy,—the vicarious sufferings and death of His only-begotten Son,—and the effusion of His Holy Spirit.



Thirdly: Our third and last observation was, that Arminianism, in its more evangelical form,—besides being marked by important errors and defects,—is chargeable with inconsistency, inasmuch as the fundamental scriptural truths which it embodies can be held consistently only in connection with the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. It is chiefly in Wesleyan Methodism that we have this more evangelical form of Arminianism presented to our contemplation; and it is—as I have had occasion to mention—in Richard Watson's Theological Institutes that we have this view of the; scheme of Christian theology most fully and systematically developed,—corresponding, in almost every respect, with that taught by Arminius himself. The errors of the system are, of course, chiefly the denial of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism; and the defects, additional to the errors, are principally those shortcomings in the bringing out of the whole doctrine of Scripture, even in regard to those points on which, in the main, they agree with Calvinists, to which I referred under the first observation. Their inconsistency lies in this, that they admit either too much truth, or too little. They concede, on the one hand, what ought, in consistency, to drag them down to Pelagianism; and they concede, on the other, what ought, in consistency, to raise them up to Calvinism. And the worst feature of the case is, that the testimony of Scripture and the voice of experience concur in declaring that, in such a position, the tendencies downwards are commonly more powerful than the tendencies upwards. The Wesleyan Methodists have hitherto maintained at once a denial of Calvinism and a denial of Pelagianism. They have hitherto continued stedfast to views, in the main, sound and scriptural in regard to the depravity of man, the nature of the atonement, and the work of the Spirit in regeneration; and there can be no reasonable doubt that, in the proclamation of these great scriptural doctrines, both at home and abroad, God has been pleased to honour them with a large measure of success in the conversion of sinners.

But no church has ever continued long in this intermediate position; and the probability is, that they too will manifest a tendency towards

one or other of the two extremes. It is earnestly to be hoped that it may be that one which will enable them to retain all the scriptural truth they at present hold, and to bring it; out more completely and consistently than they now do. They are accustomed to admit that Calvinism has been always held in combination with a great deal of important scriptural truth; and they are anxious to separate this truth from what they are fond of calling the peculiarities of Calvinism,—which they sometimes represent as of no great importance,—and which they profess to dislike chiefly as neutralizing or obstructing the operation and effect of the truth which they and Calvinists hold in common. We do not deny that they hold many important fundamental truths, or that the truths in which they agree with us are more important than those in which they differ from us. But we hold that what they call the peculiarities of Calvinism are very important truths,—essential to a full and complete exposition of the scheme of Christian doctrine,—to an exact and accurate development of the whole plan of salvation; and, more particularly,—for this is the only point we can at present advert to,—that they do not follow out, fully and consistently, the scriptural truths which they hold, and that, if they did, this would certainly land them in an admission of all the fundamental principles of Calvinism.

I do not now enter into an illustration of this position. The materials for illustrating it have been furnished in the examination of the different doctrines controverted between the Calvinists and the Arminians. In the course of this examination, we have repeatedly had occasion to show that the point in dispute really turned practically upon this question,—Whether God or man was the cause or the author of man's salvation. Socinians ascribe man's salvation—that is, everything needful for securing his eternal happiness—to man himself; Calvinists, to God; while Arminians ascribe it partly to the one and partly to the other,—the more Pelagian section of them ascribing so much to man, as practically to leave nothing to God; and the more evangelical section of them professing to ascribe it, like the Calvinists, wholly to God, but—by their denial of the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism—refusing to follow out this great principle

fully, and to apply it, distinctly and consistently, to the various departments of the scheme of divine truth. They do this commonly under a vague impression, that when this great principle is followed out and exhibited, distinctly and definitely, in the particular doctrines of Calvinism, it involves results inconsistent with the free agency and responsibility of man,—just as if the creature ever could become independent of the Creator,—and as if God could not accomplish all His purposes in and by His creatures, without violating the principles of their constitution. All men who have ever furnished satisfactory evidence, in their character and conduct, of being under the influence of genuine piety, have not only professed, but believed, that the salvation of sinners is to be ascribed to the sovereign mercy of God,—that man can do nothing effectual, in the exercise of his own natural powers, for escaping from his natural condition of guilt and depravity,—and must be indebted for this wholly to the free grace of God, the vicarious work of Christ, and the efficacious agency of the Spirit. Now Calvinism is really nothing but just giving a distinct and definite expression and embodiment to these great principles,—applying clear and precise ideas of them to each branch of the scheme of salvation; while every other system of theology embodies doctrines which either plainly and palpably contradict or exclude them, or at least throw them into the background, and involve them in indefiniteness or obscurity, which can generally be shown to resolve ultimately into a contradiction or denial of them.

Evangelical Arminians profess to believe in the utter helplessness and moral impotency of man by nature to anything spiritually good. This great principle finds its full and accurate expression only in the doctrine of original sin, as explained and applied by Calvinists; while even the soundest Arminians usually find it necessary to introduce some vague and ill-defined limitation or modification, which they are not able very clearly to explain, of the universal and entire guilt and depravity of man. They all admit something which they call the sovereignty of divine grace in the salvation of sinners; and by the admission of this, they intend to deprive men of all ground of

boasting, and to give God the whole glory of their salvation. But if the peculiar principles of Calvinism are denied, the sovereignty of God in determining the everlasting salvation of sinners is reduced to a mere name, without a corresponding reality; and whatever professions may be made, and whatever may be the intentions and feelings of the parties making them, the salvation of those who are saved is not determined by God, but by men themselves,—God merely foreseeing what they will, in point of fact, do, and regulating His plans and His conduct accordingly. Evangelical Arminians profess to ascribe to the agency of the Spirit the production of faith and regeneration in men individually; and seem to exclude, as Calvinists do, the co-operation of man in the exercise of his natural powers in the origin or commencement of the great spiritual change which is indispensable to salvation. But whatever they may hold, or think they hold, upon this point, they cannot consistently—without renouncing their Arminianism, and admitting the peculiar principles of Calvinism—make the agency of the Spirit the real, determining, efficacious cause of the introduction of spiritual life into the soul; and must ascribe, in some way or other,—palpably or obscurely,—some co-operation to man himself, even in the commencement of this work. And if the commencement of the work be God's, in such a sense that His agency is the determining and certainly efficacious cause of its being effected in every instance, then this necessarily implies the exercise of His sovereignty in the matter in a much higher and more definite sense than any in which Arminians can ever ascribe it to Him. It is not disputed that, whatever God does in time, He decreed or resolved to do from eternity; and therefore men, in consistency, must either deny that God does this,—that the agency of His Spirit is the cause of the implantation of spiritual life,—of the commencement of the process which leads to the production of faith and regeneration in any other sense than as a mere partial concurring cause co-operating with man,—or else they must admit all the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism in regard to grace and predestination.

It is not, then, to be wondered at, that, as we lately remarked, some of the most eminent divines in Germany have recently been led to see

and admit the inconsistency of the denial of Calvinism with the admission of the scriptural doctrine of the Lutheran symbols in regard to depravity, regeneration, and the work of the Spirit; and that some of them have been led, though apparently chiefly upon the ground of consistent philosophical speculation, to take the side of Calvinism. And there are few things more earnestly to be desired, with a view to the promotion of sound doctrine and true religion in our own land, than that the Wesleyan Methodists should come to see the inconsistency in which their peculiar doctrines upon these points involves them; and be led to adopt, fully and consistently, the only scheme of theology which gives full and definite expression and ample scope to all those great principles which all men of true piety profess to hold, and in some sense do hold, and which alone fully exhibits and secures the glory of the grace of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—in the salvation of sinful men.[56](#)

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Endnotes:

1. Spanhemii Elenchus, p. 238. Ed. 1701.
2. Basnage, Histoire de la Religion des Eglises Réformées, P. iii. c. iv, tome ii. p. 262.
3. C. xvii. s. xii. tom. iv. p. 528.
4. Lib. iv. c. iv. Q. 4.
5. Basnage, P. iii. c. v.
6. See Hottinger and Weisman.
7. Amesii Coronis, p. 285.
8. Acta Synodi Nationalis, p. 263. Ed. 1620.
9. Scott on Synod of Dort; Historical portion.
10. Amesii Coronis, Art. iii. p. 170.
11. Vide Scott's Remarks on Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism, vol. i. pp. 105-6.
12. C. iii. pp. 129, 130. Ed. 1850.
13. Vide Owen, Spanheim, Stapfer, Molinaei *Anatome*.
14. This was denied by Arminius himself, Orat. de Objecto Theologiæ quoted in Edwards' *Veritas Redux*, p. 432.
15. Limborch, Theol. lib. iv. c. xi. p. 363. ed. 1686.
16. Others have supposed that God may extend their probation beyond this life. Scot's *Christian Life*, quoted in Edwards' *Veritas Redux*, p. 444.
17. Turretin., Loc. xv. Qu. ii. sec. xiv.
18. Hottingeri *Fata Doctrinae de Predestinatione et gratia Dei Salutari*. excitatio ii. pp. 495 et seq.
19. Nicols' *Life and Writings of Arminius*, vol. i. p. 600. *Arminii Opera*, p. 98. *Nichols' Calvinism and Arminianism Compared*.
20. C. x. s. iv.
21. Turretin., Loc. xv. Qu. vi.; *Mastricht*, lib. vi. c. iii.
22. C. ix. s. 1.
23. C. iii. sec. iii.
24. Secs. v. vi.
25. Sec. vii.

26. See *The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation*, p. 538, etc.—EDRS.
27. "De Reprobatione nos non sumus admodum solliciti, nisi quatenus consequitur ex Electione. Positiva autm reprobatio ad exitum, sine consideratione ullius inobedientiæ, non sequitur ex Electionis doctrina." —*Amesii Anti-synodalia Scripta*, p. 37.
28. *Confession*, c. i. sec. vi.
29. *Turretin.*, Loc. iv. Qu. ix.
30. *Turretin.*, Loc. iv. Qu. ix. sec. vii.
31. This topic is more fully illustrated in *The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation*, p. 358.- EDRS.
32. So the Remonstrants in their *Acta et Scriptura Synodalia*. *Amesii Ante-synod. Script.* p. 11.
33. *Copleston's Enquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination*, Preface, and Discourse iii.
34. *Edwards on the Freedom of the Will*, P. ii. sec. xii. quoted by *Copleston*, Dis. i. pp. 39, 40. *Edwards Remarks on important Theological Controversies*, c. iii. sees, vi, xvii.
35. The unsatisfactoriness of this answer is virtually admitted by *Archbishop Whately*. *Essays on Difficulties in St. Paul's Writings*, Ess. iii. sec. iv. pp. 141-2, 5th ed. 1845.
36. *Act. et Script. Synod.* P. ii. p. 5; *Amesii Anti-synodalia Scripta*, p. 11.
37. *Censura in Confessionem*, c. ii. sec. viii. p. 39; *Apologia*, pp. 43-4; *Amesii Anti-synodalia Scripta*, pp. 14-16; *Limborch's Theologia Christiana*, lib. ii. c. viii. sec. xxvii.
38. *Institutio*, lib. ii. c. vii. p. 53.
39. *Walaei Enchiridion Religionis Reformatae*, Opera, tom. i. p. 66. See also *Walaei Loci Communes*, Opera, tom. i. p. 332, where he gives quotations on this point from Calvin and Beza.
40. *Augustini Enchiridion*, c. 98. Opera, tom. vi. p. 170. Edit. Benedict.
41. *Turretin.*, Loc. iii. Qu. xv. and xvi.
42. Part iii. c. iii. sec. 145.
43. *Essays*, pp. 135, 139 of fifth edition, 1845.

44. Whateely has pointed out this difference between his views and Dr. Sumner's, in the Introduction to the fifth edition of his Essays, pp. xxiii, xxiv.
45. Davenant's Animadversions on Hoard's God's Love to Mankind, p. 49. Dr. Gill's Doctrine of Predestination stated in answer to Wesley, pp. 21-2.
46. Works, vol. x. p. 204. For a full discussion of the objections to the Calvinistic doctrine, see The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 531, etc. etc.—EDRS. See also Amesii Medulla Theologiae, lib. i. c. xxv. Mastricht (who copies Ames), lib. iii. c. iv. sec. vi. p. 304. Turretin., Loc. iv. Qu. xiv. secs. i.-xvii. tom. i. Davenant's Animadversions, passim. Davenant, De Praedestinatione et Reprobatione, pp. 113-14, 137, 172-3, 182-8, 196-8, 201-2. Gill's Cause of God and Truth, Part iii. chaps. i. and ii. Gill's Doctrine of Predestination, Pictet, La Theologie Chretienne, liv. viii. c. vii. p. 557. De Moor, Commentarius, c. vii. secs. xxix.-xxxvi. tom. ii. pp. 96-115. Edwards' Remarks on Important Theological Controversies, c. iii. secs. xxxv.-vii.
47. See The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 458.—EDRS. Whately on Difficulties in St. Paul's Writings, Essay iii. sec. iv. pp. 144-7, fifth edition, 1845.
48. Essays, 5th edition, p. 146.
49. Rom. xi. 33-36. See this subject referred to in The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 468, etc.—EDRS.
50. Amesii Coronis, p. 285. Antisynodalia, p. 292.
51. C. xvii. s. i.
52. C. xvii. s. iii.
53. Loc. xv. Qu. xvi. s. iv., De Perseverantia Fidei.
54. 1 John ii. 19.
55. C. xvii. sec. ii. For the practical application of the doctrines of Calvinism, see The Reformers, and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 525.—EDRS
56. Knapp's Lectures on Christian Theology, pp. 116 and 411; (Wood's Notes). Hagenbach's History of Doctrines, vol. ii. pp. 448-52. Wegscheider's Institutiones, pp. 466-483.





# Calvinism and Arminianism

It has often been alleged that Calvinists are very pugnacious,— ever ready to fight in defence of their peculiar opinions. But a survey of the theological literature of this country for the last half century gives no countenance to this impression. Much more has been published in defence of Arminianism than of Calvinism. Calvinists have scarcely shown the zeal and activity that might have been reasonably expected of them, either in repelling attacks that were made upon them, or in improving advantages that were placed within their reach. In the early part of the century, indeed, the “Refutation of Calvinism,” by Bishop Tomline, was thoroughly refuted by Scott, the commentator, in his “Remarks” upon it, and by Dr Edward Williams, in his “Defence of Modern Calvinism.” But since that time, Copleston, Whately, Stanley Faber, and Richard Watson—men of deservedly high reputation—have all written against Calvinism, and some of them very elaborately, while no answer to any of them has been produced by its defenders. Whately and Richard Watson—the first from his sagacity and candour, exercised both upon matters of abstract reasoning and of philological investigation, and the second from the general soundness of his views upon original sin and regeneration, so different from the Pelagianism of the school of Whitby and Tomline—have made concessions, and thereby have afforded advantages, to Calvinists, of which they have hitherto failed, so far as we have noticed, to make any public use. The concessions of Watson are nothing but what every one who holds scriptural views of the moral state of human nature, and of the work of the Holy Spirit in changing it, must make; and such accordingly as have been made by all the more evangelical and anti-Pelagian Arminians from Arminius downwards. But his attack upon Calvinism—forming the concluding portion of the second part of his “Theological Institutes,” and published also in a small volume separately, as well as in the collected edition of his works—is, both from its great ability and from the large amount of scriptural anti-Pelagian truth which it embodies,

deserving of special attention. It has been thirty years before the world, and it has not, so far as we know, been answered.

Dr Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, in his Essay upon Election,—the third in the volume entitled “Essays on some of the Difficulties in the Writings of the Apostle Paul,”—has made some important concessions to Calvinists, both in regard to matters of abstract reasoning and philological exposition, which are eminently creditable to his sagacity and candour, but which they do not seem as yet to have turned to much account. There is really more of interest, and, in a sense, of something like novelty, in these concessions of Dr Whately, than in almost anything that has been produced upon the subject of this great controversy in the present day. There is indeed nothing like novelty in the statements themselves to which we now refer. They express views which have been always laid down and insisted on by the defenders of Calvinism. The importance and the novelty are to be found only in the circumstance of their being brought forward by one who is not a Calvinist. Dr Whately, in the essay referred to, has admitted, in substance, that the arguments commonly adduced against the Calvinistic doctrine of election, derived from the moral attributes of God, apply as much to actual results occurring under God’s providential government,—in other words, apply equally to the facts of the introduction and permanent existence of moral evil; and that the term election, as used in Scripture, relates, in most instances, to “an arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree.” These are positions which have been always asserted, and have been often conclusively proved, by Calvinists; but they have not usually been admitted by their opponents. And it may seem, at first sight, difficult to understand how any one could admit them, and yet continue to reject the doctrines of Calvinism.

We once had occasion to refer to these positions of Dr Whately; and, regarding him as an Arminian, we ventured to apply that designation to him, and to represent these positions as the concessions of an opponent. Dr Whately, it seems, does not believe or admit that he is an Arminian, and took offence at being so designated. In the last

edition of the volume above referred to, he adverts to this matter in the following terms:—

“So widely spread are these two schemes of interpretation, that I have known a reviewer, very recently, allude to a certain author as ‘an Arminian,’ though he had written and published his dissent from the Arminian theory, and his reasons for it. The reviewer, on having this blunder pointed out, apologized by saying that he had merely concluded him to be an Arminian, because he was not Calvinist, and he had supposed that every one must be either the one or the other! It is remarkable that, by a converse error, the very same author had been, some years before, denounced as Calvinistic, on the ground that he was not Arminian.” Dr Whately has acted from misinformation or misapprehension in saying that the reviewer to whom he refers apologized for the blunder of representing him as an Arminian. The reviewer has never seen that there was any blunder in the matter, and is prepared to assert and to prove, that, according to the ordinary acknowledged rules applicable to such questions, Dr Whately may be fairly called an Arminian, whether he perceives and admits that he is so or not; and that it is absurd to pretend, as he does, to be neither a Calvinist nor an Arminian.

There is no doubt a sense in which on this, as well as on most of the leading questions in Christian theology, there is a threefold course open to men. They may adopt Socinian as well as Arminian or Calvinistic views on the subject of election, just as on other great doctrines of the Christian system; but Socinianism upon this point is not much brought forward now-a-days, and was therefore scarcely worth adverting to in an incidental and popular allusion to existing differences. Arminians and Socinians oppose, with equal strenuousness, and upon substantially the same grounds, the whole doctrines of Calvinists upon this subject. They agree with each other in all the main conclusions they hold in regard to foreordination and election; so that all parties may really be ranked under the two heads of Calvinists and anti-Calvinists. The main difference here between the Arminians and the Socinians is, that the former admit, while the

latter deny, the divine foreknowledge of future events. This is not a difference bearing directly upon what is actually maintained under the head of predestination; though it enters into, and has been largely discussed in connection with, the arguments in support of the one and the other side of that question. Indeed, some of the bolder and more candid of the old Socinians acknowledge, that they denied the doctrine of divine foreknowledge, chiefly because they were unable to see how, if this were admitted, they could refuse to concede the Calvinistic doctrine of foreordination; while, at the same time, some of the bolder and more candid of the old Arminians have made it manifest, that they would gladly have rejected the doctrine of the divine foreknowledge, if they could have devised any plausible evasion of the scriptural evidence in support of it. The admission or denial of the divine foreknowledge—though in itself a difference of very great importance—thus affects rather the mode of conducting the argument, so far as foreordination is concerned, than the actual positions maintained by the opposite parties; though it has often been brought into some of the more popular but less accurate forms of stating the point in dispute. Arminians and Socinians concur in denying all the leading positions held by Calvinists on the subject of the divine decrees or purposes,—the foreordination of all events,—and the absolute election of some men to eternal life; and, practically, the great question is,—Is the Calvinistic affirmation or the anti-Calvinistic negation of these things true? This being so, it is not strictly correct to say, that the only antagonistic alternative to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is the Arminian one; because the fundamental Calvinistic position is denied equally by Arminians and Socinians; and the real question in dispute may be, and should be, stated in such a way as to omit any reference to the point of difference between the Arminians and the Socinians,—viz. the divine foreknowledge,—and to apply equally and alike to both sections of anti-Calvinists.

But while on this ground it must be admitted, that the antagonistic position to the Calvinistic doctrine is somewhat wider and more comprehensive than the Arminian one, as commonly stated by

Arminians themselves; yet the Socinian denial of the divine foreknowledge is now so little brought under our notice, that there was really no call to take it into account in an incidental reference to the subject;—and there is no material inaccuracy in Calvinism and Arminianism being spoken of as the only really antagonistic positions.

It is not upon the ground which has now been adverted to, that Dr Whately objects to being called an Arminian, and tries to throw ridicule upon the idea that a man must be either an Arminian or a Calvinist. He is not a Socinian on this point; for he admits the divine foreknowledge of all events. He denies that he is an Arminian,—he denies that he is a Calvinist; and he denies that a man, though holding the divine foreknowledge of all events, and therefore not a Socinian, must be either a Calvinist or an Arminian on the subject of foreordination. He thus plainly gives us to understand that he holds a doctrine on this subject which is materially and substantially different both from Calvinism and Arminianism,—though he has not suggested any name by which to designate it. Now we take the liberty of dissenting from all this,; and we do not hesitate to affirm that Dr Whately is an Arminian: and further, that every man who has formed an intelligent and definite opinion upon this important controversy, and who repudiates the Socinian denial of the divine foreknowledge, must be either an Arminian or a Calvinist,—or rather must be an Arminian, if he refuses to admit the truth of Calvinism.

It may seem somewhat ungracious to refuse Dr Whately's own statement about his views, and to continue to maintain that he is an Arminian, when he himself repudiates the name. Most certainly nothing -ungracious is intended; the somewhat uncourteous form of the statement is the result of what was purely accidental; and there are some important considerations, bearing upon the interests of truth, which seem to render it expedient that the ground taken should be maintained. The allegation that the Archbishop is an Arminian was introduced in the most incidental way, and evidently under the influence of a feeling that this was a position of notorious

and undeniable certainty,,—a position which no one could dispute, and of which no one would complain. We are neither convinced nor frightened by the somewhat angry allusion made to this matter in the note above quoted from him; and we think it may be fitted to throw light upon an important subject, not well understood, if we attempt to establish the truth of the allegation. We have, of course, no doubt of the integrity and sincerity of Dr Whately in abjuring the name of an Arminian. We differ from him in opinion as to what is or is not Arminianism, and as to what are the grounds and circumstances which warrant the application of this name; and these are matters on which a difference of opinion may be expressed without any want of personal respect being indicated. We think we can prove that Dr Whately's views upon the subject of election are—notwithstanding his important concessions to Calvinism, above referred to—so accordant in substance with those which have been generally known in the history of the church as Arminian, and so different from those indicated by any other recognised ecclesiastical designation, that it is perfectly warrantable to describe them as Arminianism.

We would scarcely have thought of taking the trouble of attempting to prove this, had we not been persuaded that defective and erroneous views on these matters are very prevalent, especially among the clergy of the Church of England; and that there is not a little in the present aspect of theological literature, fitted to show the importance of trying to diffuse accurate and definite views of the true status quaestionis in regard to the topics involved in our controversy with the Arminians.

Dr Whately is not the only eminent writer of the present day who has advocated Arminianism, without being aware of this, and even while repudiating it. The late Mr Stanley Faber—who has rendered important services in several departments of ecclesiastical literature, and who was greatly superior to Dr Whately in theological erudition, though much inferior to him in sagacity and penetration of intellect—published an elaborate work “On the Primitive Doctrine of Election,” the second edition of which appeared in 1842. In this

work he expounds three different theories on the subject of Election—viz. Calvinism, Arminianism, and what he calls Nationalism, or the system advocated by Locke and Dr John Taylor. He labours to prove that all these three theories are erroneous,—opposed equally to the testimony of Scripture, primitive antiquity, and the symbolical books of the Church of England. He then brings forward a fourth theory, different from all these—one which is neither Calvinism, nor Arminianism, nor Nationalism. This he calls Ecclesiastical Individualism,—meaning thereby an election of individuals to the privileges of the visible church—to the enjoyment of the means of grace. This fourth theory—as distinguished from and opposed to the other three—he labours to establish as true, by an application of the three standards just mentioned. While Calvinism, Arminianism, and Nationalism, are all unfounded and erroneous, Arminianism is, in Faber’s judgment, the farthest removed from the truth; or, as he expresses it, —“Of the three systems, Arminianism has the most widely departed from aboriginal Christian antiquity” (including Scripture and the early fathers), “for, in truth, it has altogether forsaken it.” Now, we are firmly persuaded, and think we can prove, that both the Nationalism which he rejects, and the Individualism which he upholds, are just in substance the very Arminianism which he denounces and abjures; that his Arminianism, Nationalism, and Ecclesiastical Individualism, are really just one and the same system or doctrine, exhibited under slightly different aspects, and constituting the one only really antagonistic theory to Calvinism. Faber, we think, has utterly failed to distinguish between the essentials and the accidentals of the different systems which he has investigated. He has not penetrated beneath the surface. He has been entirely carried away by slight and superficial differences, while he has wholly failed to perceive intrinsic and substantial resemblances. The consequence is, that his “Primitive Doctrine of Election”—though containing much interesting matter, which admits of being usefully applied—is practically a mass of confusion; and can produce only error and misapprehension in the minds of those who are unacquainted with some of the more thorough and searching expositions of these important and difficult subjects.



If there be any truth in these statements,—if there be any fair ground for believing that Whately and Faber, the former most favourably representing the ability, and the latter the erudition of the Episcopal Church of this country, are really Arminians, though they are not aware of it,—if these men are truly in substance teaching Arminianism, while they sincerely denounce and abjure it,—there must be some great misapprehension or confusion prevalent, which distorts and perverts men's views upon these subjects; and if any such state of things exist, it must be important, with a view to the interests of truth, that it should be pointed out and exposed.

The statements of Whately and Faber—to which we have referred—seem to be received as true, without any doubt or misgiving, in the great ecclesiastical denomination to which these authors belong; and we are not by any means confident that the generality of Scotch Calvinists now-a-days have sufficient knowledge of doctrinal theology to be able to detect the fallacy. The discussion of this subject extends greatly beyond what is personal to individuals, as affecting the accuracy of their statements. It really involves the whole question of the right settlement of the true status quaestionis in the great controversy about predestination. The settlement of the status quaestionis is always a point of fundamental importance in great doctrinal controversies. It is especially important in this one, where—unless the state of the question is clearly settled and carefully and constantly attended to—men are very apt to fight at random, to be dealing blows in the dark, and running some risk of wounding their friends. A right estimate of the accuracy of the statements of Whately and Faber, condemning and repudiating Arminianism, must be based upon an investigation of these two questions—1st, What is the real essential point of difference between Calvinists and Arminians on the subject of election? and 2d, Is there any real, definite, and important subject of controversial discussion involved in the exposition of election, and not disposed of by the determination of the fundamental question controverted between Calvinists and Arminians? It is only by settling and applying the first of these questions, that we can satisfactorily determine whether Whately and

Faber, and men holding such opinions, may be justly designated as Arminians; and if, by a further application of the results of the same inquiry, we can settle the second of these two questions in the negative, we thus establish the wider and more important conclusion, that men who intelligently investigate the subject of election, and form anything like a clear and definite opinion regarding it, must be substantially either Calvinists or Arminians, whether they perceive and admit this or not.

The consideration of these points, however, has a wider bearing than has yet been indicated. It is fitted to bring out some defects of considerable importance in the way in which this great class of theological topics have been usually discussed by divines of the Church of England. Doctrinal and systematic theology has not ordinarily been studied with much care by the clergy of that church; and the consequence of this has been, not only that crude, confused, and erroneous views upon doctrinal subjects abound in the writings of many of them, but also that the warrantableness and desirableness of vague and indefinite views upon these matters have found in them open and avowed defenders. The clergy of the Church of England at the period of the Reformation were generally, like most of the other Reformers, Calvinists, and continued to be so during the whole reign of Queen Elizabeth and the greater part of that of James VI. Since about the earlier part of the reign of Charles I., the great majority of them have ceased to be Calvinists, though many of these have refused, like Dr Whately, to be called Arminians, and some—though not Calvinists—have even declined to be called anti-Calvinists. These changes in the actual opinions of the clergy of the Church of England have taken place, while their symbolical books have continued unaltered upon doctrinal questions. Since the great body of the clergy have thus been at one time Calvinistic, and at another Arminian; and since probably at all times, at least for two centuries and a half, there have been both Calvinists and Arminians among them, this has tended in many ways to produce great laxity and confusion of doctrinal views, and has not only tended to produce this laxity and confusion in point of fact, but to lead men to justify its

prevalence as a sound and wholesome condition of things. Calvinists and Arminians had equally to show that their views were accordant with the Thirty-nine Articles; and this almost unavoidably led, not only to a straining and tampering with the language of the Articles, but even with the full expression of their own personal convictions. Some have contended that the Articles admitted only of a Calvinistic, others only of an Arminian sense; while others have thought it more accordant with the facts of the case, and with the honour of their church, to maintain that they do not decide in favour of either doctrine, but may be honestly adopted by both parties. The position that the Articles are neither Calvinistic nor Arminian, distinctively, does not differ very materially from the one that they are both. Some have preferred to put it in this latter form; and this again has just tended the more to deepen the confusion which has been introduced into the discussion.

We may give a specimen or two of what is a common mode of speaking among the divines of the Church of England upon this subject. Bishop Tomline concludes his "Refutation of Calvinism" in these words:—"Our church is not Lutheran, it is not Calvinistic, it is not Arminian; it is scriptural, it is built upon the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone." Dr Magee, the late Archbishop of Dublin,—whom we regard as a far superior man to Tomline,—puts the point under consideration in this way, in one of his charges:—"If any proof were wanting that our Articles are, as they profess to be, of a comprehensive character, it would be found in this, that, of the contending parties into which our church is unhappily divided, each claims them as its own. By those who hold the creed of Arminius, they are pronounced to be Arminian; and by those who hold the creed of Calvin, they are pronounced to be Calvinistic. The natural inference of the impartial reasoner would be, that they are neither, whilst they contain within them what may be traced to some of the leading principles of doth. And this is the truth. They are not enslaved to the dogmas of any party in religion. They are not Arminian. They are not Calvinistic. They are scriptural. They are Christian In a note on this passage, he asserts "that the doctrines

of the Church of England are not the doctrines of Calvinism, and that the informed and intelligent clergy of that church are not the followers of Arminius.” This has been a favourite mode of statement with very many Episcopalian divines, whom we believe to have been substantially Arminians, perhaps without their being aware of it. Some Episcopalians—whose doctrinal views were sounder—have, as we have hinted, been disposed rather to take the ground, that, without contradicting either Scripture or the English Articles, men might be both Calvinists and Arminians, or partly the one and partly the other. Statements to this effect, or something like it, have been produced from “Cecil’s Remains” and from “Simeon’s Memoir;” and they have been employed by Professor Park of Andover, to countenance his ingenious attempt to involve important doctrinal differences in inextricable confusion, by distinguishing between the theology of intellect and the theology of feeling.

There is, indeed, a distinction to be made between men’s own personal convictions and their views as to the meaning and import of a symbolical document of public authority. It is quite possible to produce a deliverance upon the subject of election, which is neither Calvinistic nor Arminian,—that is, which is so general, vague, and indefinite, as to contain no decision of any of the points really controverted between the opposite parties. A church may think such an indefinite and indecisive statement the most suitable for a symbolical book,—may deliberately intend to include both parties within her pale,—and may so regulate her deliverances as not to make a definite opinion on the one side or the other a term of communion, or what is virtually the same thing, a ground of separation. Very many of the clergy of the Church of England contend that this is realized in the Thirty-nine Articles. And it is quite possible that they may hold this to be an actual feature of these Articles, and approve of it as a right state of things for a church to exhibit in her symbols; while yet they themselves, in their own personal convictions, may have decided the question in favour of the one side or the other. Tom-line and Magee were Arminians as much as Whately and Faber, while maintaining that the Articles are neither

Arminian nor Calvinistic; and they might have taken this view of the Articles although they themselves had been Calvinists. But although the Episcopalian clergy may consistently maintain that the Articles are neither Calvinistic nor Arminian,—even while they themselves, in their own personal convictions, may have decidedly adopted the one view or the other,—yet there can be no doubt that the peculiar character of the Articles, and the kind of discussion which this has suggested or required, has tended largely to keep many Episcopalian divines in a state of great uncertainty and confusion in regard to this whole class of subjects. There being some plausible grounds for believing that subscription to the Articles did not require them to have their minds made up on the one side or on the other, very many have not thought themselves called upon to give the time and research necessary for forming a judgment on these difficult and arduous topics; and have preferred to exercise their talents rather in the way of trying to show that it was not only unnecessary, but very difficult, and highly inexpedient and dangerous, to be forming a decided opinion, and to be giving an explicit deliverance, upon such matters. The title of the “Bampton Lectures” for 1855, by the Rev. John E. Bode,— and they form a very respectable work,—is this, “The Absence of Precision in the Formularies of the Church of England scriptural and suitable to a state of Probation.” And this “absence of precision,” which they regard as attaching to the public formularies, they too often extend to their own private personal convictions. This influence of the one upon the other has, no doubt, operated powerfully on the general state of thought and sentiment in the Church of England. But it ought not to have done so. There may be very good grounds why precise deliverances upon some doctrinal controversies should not be embodied in symbolical books; while yet it may be the duty of ministers to have formed for themselves a decided opinion regarding them. The reasons that satisfy many of the warrantableness and expediency of the “absence of precision in the public formularies,” do not necessarily sanction the same quality as attaching to men’s own personal convictions; though we fear that some notion of this sort is very prevalent among the clergy of the Church of England. Many have preserved and cherished the “absence

of precision” in their own personal convictions; and in defending the propriety and expediency of this, they have introduced a vast deal of vagueness and confusion into the whole discussion.

This course has been adopted, and this tendency has been exhibited, chiefly by Arminians; and Arminianism certainly has got the benefit of it. Indeed, ignorance and confusion upon this subject always tend to the benefit of Arminianism. Truth is promoted by a thorough knowledge and a careful study of the subject in hand, and by the clear and definite conceptions which are the results of intelligence and investigation; while any shortcoming or deficiency in these respects tends to promote the prevalence of error. This holds true generally of all the ordinary subjects of speculative inquiry. It holds true pre-eminently of the leading points involved in the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians. There are vague, general, and indefinite positions about the divine purposes and plans, and about the divine providence and agency, in which both Calvinists and Arminians concur. Calvinism may be said to involve, and to be based upon, a conversion of these vague and indefinite positions into precise and definite doctrines. These doctrines the Arminians refuse to admit, —alleging that no sufficient evidence can be produced in support of them, and that formidable objections can be adduced against them. They refuse to advance to the more profound and definite positions, which may be said to constitute the distinctive features of Calvinism; and they insist that men should be satisfied with those more superficial and indefinite views in which they and their opponents agree. We are not professing to give this as the formal status quaestionis in the controversy. But this is an account of the difference which is correct, so far as it goes; and it illustrates our present position, that imperfect and confused views upon these subjects tend to injure truth and to advance error,—to damage Calvinism and to favour Arminianism; and this, too, even when men’s views may be so pervaded by ignorance and confusion, that they do not themselves perceive this tendency, or do not really mean to advance the object to which it leads.

It is one of the leading features or results of this vagueness and confusion of thought upon these subjects, that there has commonly been a great tendency to multiply and exaggerate the differences of opinion which have been expressed regarding them; as if to convey the impression that there was a considerable variety of views, out of which men were very much at liberty to make a choice as they might be disposed. As Arminianism is at the bottom of all this confusion, and as it is promoted chiefly for Arminian objects, it has been common for divines of the Church of England to magnify differences subsisting among Calvinists, and to represent each modification of sentiment that may have been brought out, as constituting a distinct and different doctrine. This process tends to increase the general mass of confusion attaching to the whole subject, and to excite a special prejudice against Calvinism, as if its supporters were divided among themselves on points of fundamental importance, and had not any uniform and well-settled position to occupy. We may refer to some historical illustrations of this feature of the controversy.

The first person of any consequence who openly taught Arminianism in the Church of England (not then known by that name) was Peter Baro, a Frenchman, who had held the office of Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge for about twenty years. It was his teaching Arminianism, in opposition to the general doctrine of the Reformers, that occasioned the preparation of the famous Lambeth Articles in 1595,—a transaction, the history of which affords conclusive evidence of the general prevalence of Calvinism in the Church of England till the end. of the sixteenth century. In 1596 he had to resign his office in the university because of his doctrinal views; and on that occasion he prepared a short exposition of his case, under the designation of “*Summa Trium de Prsedestinatione Sententiarum*,”—the three doctrines being, 1st, Supralapsarian Calvinism; 2d, Sublapsarian Calvinism; and 3d, his own Arminianism, which he describes as the doctrine held by the Fathers who preceded Augustine, and by Melancthon and a few other Protestant divines; just as if the first and second differed from each other as much as they both differed from the third.

Arminius himself made large use of the same unfair mode of representation. In his *Arnica Collatio* with Junius, his predecessor in the chair of theology at Leyden, he brings forward three leading doctrines upon the subject of predestination as prevailing among Protestants, and attempts to refute them in order to make way for his own. The three doctrines are—Supralapsarianism, which he ascribes, unwarrantably, to Calvin; Sublapsarianism, which he ascribes to Augustine; and a theory intermediate between them,—a sort of modification of Supralapsarianism,—which he ascribes to Thomas Aquinas. In his famous “*Declaratio Sententise*,” published in 1608, the year before his death, he brings forward again the same three opinions as contrasting with his own, though without associating them historically with the names of individuals. He puts first and most prominently the highest Supralapsarianism, and dwells upon it at the greatest length. He admits, indeed, at last, that there is not any very material difference among these three doctrines,—all held by Calvinists. But he has taken care, in the first place, to have the controversial advantage of having conveyed the impression, that there is great diversity of sentiment among his opponents; and of having held up first and most prominently, in his account of their opinions, the highest Supralapsarianism,—the view against which it is easy to excite the strongest prejudice, while it has really been professed by comparatively few Calvinists. It is worth while to mention, as a curious specimen of elaborate controversial unfairness, that of the whole space occupied by the declaration of his judgment concerning predestination, Arminius devotes four-fifths to an exposure of high Supralapsarianism, leaving only the last fifth for the statement of the other two forms of Calvinism, and of his own anti-Calvinistic doctrine.

But we mean to confine ourselves for the present to our own country. The first elaborate Arminian work produced in England, after Laud’s patronage had done something to encourage opposition to Calvinism, and after Bishop Montague had fairly broken the ice, was “*An Appeal to the Gospel for the true doctrine of Divine predestination, concorded with the orthodox doctrine of God’s free*



grace and man's free will, by John Plaifere, B.D." He held a living in the Church of England for a period very nearly corresponding to the reign of James VI. in that country, and is not to be confounded with Thomas Playfere, a Calvinist, who succeeded to the Margaret divinity professorship in Cambridge, when Baro lost it in consequence of his Arminianism. John Plaifere begins his "Appeal" with a full and elaborate statement of five different doctrines upon the subject of predestination. The first, of course, is Supralapsarian Calvinism; the second is Sublapsarian Calvinism; the third is a sort of intermediate system between Calvinism and Arminianism, propounded by Bishop Overall, and very similar to what was afterwards called Baxterianism; the fourth he represents as the doctrine held by Melancthon, by the Lutherans, and the Arminians; and the fifth and last is the opinion of Arminius himself, of the Jesuit defenders of scientia media, and, as he alleges, of all the Fathers before Augustine. The first four he regards as erroneous, though in different degrees, while he admits that in all of them there are "some parts and pieces of truth, but obscure and mingled with defects." The fifth he adopts as his own, and defends it as true; though he has failed to point out any intelligible difference between this and the fourth. The substantial identity indeed of the fourth and fifth opinions is so obvious, that it is admitted, and the representation given is attempted to be accounted for, in the Preface to the republication of this work, in a "Collection of tracts concerning predestination and providence," at Cambridge in 1719.

The example set by Plaifere, in this the earliest formal and elaborate defence of Arminianism in the Church of England, has been largely followed down to the present day, especially in the point of multiplying and magnifying differences, in order to excite a prejudice against Calvinism, and to shelter Arminianism in the confusion and obscurity. Bishop Burnet, in his Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles, has manifested a good deal of candour and fairness. He was an Arminian, or, as he himself expresses it in his preface,—“I follow the doctrine of the Greek Church, from which St Austin departed and formed a new system.” But he has distinctly admitted, in expounding

the 17th Article, that “it is not to be denied that the Article seems to be framed according to St Austin’s doctrine that “it is very probable that those who penned it meant that the decree was absolute;” and that “the Calvinists have less occasion for scruple” in subscribing than the Arminians, “since the Article does seem more plainly to favour them.” But what alone we have at present to do with is, that he follows the common Arminian course, by giving a distinct and separate head to Supralapsarianism. According to Burnet, there are four leading opinions on the subject of God’s decrees or purposes, viz.:—1st, Supralapsarianism; 2d, Sublapsarianism; 3d, “That of those who are called Remonstrants, Arminians, or Universalists;” and 4th, “That of the Socinians, who deny the certain prescience of future contingencies.”

Without further multiplying proofs of this, we come down to the present day. We have already stated Faber’s classification of the leading doctrines upon this subject under the four heads of Calvinism, Arminianism, Nationalism, and Ecclesiastical Individualism,—the first three being, in his judgment, false, and Arminianism the worst,—while we maintain that three of them, including the fourth, which he defends as true, are just Arminianism, and nothing else.

There is a book which seems to be in great repute in England in the present day, which also illustrates the point we are now explaining. It is, “An Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles, historical and doctrinal,” by E. Harold Browne, B.D., Norrisian Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge. The third edition of it was published in 1856, and a fourth has already appeared, though it is a bulky octavo of about 900 pages. We have done little more than dip into it; but we are satisfied that it is a highly respectable and useful book, embodying a large amount of information, and exhibiting a fair and candid spirit, though certainly not free from errors and inaccuracies. The Norrisian Professor begins his exposition of the 17th Article by an enumeration and brief statement of the leading theories which have been held upon the subject of predestination.

According to this author, they are no fewer than six, viz. 1. Calvinism; 2. Arminianism; 3. Nationalism; 4. Ecclesiastical Election. Thus far he has fully followed Faber,—ecclesiastical election being just the election of individuals to outward privileges,—the elect being just virtually the baptized, and the election the visible church. The fifth theory he mentions is a somewhat unintelligible piece of complication, to which no designation is given; and the sixth is Baxterianism. This seems to be now, as indeed it has always been in substance, a favourite mode of representing the matter among the divines of the Church of England. Professor Browne's own opinions are not very explicitly brought out. He seems to think that the Articles were expressed intentionally in such indefinite and general phraseology as to take in the adherents of several of the different theories. His own views seem to be very much the same as Faber's, while, at the same time, he concedes that there are some scriptural statements which do not easily admit of any other sense than a Calvinistic one.

Mozley's "Treatise on the Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination," is one of a different class, and of a higher order, both in point of ability and general orthodoxy; while at the same time it affords another specimen of that predilection for the "absence of precision" on doctrinal questions, which has so generally characterized the clergy of the Church of England. It is a work of very superior learning and ability, and is really a valuable contribution to our theological literature. This treatise is substantially ( an exposition and defence of the Augustinian or Calvinistic view of predestination; while at the same time the author seems determined, for some reason or other, to stop short of committing himself to a full and open assertion of the doctrine which he seems to believe. He appears to be always on the point of coming out with an explicit and unqualified assertion of Calvinism, when he finds some excuse for stopping short, and leaving the subject still involved to some extent in obscurity and confusion. It would almost seem as if Mr Mozley had some secret and inexplicable reason for refusing to come out with an explicit profession of the Calvinism to which all his convictions tend to lead

him; and the excuses or pretences he assigns for stopping short on the verge of a full and open proclamation of this system, are of a very peculiar and unreasonable kind. We refer to this very superior and remarkable book as another specimen, though in a somewhat peculiar form, of the tendency of Church of England divines to exhibit and to defend “the absence of precision,” in discussing the points controverted between the Calvinists and the Arminians; and thereby to involve the statement and exposition of this important subject in obscurity and confusion,—qualities which always tend powerfully to promote the prevalence of Arminian error.

We have brought forward these historical notices to illustrate the magnitude and the prevalence of what we believe to involve a serious injury to doctrinal truth; and to show the importance of attempting to settle, as precisely and definitely as possible, the true state of the question—the real meaning and import of the main points controverted on the subject of predestination. This is important, not so much in reference to the topic which has more immediately suggested to us this investigation of it,—viz. determining the accuracy of the application of certain historical designations,—but chiefly in reference to the far higher object of forming accurate and definite conceptions on the whole subject, in so far as we have materials for doing so. We believe that it can be proved, that men who admit the divine foreknowledge of all events, and who have formed a distinct and definite opinion on the subject of predestination, must be either Calvinistic or Arminian, whether they perceive and admit this or not; and that Whately and Faber may be fairly designated as Arminians, notwithstanding their honest repudiation of the name, inasmuch as they accord with the views commonly known as Arminian in every point of real importance, and differ from them only, if at all, on topics that are really insignificant. The determination of these questions must, from the nature of the case, depend upon the true status quaestionis between the contending parties; and there is no great difficulty in settling this,—although it is true that men, notwithstanding its paramount

importance, often allow their minds to remain in a condition of great uncertainty and confusion regarding it.

In proceeding to consider this subject, we would begin with observing, that it tends to introduce obscurity and confusion into the whole matter, that men in surveying it are apt, especially in modern times, to confine their attention too much to election,—that is, to the decrees or purposes and agency of God with reference to the eternal destinies of men, without taking in predestination or foreordination in general,—that is, the decrees or purposes and agency of God with reference to the whole government of the world and all the actions of His creatures. The fundamental principle of Calvinism, as stated in the “Westminster Confession,” is, “that God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.” If this great doctrine be true, and be validly established by its appropriate evidence, it includes and comprehends,—it carries with it and disposes of,—all questions about the purposes of God with respect to the eternal destinies of the human race. If it be true that God hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, He must have predetermined the whole history and the ultimate fate of all His intelligent creatures. If it be true that God hath eternally and unchangeably ordained whatsoever cometh to pass, it must also be true,—as being comprehended in this position,—that, as the “Confession” goes on to say, “By the decree of God for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.” It serves some useful and important purposes bearing upon the apprehension and establishment of sound doctrine, to have regard to the import and evidence of the fundamental and comprehensive doctrine of predestination, or of God’s decrees in general; instead of confining our attention to the more limited topics usually understood to be indicated by the words election and reprobation. The decrees of God are usually understood as describing in general the purposes or resolutions which He has formed, and in accordance with which He regulates His own procedure, or does whatever He does in the

government of the world. That God has, and must have, formed purposes or resolutions for the regulation of His own procedure in creating and governing the world, must be admitted by all who regard Him as possessed of intelligence and wisdom; and therefore the disputes which have been raised upon this subject appear to respect, not so much the existence of the divine decrees, but rather the foundation on which they rest, the properties which attach to them, and the objects which they embrace. The main questions which have been usually discussed among divines concerning the divine decrees in general, or predestination in its widest sense, have been these,—1. Are the divine decrees or purposes in regard to all the events which constitute the history of the world conditional or not? and 2. Are they unchangeable or not? Calvinists hold that God's decrees or purposes in regard to everything that was to come to pass are unconditional and unchangeable, while Arminians or anti-Calvinists deny this, and maintain that they are conditional and changeable. But while this is the form which the general question has commonly assumed in the hands of theologians, the real point in dispute comes practically to this: Has God really formed decrees or purposes, in any proper sense, with respect to the whole government of the world? It seems plain —so at least Calvinists believe—that it is unwarrantable to ascribe to a Being of infinite perfection and absolute supremacy any purposes or resolutions for regulating the administration of the universe, that should be left dependent for their taking effect, or being fully realized, upon the volitions of creatures; and liable to be changed according to the nature and results of these volitions. And this brings us back again to the simple but infinitely important and comprehensive question, Has God eternally and unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass? There is no difficulty in understanding the meaning of this question. The foreordination of every event implies, that God from eternity had resolved that it should come to pass, and had made certain provision for this result. And the real subject of controversy is just this, Has God foreordained, in this the only proper sense of the word, whatsoever comes to pass? All Calvinists say that He has; and all anti-Calvinists say that He has not. Arminians and Socinians equally

deny this divine foreordination of all events; while Socinians also deny, but Arminians admit, that God foreknew or foresaw them all. The divine foreordination of all events must either be affirmed or denied,—all who affirm it are Calvinists, and all who deny it are anti-Calvinists; and if, while denying foreordination, they admit foreknowledge, then they may be fairly and justly described as Arminians, because this is the designation by which, for nearly two centuries and a half, the actual doctrinal position they occupy upon this fundamental and all-comprehensive subject has been commonly indicated.

Whately and Faber deny the divine foreordination, while they admit the divine foreknowledge, of all events; and therefore, according to the acknowledged rules and the ordinary practice by which this matter is regulated, they may, without any transgression of accuracy, or justice, or courtesy, be designated as Arminians.

But it was not this great doctrine of the foreordination of all events which Whately and Faber discussed, or seem to have had in their view. It comprehends indeed and disposes of the subject they discussed; and it is an act of ignorance or inconsideration, tending to involve the whole matter in confusion, that they did not take it into account. If they had been familiar with the whole subject in this its highest and widest aspect, and if they had seen that the settlement of the question of foreordination, as commonly discussed, disposes of the question of election, they would scarcely have ventured to deny that they were Arminians. But we must see what was their position in regard to the subject which they had under consideration, viz. election, or the doctrine of the purposes and procedure of God in regard to the ultimate destinies of the human race. What is Calvinism, and what is Arminianism, on this subject? The Calvinistic doctrine is this, that God from eternity chose or elected some men, certain definite individuals of the human race, to everlasting life,—that He determined certainly and infallibly to bring these persons to salvation by a Redeemer, —that in making this selection of some men, and in resolving to save them, He was not influenced by

anything existing in them, or foreseen in them, by which they were distinguished from other men, or by any reason known to or comprehensible by us, but only by His own sovereign good pleasure, by the counsel of His own will,—and that this eternal decree or purpose He certainly and infallibly executes in time in regard to each and every one included under it. This is the Calvinistic doctrine of election; every Calvinist believes this, and every one who believes this is a Calvinist. The meaning of this doctrine, solemn and mysterious as it is, is easily understood; and men are Calvinists or antiCalvinists according as they affirm or deny it. The grand question is,—Is this election—such a choice of men to eternal life, on the ground of the good pleasure of God—a reality, established by scriptural authority, or is it not? From the nature of the case it is manifest, that everything of real importance hinges upon the reality of such an election as has now been described; and that the controversy, so far as it involves anything vital or fundamental, is exhausted, whenever it is settled,—that is, practically, whenever a man has conclusively made up his mind, either that such an election is or is not revealed in Scripture. All men who are not Calvinists deny the reality of any such election on the part of God; and if, while denying this, they admit that God foresaw from eternity the whole of the actual history of each individual of the human race, then they are Arminians,—and nothing but ignorance will lead them to object to this designation.

The fundamental principles of the Arminian doctrine upon the subject of election—the leading features of the theory which has been always historically associated with that name—may be accurately exhibited in the two following positions, 1st, That God made no decree—formed no purpose—bearing immediately and infallibly upon the final salvation of men, except this general one, that He would save or admit to heaven all men who should in fact believe in Jesus Christ and persevere till death in faith and holiness, and that He would condemn and consign to punishment all who should continue impenitent and unbelieving. And 2d, That if there be any act of God, bearing upon the ultimate salvation of particular men



considered individually, which may be called in any sense an election, or decree, or purpose, it can only be founded on, and must be determined by, a foresight of their actual faith and perseverance.

The first of these is the true proper anti-Calvinistic position, held equally and alike by Arminians and Socinians; and constituting manifestly the main substance of what must be held by every intelligent man who has not embraced Calvinism. It implies that God did not make an election of particular persons to eternal life, and resolve to bestow upon them faith, holiness, and perseverance, in order to secure the end of this election; but that He merely made choice of certain qualities or features of character, and resolved to treat them according to their proper nature, in whatever individuals they might turn out at last to be found. Having formed this general purpose to save those who might believe and persevere, and to condemn and punish those who might be impenitent and unbelieving, God virtually left it to men themselves to comply or not with the terms or conditions He had prescribed;—having no purpose to exercise, and, of course, not in fact exercising, any determining influence upon the result in any case, whatever amount of assistance or co-operation He may render in bringing it about. This must be in substance the ground taken by every one intelligently acquainted with the subject, who is not a Calvinist. We could easily prove that this ground was taken by Arminius and his followers, and really formed the main feature of the discussion about the time of the Synod of Dort. The Synod of Dort, in their deliverance upon the controversy raised by Arminians and his followers in opposition to the Calvinism of the Reformers, not only gave an exposition of the positive scriptural truth upon each of the five points, but also subjoined to these a rejection of the errors (*rejectio errorum*) which had been broached by Arminians; and upon the first of the Articles, that on predestination, the very first of the Arminian errors which the Synod rejected and condemned was this, that “the will of God concerning the saving of those who shall believe and persevere in faith and the obedience of faith, is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that there is nothing else whatever

concerning this decree revealed in the word of God". Arminianism was fundamentally and essentially a rejection of the Calvinism taught by the great body of those whom God raised up and qualified as the instruments of the Reformation. Its leading positions thus came to be a denial of the scriptural warrant for such a decree of election as Calvinists usually advocate, and an assertion that the whole of what is said in Scripture about a decree of election bearing immediately upon the final salvation of men, is exhausted by the doctrine,—which, of course, all admit to be true,—viz. that God has determined to save all who shall believe in Jesus Christ and persevere to the end in faith and holiness, and to consign to punishment all who continue impenitent and unbelieving.

The second position above laid down, states accurately the true place and standing of the subject of the foreknowledge or foresight of faith and perseverance, about which so much is said in the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians. We believe that it is chiefly from want of clear and accurate conceptions of the true logical position and relations of this matter of foreknowledge or foresight, that so many men are Arminians without being aware of it; or rather that so many honestly but ignorantly repudiate Arminianism while they really hold it. The fallacy which leads many astray, upon this point is the notion, that the doctrine that the divine decree of election, or the divine purpose to save certain men, is based or founded only upon the foreknowledge that these men will in fact believe and persevere, is an essential, necessary part of the Arminian system of theology; and affords a precise test for determining, both negatively and positively, whether or not men are Arminians. This, though a very common notion, and one not unnaturally suggested by some of the aspects which this controversy has assumed, is erroneous. This matter of foreknowledge does not intrinsically and logically occupy so prominent and important a place in the controversy—or at least in that branch of it which concerns the settlement of the state of the question—as is often imagined. Its real place in this department of the controversy is collateral and subordinate; and the practical result of a correct view of its position is, that while the founding of election

upon foreknowledge proves that a man is an Arminian, the rejection of this idea is no proof that he is not. The fundamental position of Arminius and his followers was in direct opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of the absolute election of some men to everlasting life, based only upon the sovereign good pleasure of God. They held that this doctrine is opposed to the testimony of Scripture, and to right views of the divine character and government. But Arminians, while denying that God absolutely chooses some men to life in the exercise of His sovereign good pleasure, admit that He does infallibly foresee everything that comes to pass,—that thus the history and fate of each individual of the human race were from eternity present to His mind, and of course became in some sense the objects of His actings and purposes;—and that, on this ground and in this sense, He might be said to have resolved from eternity to save each individual who is saved. The notion of an election to life originating in and founded upon the foresight of men’s character and conduct, is thus no necessary or fundamental part of the actual position which the Arminians occupy. It is merely a certain mode of expression into which they can, without inconsistency, throw their leading doctrine; and the use of which involves something of an accommodation or approximation to the language of Scripture, and of their Calvinistic opponents. Arminians virtually say to their opponents,—“We wholly deny your doctrine of election to life on the ground of God’s sovereign good pleasure foreordaining and securing this result; and the only sense in which we could, consistently with this denial, admit of anything like an election of individuals to life, is God’s foreseeing and recognising this result as a thing determined in each case by men’s actual character. An election to life in this sense and upon this ground is undoubtedly a reality, a process which actually takes place; and we are quite ready to admit it, especially as it seems to accord with and to explain those scriptural statements about election on which you base your doctrine. In short, if you will insist upon something that may be called an election, at least in a loose and improper sense, we have no objection to allow an election founded on foresight, but we can concede nothing else of that sort.” This is the true state of matters, and it brings out clearly the subordinate and

collateral place held by the subject of foreknowledge in the investigation of the state of the question.

Some Arminians are willing so far to accommodate themselves to the scriptural and Calvinistic usage of language, as to admit that, in the sense now explained, God had from eternity His own . fixed and unchangeable purposes in regard to the admission of men individually into heaven; while others think it more manly and candid to avoid the use of such language, when their fundamental principle requires them so thoroughly to explain it away. All that is implied in the election of any individual to eternal life, in the only sense in which any one not a Calvinist can admit it, is, that God foresees that that individual will in fact believe and persevere; and that on this ground—this being “the cause or condition moving him thereto”—He decrees or purposes to admit that man to heaven, and to give him everlasting life. The result is thus determined by the man himself,—God’s decree (falsely so called) with respect to his salvation being nothing but a mere recognition of him as one who, without His efficacious determining interposition, would certainly, in point of fact, comply with the conditions announced to him. A decree or purpose based solely upon the foreknowledge or foresight of the faith and perseverance of individuals, is of course practically the same thing as the entire want or non-existence of any decree or purpose in regard to them. It determines nothing concerning them, it bestows nothing upon them, it secures nothing to them. It is a mere word or name, the use of which only tends to involve the subject in obscurity and confusion. Whereas, upon Calvinistic principles, God’s electing decree in choosing some men to life is the effectual source or determining cause of the faith and holiness which are ultimately wrought in them, and of the eternal happiness to which they at last attain. God elects certain men to life, not because He foresees that they will repent and believe and persevere in faith and holiness, but for reasons no doubt fully accordant with His wisdom and justice, though wholly unknown to us, and certainly not based upon anything foreseen in them as distinguished from other men; and then further decrees to give to these men, in due time, everything necessary in

order to their being admitted to the enjoyment of eternal life, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which His wisdom has devised for saving sinners.

But we are in danger of travelling beyond the consideration of the state of the question, and trenching upon the proper argument of the case. Our object at present is simply to show, that although the idea of the foresight of men's faith and perseverance is commonly brought into the ordinary popular mode of stating the difference between Calvinists and Arminians, yet it does not really touch the substance of the point controverted, so as to be, out and out, a discriminating test of men's true doctrinal position.

It is rather a certain mode of speaking, by which Arminians endeavour to evade a difficulty, and to approximate to scriptural language without admitting scriptural truth. When men say, as many Arminians do, that the divine decree of election is based upon the foresight of faith and perseverance, they are virtually saying that there is no decree of election, in any proper sense of the word; or, what is practically the same thing, that the whole and entire decree of election is God's eternal purpose to save all who shall, in point of fact, believe and persevere. Foreknowledge thus does not really affect the proper status quaestionis,—the real substance of what is maintained on either side, or made matter of actual controversy; though it does enter fundamentally into the argument or proof,—the Arminian admission of divine foreknowledge affording to the Calvinists an argument in favour of foreordination which has never been successfully answered.

It is on such grounds as these that we contend that, while the basing of election upon foreknowledge is a proof that men may be justly described as Arminians, the declining or refusing to embrace this idea is no proof that they may not be justly so designated. We believe that erroneous and defective conceptions, on this point, are one main cause why men are not aware that they are Arminians, and unwarrantably repudiate the designation. There are various reasons

that lead men, who are really Arminians, to reject this idea of an election founded on foresight. Some think it more manly and straightforward to declare openly that there is no such thing as an election to eternal life, instead of grasping at what has the appearance of being an election, but is not. Others rather wish to leave divine foreknowledge altogether in the background, and to say as little about it as they can, either in the statement or in the argument of the question. Many, while admitting foreknowledge and denying foreordination, see the difficulties and inconveniences of attempting to connect them in this way. The attempt to found an election on foreknowledge brings out, in a peculiarly palpable light, the fundamental objection of Calvinists against the system of their opponents,—viz. that it leaves everything bearing upon the character and eternal condition of all the individuals of our race undetermined, and indeed uninfluenced, by their Creator and Governor, and virtually beyond His control; and degrades Him to the condition of a mere spectator, who only sees what is going on among His creatures, or foresees what is to take place, without himself determining it, or exerting any real efficiency in the production of it,—and who must be guided by what He thus sees or foresees in all His dealings with them. All this, indeed, can be proved to be involved necessarily in the denial of Calvinism; but it comes out very plainly and palpably when Arminianism is put in the form of maintaining an election founded on foresight, and on this account many Arminians shrink from that mode of representation. For these reasons, many who zealously maintain what is really the essential characteristic feature of Arminianism, dislike and avoid the basing of election upon foresight; and as this mode of putting the matter is popularly regarded as the distinctive mark of Arminianism, those who avoid and reject it are very apt, when their acquaintance with these subjects is imperfect and superficial, to regard themselves as warranted in repudiating the designation of Arminians.

Faber has made it quite manifest that it was chiefly by some confusion upon this point that he was induced to abjure Arminianism, while he really believed it; and we suspect that this has

operated as an element, though perhaps not the principal one, in producing the same result in the case of Archbishop Whately. Faber has developed his views upon these points much more fully than Whately, and it may tend to throw light upon the matter under consideration, if we advert to his mode of representing it. Faber entitles his work, "An Historical Inquiry into the Ideality and Causation of Scriptural Election." By the ideality of election, he means the investigation of the question as to what it is to which men are said to be elected or chosen; and by the causation of election he means the investigation of the question as to what is the cause, or ground, or reason of God's act in so electing or choosing them. It is plain enough, from the nature of the case, that there can be only two distinct questions of fundamental importance in regard to the idea of election,—viz. 1st, Did God choose men only to what is external and temporal? or 2d, Did He also choose them to what is internal and everlasting? In other words, Did God choose men only to external privileges and opportunities, not determining by any act of His, but leaving it to be determined by themselves, in the exercise of their own free will, whether or not they shall improve these means of grace, and consequently whether or not they shall be saved? or, Did He choose them also to faith, and holiness, and heaven, to grace and glory, resolving absolutely to save those whom He had chosen, and to give them everything needful to prepare them for salvation, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which He had devised and proclaimed? The cause of election must, in like manner, be resolved either into something in men, existing or foreseen, or into something in God himself; and if everything in men themselves be excluded from any causal influence upon God's act in election, this is evidently the same thing as tracing election to God's sovereign good pleasure—to the counsel of His own will.

It is by the application of these two pairs of differences that Faber discriminates his four different doctrines on election, viz. Calvinism, Arminianism, Nationalism, and Ecclesiastical Individualism,—taking some assistance also from another distinction of much inferior importance,—viz. that between an election of nations or masses of

men collectively, and an election of individuals. Calvinism he represents as teaching, that the idea of election is God's choosing absolutely some men individually to eternal life, and that the cause of election is not anything in these men themselves, but only the sovereign good pleasure of God. As Calvinists, we have no objection to make to this representation. Faber rejects the Calvinistic idea of election, but approves of our view of its cause. Arminians, according to him, agree with the Calvinists in representing the idea of election to be a choosing of men individually to eternal life, but differ from them in representing the cause of this election to be the foreknowledge of men's character and conduct, or their faith and perseverance foreseen. And here we see the fallacy which involves the views of Faber, and many others, upon this whole matter in confusion, and which we have already in substance exposed. It is only a great ignorance of the whole bearing and relations of the notion of basing election upon foresight, that could lead any man to assert, as Faber does, that Arminians agree with Calvinists in maintaining that the idea of election is that God chooses some men to eternal life. Beyond all question, the fundamental principle of Arminianism is just a denial of the Calvinistic doctrine, that God really, in the proper sense of the word, chooses some men to eternal life—a denial that such an election is sanctioned by Scripture; while the idea of representing foreknowledge as the ground of election, is merely a collateral subordinate notion, having something of the character of an afterthought, and forming no part of the real substance or essential features of the actual position maintained. Arminians deny out-and-out that Scripture reveals any real election by God of some men to eternal life; while they often add to this denial a statement to this effect, that if there be anything in Scripture which seems to indicate an election of some men to eternal life,—anything resembling or approximating to the Calvinistic idea of election,—it can be only an election based upon a foresight of men's character, which is manifestly, as intelligent and candid Arminians admit, no election at all. But, after the explanations formerly given, we need not dwell longer upon this point. Arminians then are, according to Faber, unsound, both in regard to the idea of election, in



which, it seems> they agree with Calvinists; and in regard to the cause of it, in which they differ from them.

Let us attend now to what he says about the two other schemes, which are different from both of these. The third is what he calls Nationalism,—a doctrine taught by John Locke, Dr John Taylor of Norwich, and Dr Sumner, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, in his book on Apostolical Preaching. It is this, that the election spoken of in Scripture is merely a choice made by God of nations or masses of men to form His visible church, and to enjoy the outward means of grace; and that the cause of this election is the sovereign good pleasure of God, who gives to different ages and countries the enjoyment of the means of grace, and withholds them, according to the counsel of His own will. Here Faber thinks the causation right; it being resolved, as in the case of Calvinism, into the good pleasure of God. He thinks the ideality partly right and partly wrong: right in so far as it represents election as being only a choice to outward privileges and means of grace, and not, as Calvinists and Arminians concur in holding, a choice to salvation and eternal life; and wrong, in so far as it implies that election has for-its object, not individuals, but nations or communities. The fourth theory which he expounds, and which he labours to prove to be altogether, both in ideality and causation, accordant with the sacred Scriptures, with primitive antiquity, and with the symbolical books of the Church of England, he calls by the name of Ecclesiastical Individualism. In point of causation, it agrees with Calvinism and Nationalism, in resolving the cause of election into the good pleasure of God. In regard to ideality, it agrees with Nationalism in the fundamental point of representing election as a choice of men only to the communion of the visible church and to the enjoyment of the means of grace, and not to anything implying or securing salvation; while it differs from it only in the insignificant point of making the objects of election individuals instead of nations.

It thus appears why it is that Faber represents Arminianism as the most erroneous of the three erroneous doctrines. Arminianism is

erroneous both in point of ideality and of causation: whereas Calvinism and Nationalism are both right in point of causation, and Nationalism is only partially and slightly wrong in point of ideality. It must also be very plain, we think, from the explanation which has been given, that Faber—while condemning and abjuring Arminianism, with, we have no doubt, perfect sincerity—is himself an Arminian, and nothing else. The fundamental principle of Calvinists is, that God has absolutely chosen some men to salvation, resolving to give them eternal life, and of course infallibly executing this purpose. The fundamental principle of Arminians, and of all who are not Calvinists, is and must be, that God has made no such decree,—formed no such purpose; that He has not chosen any men to eternal life, or to anything which implies or secures it, but only to that which is in itself external and temporary, though, if rightly improved, it avails to men's salvation,—viz. the communion of the visible church and the enjoyment of the means of grace. Faber repudiates the fundamental principles of Calvinism; he strenuously contends for the fundamental principle of Arminianism; and therefore he may be justly called an Arminian.

The subject may also be illustrated in this way. Election is frequently spoken of in Scripture, and ascribed to God. Men are bound to understand the Scriptures, and they should investigate and ascertain what is there meant by election. Calvinists admit that election and cognate words are used in Scripture in a variety of senses. They admit that God, in fact, chooses nations and chooses men individually to the enjoyment of the means of grace; and that this choice of nations and individuals to external privileges is described in Scripture by the name of election, and is ascribed to the good pleasure of God. Thus far all parties are agreed. The distinctive principle of Calvinism is, that, while election is used in Scripture in these senses,—to describe these processes,—it is also used in a higher and more important sense, to describe a process in which God, out of His own good pleasure, chooses some men to eternal life, and to the certain improvement as well as the outward enjoyment of the means of grace; and by which, therefore, He secures their salvation. God

determines the outward privileges enjoyed by nations and individuals,—it is admitted that whatever He does in time He resolved from eternity to do,—and therefore He may be said to have chosen from eternity nations and individuals to the outward privileges which they come in time to enjoy. Nationalism and Ecclesiastical Individualism are thus both true so far as they go. No Calvinist denies either the one or the other. They both describe realities,—processes which actually take place under God's moral government,—which He resolved from eternity to carry through, and which are sometimes indicated in Scripture by election and cognate words. This is certainly true. The question is, Is it the whole truth? Is there, or is there not, another and higher sense in which the word election is used in Scripture, as descriptive of an act of God bearing directly and conclusively upon the salvation of men? Calvinists maintain that there is; Arminians and all other anti-Calvinists maintain that there is not; and this is indeed the one essential point of difference between them. Nationalism and Ecclesiastical Individualism,—or the choice of nations and individuals to the means of grace,—though true so far as they go, viewed as descriptive of actual realities, are yet, when represented as embodying the whole truth, or as exhausting the senses in which election is used in Scripture, just a denial of the fundamental principle of Calvinism, and an assertion of the fundamental principle of Arminianism; and therefore both Nationalists and Individualists are equally and alike, at least when they admit foreknowledge, Arminians, and nothing else.

In the exposition of the scriptural meaning of election, the ground taken by Calvinists is this, that whatever other acts of God, bearing in any way upon the salvation of men, are or may be described by this name, there is an election spoken of in Scripture, of which the three following positions can be established:—1st, That it is not founded upon anything in men (foreseen or existing) as the cause or reason why they are chosen, but only on God's own sovereign good pleasure. 2d, That it is a choosing of individuals, and not merely of nations, or masses of men collectively. And 3d, That it is directed immediately

not to anything merely external and temporary, but to character and final destiny; that it is a choosing of men to eternal salvation, and does certainly and infallibly issue in that result in the case of all -who are included in it. Calvinists believe that there is an election spoken of in Scripture, of which these three positions can be established; and it is the maintenance of all this that makes them Calvinists. But the question with which at present we are chiefly concerned is,—What is the Arminian mode of dealing with these three positions? and what mode of dealing with them entitles us to call men Arminians?

With regard to the first of these positions, the more candid and intelligent Arminians admit, that there is an election spoken of in Scripture .which is founded not on anything in men, but only on the good pleasure of God. Some Arminians have denied this, notwithstanding the clearest scriptural evidence. But these have not been the most reputable and formidable advocates of Arminianism. There is nothing in their Arminianism that should prevent them from admitting this; and it is only the misapprehension and confusion which we have already exposed about the bearing and relations of the idea of foreknowledge or foresight, that could lead any one to suppose that this admission involved them in inconsistency, or afforded any presumption that they were not Arminians. Arminians, indeed, must repudiate—in order to preserve anything like consistency—an election to eternal life, founded only on the good pleasure of God, and not on anything in men themselves. If there were any such election as this, it could be founded only upon a foresight of faith, holiness, and perseverance. But rejecting any proper election to eternal life, there is nothing to prevent them from admitting an election of men to what is external and temporary, founded only on the good pleasure of God. Whately and Faber both admit what is sometimes called arbitrary or irrespective election; but as it is only an election to outward privileges,—which men may improve or not as they choose,—the admission does not afford even a presumption that they are not Arminians, although they seem to think it does.

The second position—viz. that there is an election spoken of in Scripture, the object of which is not nations or masses of men collectively, but men individually—does not of itself determine anything of much importance. Calvinists admit that there is an election of nations spoken of in Scripture; and many Arminians admit that there is also brought before us in the Bible an election of individuals as distinguished from masses. If the only election spoken of in Scripture be an election of masses or communities,— and this, of course, is the distinctive tenet of those who are called Nationalists, —it follows that the election could be only to what was external and temporary, that is, to outward privileges. And it is this plainly which has commended the notion to a certain class of Arminians. Finding it conceded that there are instances in Scripture in which the election spoken of is applied to nations, they have bethought themselves of employing this notion for the purpose of shutting out Calvinism altogether, by showing that there is no other election—no election of individuals—spoken of in Scripture; and consequently that "scriptural «election is only to outward privileges. Nationalism, then, so far from being a different doctrine from Arminianism, is merely a form or aspect in which Arminianism may be embodied, with something like a show of an argument in support of it. The maintenance of Nationalism proves that men are Arminians; while the denial of it—in other words, the admission that Scripture speaks also of an election of individuals—is no proof that they are not.

The truth is, that the hinge of the whole question turns upon the third position above stated as maintained by Calvinists in regard to the meaning of election,—viz. that Scripture does tell us of an absolute and unchangeable election of some men to eternal life, an election which infallibly secures to these men grace and glory. The only conclusive proof that a man is not an Arminian, is the proof that he holds this fundamental principle of Calvinism. If men do not admit this great distinctive principle of Calvinism, they must maintain that the election spoken of in Scripture is only an election to what is external and temporary,—that is, to privileges or opportunities which men may improve or not as they please. It is

impossible to examine an Arminian commentary upon the scriptural statements concerning election, without seeing that the one grand object aimed at is just to establish, that there are none of them which prove a real election to grace and glory, and that they may be all explained so as to imply nothing more than an election to outward privileges. All the leading Arminian divines have taken—and from the nature of the case could not avoid taking—this ground, in dealing with the scriptural argument on the subject of election; and every one who takes this ground is thereby conclusively proved to be an Arminian. They» may concede to Calvinists the first two of the positions we have laid down in regard to the scriptural meaning of election,—that is, they may admit that there is an election spoken of in Scripture which is founded only on the sovereign good pleasure of God, and which has respect to men individually, and not merely to nations or masses. They are quite consistent in their Arminianism, and have quite a sufficient basis on which to rest it, so long as they deny the third position, and maintain the converse of it; and by occupying this ground they prove themselves to be Arminians. This is precisely the case with Faber and Whately. They both deny that Scripture gives any sanction to a real electioli of some men to faith and holiness, to grace and glory; and therefore they are not Calvinists. They both maintain that the only election spoken of in Scripture is an election to outward privileges and opportunities, which men may improve or not, according to their Own good pleasure; and therefore (since at the same time they admit foreknowledge) they may be most warrantably held to be Arminians.

From the explanation which has been given, it must, we think, be very evident, that Nationalism and Individualism as explained by Faber, instead of being, as he represents the matter, two distinct doctrines on the subject of election, different both from Calvinism and Arminianism, are just two devices for evading the scriptural evidence in support of the former, and for assisting to furnish a scriptural argument in favour of the latter. There is very little real intrinsic difference between these two Arminian devices for answering the Calvinistic argument and evading the testimony of

Scripture; for, on the one hand, an election of nations must be an election only to outward privileges; and, on the other hand, outward privileges are usually—in the ordinary course of God’s moral administration—bestowed rather upon nations or communities than upon individuals. Some Arminians prefer the one and some the other of these two modes of disposing of the Scripture testimony in favour of Calvinism; while others again think it best to employ both methods, according to the exigencies of the occasion. The two together form the great staple of the scriptural argument of the whole body of Arminian divines; and it has been no uncommon practice among men to employ the one or the other mode of evasion, according as one or the other seemed to afford the more plausible materials for turning aside the argument in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of election, derived from the particular passage which they happened to be examining at the time. Dr Whately takes the ground, directly and at once, that the election ascribed to God in Scripture is not an election to faith and salvation, but only to outward privileges or means of grace, which men may improve or not as they choose; while Dr Sumner, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, takes the other ground, and maintains that scriptural election is a choice not of individuals but of nations; and thus, of course, comes round to the same inevitable Arminian position, by a slightly different and somewhat more circuitous process.

We are almost ashamed to have dwelt so long, and with such reiteration, upon these matters. But when we find it gravely put forth by such a writer as Faber, that Calvinism, Arminianism, Nationalism, and Ecclesiastical Individualism, indicate four different theories upon the subject of election,—Arminianism being at once more erroneous in itself, and yet nearer to Calvinism, than either of the other two; when we find the same views of the general import of these alleged theories brought out by one at present holding the office of a professor of divinity in the University of Cambridge, in a work which seems to be in great repute, having gone through four editions in the course of the last seven or eight years; and when we reflect upon the various indications presented, that these views of

Faber and Professor Browne pass current as undoubted truths among many of the clergy of the Church of England, we cannot but believe that ignorance, misapprehension, and confusion are widely prevalent upon these subjects, and that there is an imperative call to attempt to dispel this thick darkness, while at the same time we cannot but feel that it may probably not be easy to effect this. We have surely said enough to prove—1st, That there are just two really distinct theories upon this subject which, with substantial historical accuracy, may be called Calvinism and Arminianism,—that the great point which forms the proper subject of controversy between Calvinists and Arminians is the existence or the non-existence, the affirmation or the negation, of a real decree, or an absolute purpose of God, formed from eternity, originating in His sovereign good pleasure, choosing some men to eternal life, and effectually securing that these men shall have grace and glory; 2d, That it is a thorough fallacy to represent Arminianism—as is done by Faber and Professor Browne—as countenancing any proper decree or purpose of God really bearing upon the salvation of men,—a fallacy arising from the want of a right perception of the true bearing and relations of the idea of foreknowledge or foresight, as it has been brought into the discussion of this subject; and 3d, That Nationalism and Individualism, instead of being theories differing from Arminianism, are just forms or aspects of it,—or rather, perhaps, attempts at arguments in support of it. All who believe that Scripture establishes the existence of such an election as is described in the first of these positions, are Calvinists; and all who deny this, provided they at the same time admit the divine foreknowledge, are Arminians. When tried by this,—the only really sound and searching test,—Faber and Whately are undoubtedly Arminians; and there is no violation of historical accuracy or of substantial justice in applying to them that designation notwithstanding that they through misapprehension disclaim it.

Dr Whately, in his latest work, “The Scripture Doctrine concerning the Sacraments,” has a remark which bears upon this matter, and may require to be adverted to. He says there, “It is utterly improper



that any should be called either by themselves or by others ‘Calvinists,’ who dissent from any part of what Calvin himself insists upon as a necessary portion of his theory;” and upon this principle he would probably contend that it is “utterly improper to call him an Arminian/’ since he dissents from (i some part of what Arminius insists upon as a necessary portion of his theory.” Personally we have no objection to the principle of the rule indicated by Dr Whately. We could not, even if so disposed, escape from the imputation of being Calvinists, by alleging that we dissent from any part of what Calvin insisted upon as a necessary portion of his theory, though we do dissent from some of his opinions. But in regard to the application of Dr Whately’s remark to his own case, we venture to affirm, 1st, That the rule which he lays down about the application of such designations is unnecessarily and unwarrantably stringent; and 2d, That even conceding the soundness of this stringent rule, we are perfectly warranted in calling him an Arminian. 1st, The rule is unduly stringent. This matter must be settled—for there is no other standard applicable to the point—by considering the practice of the generality of divines of different denominations. Now, there can be no doubt that it is a common and usual thing for divines to apply such designations as those under consideration in a wider and more indefinite way than Dr Whately’s rule would sanction. Calvinism, Arminianism, and similar names, are generally employed to indicate, not so much the actual views held by Calvin, Arminius, and others, but rather the general system of doctrine which these men did much to bring out and to commend, even though it may have been considerably modified in some of its features by the discussion to which it has been subsequently subjected. Controversy conducted by competent persons usually leads—though it may be after an interval, and even after the removal of the original combatants—to clear up and modify men’s views upon both sides; and yet, for the sake of convenience, the same compendious designations may still be retained. The general practice of divines sanctions this use of these names, though it is manifest that they must often be employed in a somewhat vague and ambiguous way,—there being no precise or definite standard to which reference can be made, in order to

determine their proper meaning and import. This unavoidable vagueness and uncertainty in the use and application of those words, leaves much room for carping and quibbling when men are disposed to evade or escape from a difficulty. But even with this drawback, there is much convenience in the use of such designations; the general usage of theologians sanctions it; and it is trifling to make an outcry about any matter of this sort, unless in a case of gross and deliberate unfairness, Calvin and Arminius must not be held responsible for any opinions which they have not themselves expressed. Still there is no great difficulty in distinguishing between their personal opinions and the leading features of the systems of theology to which their names have been attached, as these seem to be logically related to each other, and as they have been commonly set forth by the most eminent divines of either denomination. Arminius never positively and decidedly renounced the Calvinistic doctrine of the certain perseverance of believers; but no one has ever had any hesitation about calling the denial of this doctrine Arminianism, upon these grounds—1st, That logically it forms a natural, necessary part of the Arminian system of theology, although Arminius himself did not perceive this, and did not insist upon it as a necessary portion of his theory; and 2d, That historically, the doctrine of perseverance has been denied by the great body of those divines who, ever since Arminius's time, have been called after his name. It is true, on the one hand, that men of sense do not suppose that these designations—even when applied in a way which, general usage warrants—afford of themselves anything like a proof either of the truth or the falsehood of the doctrines to which they are attached; and it is also true on the other, that men of sense will not raise an outcry about the application of one of these designations to themselves, if their views agree in the main with the general system of doctrine to which this designation has been usually applied. We would not object to be called Calvinists, though we differed much more widely from Calvin's own views than we do, nay, even though we dissented from some point which "Calvin himself insisted upon as a necessary portion of his theory," so long as we held the

fundamental distinguishing principles of that scheme of theology with which his name is usually associated.

But 2df Though Dr Whately's rule is unduly stringent, still its fair application does not prove the unwarrantableness of calling him an Arminian. Not only does he hold, all the fundamental distinguishing principles of the system of theology which has been generally known in the history of the Church under the name of Arminianism, as expounded by the generality of the most eminent divines who have accepted that, name for themselves, but he does not dissent from any part of what Arminius himself insisted upon as a necessary portion of his theory; nay, he does not dissent from Arminius, or from the general body of Arminian divines, in any doctrine of real importance. Arminius was very unwilling to bring out, honestly and explicitly, his peculiar opinions. It was only in 1608, the year before his death, that he was induced to come out with a profession of his doctrines; and even then his conduct was not very manly and straightforward. We have four different statements, more or less explicit, prepared by him in that year, of his sentiments upon predestination. They are to be found in his works. We are unable to perceive any material difference between the views of Arminius—as there stated—and those of Dr Whately; and we are confident that no such difference can be established. Dr Whately, in asserting that he is neither a Calvinist nor an Arminian, must be understood as intending to affirm that he differs in some points of real importance, not so much from the opinions of Calvin and Arminius, as from the leading views on the subject of election that have commonly been held by Calvinistic and Arminian divines. He probably also intended, in making this statement, to convey the idea that his views lay somewhere between the one system and the other; or, in other words, that he neither went so far in one direction as the Calvinists, nor so far in the opposite direction as the Arminians. If this was his intention—as it seems to have been—the fact would only show how imperfect is his knowledge of these matters. For it is evident that in so far as anything like a material difference from Arminius could be pointed out, it is to be found principally in this direction, that

Arminius retained more of the doctrines generally held by Calvinists than Dr Whately has done. But whatever there be in this, it is certain that he holds the whole substance of what has been well known in the history of the Protestant church for the last two centuries as Arminianism, as opposed to Calvinism, and differing somewhat from Socinianism, on this subject; and that therefore we are fully warranted, by the ordinary, reasonable, and convenient practice of theologians, to call him an Arminian. We must be careful, indeed, to ascribe to him no opinions which he has not professed or acknowledged. But he has no right to demand that, because he has a dislike to the designation Arminian, we must have recourse to circumlocution in indicating his theological position, when he is utterly unable to prove that calling him an Arminian involves inaccuracy or injustice, or implies any deviation from the mode of dealing with such topics which is sanctioned by the ordinary practice of theologians.

Faber having written a book upon the subject of election, and having there brought out his views fully and elaborately, has made it manifest what were the grounds that led him to believe that he was not an Arminian; and we have had no difficulty in pointing out the source of the fallacy in his case. Whately has referred to this matter only incidentally, and has not gone into any formal or elaborate exposition of the different theories which have been held regarding it. In this way, while he has afforded us abundant ground for believing that he is an Arminian, and for calling him by that name, he has not told us explicitly or in detail what are the grounds on which he considers himself warranted to repudiate the designation. Our views upon this point must therefore be inferential, and to some extent conjectural. We think there are some indications, in his statements upon the subject of election, showing that he was to some extent misled by the same fallacy about the relation between election and foreknowledge which we have exposed in the case of Faber.' They both concur in rejecting the Arminian interpretation of Rom. viii. 29, "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son;" and of 1 Pet. i. 2, "Elect

according to the foreknowledge of God;”—denying, as Calvinists do, that these passages afford a warrant for basing election upon foresight. And there are other indications—though none, so far as we remember, of a very explicit kind—that Whately concurred with Faber in rejecting altogether the idea of basing election upon foresight; and in imagining that, in rejecting this idea, he was abjuring the fundamental, distinctive principle of Arminianism. We have said enough, w'e think, to show that any such notion can originate only in a very defective and superficial knowledge of the intrinsic merits of this great controversy.

We have had occasion to refer to some points on which Dr Whately has expressed opinions different from those held by the generality of Arminians. These we have always regarded as eminently creditable to him, especially as we could not but view them as the concessions of an opponent. It is probably on these-differences that he founds his warrant and right to deny that he is an Arminian. We think it proper to advert to these points of difference, not merely for the purpose of showing that they afford no ground for his abjuring the designation, but for the more important object of bringing out the valuable concessions thus made to Calvinism by one whom we must still take the liberty of calling an Arminian.

The first point of this nature which we would notice we have already adverted to. It is one which only partially comes under the present head, as the same concession has been made by many Arminians. It is this, that Dr Whately distinctly admits that the word election, as used in Scripture, “relates, in most instances, to an arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree;” and shows that those who endeavour to answer the Calvinistic argument founded upon the Scripture passages where election and its cognates occur, by denying this, are incapable of maintaining the position they have assumed.

There are some Arminians who are so afraid of admitting anything that might be called “arbitrary, irrespective, or unconditional” in God’s purposes or procedure in regard to men, that they labour, in spite of the strongest opposing evidence, to exclude everything of this

nature from every passage in Scripture where the words occur. But Dr Whately, and many of the more sagacious and candid Arminians, admit that this mode of dealing with the matter is unnecessary and unwarrantable. They could not indeed believe in any arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree of God bearing directly upon men's salvation, and exerting a determining influence upon the result.

And, as we have fully explained, the fundamental, distinctive principle of all anti-Calvinists—Arminians included—is just to deny that any such decree was or could be formed. But there is nothing in point of consistency to make it impossible for Arminians to admit an arbitrary, irrespective, and unconditional election, provided it be an election not to faith and salvation, to holiness and heaven, to grace and glory, but only to what is external and temporary, to outward privileges or means of grace; it being still dependent on men's free will to improve or not their opportunities, and thus to attain or not to eternal life. Any such thing as an election to salvation could, upon anti-Calvinistic principles, be based only upon a foresight of what men individually would actually be and do; and in fairness and reason this could not properly be called an election. But an election to outward privileges or means of grace might be based upon the sovereign good pleasure of God, as it exerts no efficacious determining influence upon men's eternal destiny. Dr Whately denies the existence of any real election of some men by God to eternal, life, and admits only an election to the means of grace. This is a conclusive proof that he is an Arminian; and the proof is not in the least affected by his admission, that this election of some, whether nations or individuals, to outward privileges, is “arbitrary, irrespective, and unconditional,”—in other words, is founded on the sovereign good pleasure of God, and not on anything existing or foreseen in men themselves.

Some of the other concessions which Dr Whately has made to Calvinists are points in which he has few or none of the Arminians to countenance him, and they are therefore all the more creditable to

his sagacity and candour; while at the same time we may say of them, in general, that they cannot be of any avail in proving that he may not be warrantably called an Arminian, inasmuch as they do not affect the state of the question, or the real meaning and import of the actual positions held on either side and controverted between the two parties, but only the force and value of some of the arguments employed in conducting the contest.

The second—and in some respects the most important—of these concessions is the admission that the arguments commonly adduced against Calvinism, derived from the moral attributes and government of God, are unsatisfactory and invalid; and that the grand difficulty of this whole subject applies to every system, inasmuch as it attaches to the facts—admitted by all—of the introduction and permanent continuance of moral evil. His views upon these subjects are brought out not only in his “Essay on Election,” but also in what he has said in connection with the Discourse of his predecessor, Archbishop King, on Predestination, which he has republished, with Notes and an Appendix, in the later editions of his “Bampton Lectures.” He has fully adopted, as had been previously done by his friend Bishop Copleston, in his “Inquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination,” the leading principle, expounded in King’s famous Discourse. The principle is in substance this (we are not called upon to go into any details upon the point), that we know too little about God and the divine attributes and perfections, to warrant us in drawing conclusions from them as to the divine procedure; that the divine attributes, while infinitely superior in degree, are:—though called by the same names—not the same in kind as those which we ourselves possess; that our knowledge of them is almost wholly, if not altogether, analogical; and that, therefore, we are not entitled to draw inferences or conclusions about the divine procedure from the divine power and knowledge, or from the divine justice and holiness, as we would from the same qualities in men. There is as much truth in this general principle, as to lay a good ground for condemning much presumptuous and ill-founded speculation, which has been brought to bear upon the

discussion of this subject. But the principle is surely carried too far, when it is laid down so absolutely that our knowledge of God's attributes is wholly analogical, and does not warrant any inferences as to the mode of the divine procedure. The incomprehensibility of Jehovah—the infinite distance between a finite and an infinite being—should ever be fully recognised and acted on. But Scripture and right reason seem plainly enough to warrant the legitimacy and propriety of some inferences or conclusions as to God's procedure, derived from the contemplation of His attributes. King developed the leading principle of his Discourse for anti-Calvinistic purposes; and Copleston brought it forward—to use a favourite phrase in the present day—in the same dogmatic interest. Their object was to wrest, by means of it, from the hands of Calvinists, the formidable arguments usually adduced against Arminianism, derived from God's power, knowledge, and wisdom, which are often spoken of as His natural attributes. Dr Whately, with superior sagacity and candour, sees and admits that this principle, if true and sound, is equally available for wresting from the hands of Arminians the arguments they have been accustomed to adduce against Calvinism, derived from what are often called God's moral attributes—His holiness, justice, and goodness. The great staple of the argument against Calvinism has always been, that the procedure which it ascribes to God is inconsistent with the holiness, justice, and goodness which all attribute to Him. If the argument derived from this source must be thrown aside as unwarrantable and invalid,—and Whately concedes this as necessarily involved in the fair application of King's principle,—Arminians are stripped of by far the most plausible things they have to adduce. They may still, indeed, consistently retain their leading position upon other grounds. They may still deny the fundamental principle of Calvinism, though deprived of what has been always felt to be the most formidable argument against it; and this is, indeed, just the position occupied by Dr Whately. He still holds that there are good and sufficient grounds for rejecting the Calvinistic doctrine, though he declines to make any use of the common argument against it, derived from God's moral attributes. The abandonment of this argument as unsatisfactory,



does not produce any change in the actual doctrines he maintains. The position he occupies may be, and in point of fact is, the very same as that of those who continue to believe in the validity of the old favourite anti-Calvinistic argument; and as the abandonment of this argument does not make him less anti-Calvinistic, so neither can it afford any evidence that he is not an Arminian. We must therefore continue to regard Dr Whately's abandonment of King's principle of the common argument from God's moral attributes, as the concession of an opponent, due to the force of truth; while we are not called upon to attach the same weight to his continued adherence to the ordinary Arminian ground of the invalidity of the argument in favour of Calvinism, derived from God's natural attributes. Calvinists do not, in general, admit the soundness of King's principle. They think they can establish the invalidity of the Arminian argument from the divine perfections upon other and more specific grounds; and thus they profess to be able to show, that they are warranted in accepting the concession of Dr Whately, as to the utterly precarious and uncertain character of the argument against Calvinism, from its alleged inconsistency with God's moral attributes; without at the same time needing to renounce the argument in favour of Calvinism and against Arminianism, derived from the consideration of His natural attributes.

The substance of this important concession is also presented by Dr Whately, in a more definite and specific form. He virtually admits that the arguments which have been commonly adduced against Calvinism on account of its alleged inconsistency with God's moral attributes, really apply to and tell against actual facts, —undoubted realities occurring under God's moral government,— that they thus prove too much, and therefore prove nothing; in short, that the real difficulty is not anything peculiar to Calvinism, but just the introduction and the permanence of moral evil,—an awful reality, which every system must equally deal with and in some way dispose of. It is admitted, that whatever God does in time He resolved from eternity to do; and if so, no peculiar or additional difficulty attaches to His eternal decree or purpose, as distinguished from that

attaching to its execution in time, or to what God actually does in determining men's character and destiny. Whatever takes place in time God resolved from eternity to produce or to permit; and the fact of its occurrence proves that there was nothing in His character to prevent Him from producing or permitting it; and, of course, nothing to preclude His having resolved from eternity to produce or permit it. By following out these obvious considerations, Calvinists have proved that the great difficulty in this whole subject is just the permanent existence of moral evil under God's administration; and as this is admitted on both sides to be an actual reality, the difficulty suggested by the contemplation of God's moral attributes is thus proved to be one which Calvinists and Arminians are equally bound, but at the same time equally unable, to solve. All this has been proved to demonstration by Calvinists, times without number; and it manifestly removes out of the way by far the most formidable and plausible objections by which their system has ever been assailed. Anti-Calvinists have never been able to devise a plausible answer to this line of argument, so subversive of their favourite and most effective allegations. But not one of them has ever, so far as we remember, conceded its truth and soundness so fully and frankly as Dr Whately has done. This concession is so important in itself, and so honourable to him, that we must present it in his own words: —

“Before I dismiss the consideration of this subject, I would suggest one caution relative to a class of objections frequently urged against the Calvinistic scheme—those drawn from the conclusions of what is called Natural religion, respecting the moral attributes of the Deity; which, it is contended, rendered the reprobation of a large portion of mankind an absolute impossibility. That such objections do reduce the predestinarian to a great strait, is undeniable; and not seldom are they urged with exulting scorn, with bitter invective, and almost with anathema. But we should be very cautious how we employ such weapons as may recoil upon ourselves. Arguments of this description have often been adduced, such as, I fear, will crush beneath the ruins of the hostile structure the blind assailant who seeks to overthrow it. It is a frightful, but an undeniable truth, that multitudes, even in

Christian countries, are born and brought up under such circumstances as afford them no probable, even no possible, chance of obtaining a knowledge of religious truths, or a habit of moral conduct, but are even trained from infancy in superstitious error and gross depravity. Why this should be permitted, neither Calvinist nor Arminian can explain; nay, why the Almighty does not cause to die in the cradle every infant whose future wickedness and misery, if suffered to grow up, He foresees, is what no system of religion, natural or revealed, will enable us satisfactorily to account for.

“In truth, these are merely branches of the one great difficulty, the existence of evil, which may almost be called the only difficulty in theology. It assumes indeed various shapes: it is by many hardly recognised as a difficulty, and not a few have professed and believed themselves to have solved it; but it still meets them, though in some new and disguised form, at every turn, like a resistless stream, which, when one channel is dammed up, immediately forces its way through another. And as the difficulty is one not peculiar to any one hypothesis, but bears equally on all alike, whether of revealed or of natural religion, it is better in point of prudence as well as of fairness that the consequences of it should not be pressed as an objection against any.”

“I cannot dismiss the subject without a few practical remarks relative to the difficulty in question (the origin of evil).

“First, let it be remembered, that it is not peculiar to any one theological system; let not therefore the Calvinist or the Arminian urge it as an objection against their respective adversaries, much less an objection clothed in offensive language, which will be found to recoil on their own religious tenets, as soon as it shall be perceived that both parties are alike unable to explain the difficulty. Let them not, to destroy an opponent’s system, rashly kindle a fire which will soon extend to the no less combustible structure of their own.

“Secondly, let it not be supposed that this difficulty is any objection to revealed religion. Revelation leaves us, in fact, as to this question, just where it found us. Reason tells us that evil exists, and shows us in some measure how to avoid it. Revelation tells us more of the nature and extent of the evil, and gives us better instructions for escaping it; but why any evil at all should exist, is a question it does not profess to clear up; and it were to be wished that its incautious advocates would abstain from representing it as making this pretension, which is, in fact, wantonly to provoke such objections as they have no power to answer.”<sup>f</sup> These views are, of course, familiar to intelligent Calvinists, as furnishing what they regard as a satisfactory answer to the most plausible objections of their opponents; their soundness is now for the first time fully conceded by a very able Arminian; and this concession, so honourable to him, may be expected to put an end to the coarse and offensive declamation in which Arminians have commonly indulged on this branch of the argument, and which has usually formed a very large share of their whole stock in trade as polemics.

The only other concession made by Dr Whately to Calvinism which we mean to notice is one connected with its alleged practical application. It has always been a favourite allegation of Arminians, that the Calvinistic doctrine of election tends to lead men to be careless about the improvement of the means of grace and the discharge of practical obligations, on the ground—as they represent the matter—that the result in each case is already provided for and secured irrespective of these things. The answer to this allegation is, in substance, that it is not only consistent with, but that it constitutes an essential part of, the Calvinistic doctrine, that God has foreordained the means as well as the end, and has thus established a certain and invariable connection *de facto* between them. This doctrine of the foreordination of the means as well as of the end, not only leaves unimpaired, to second causes, the operation of their own proper nature, constitution, and laws, but preserves and secures them in the possession of all these. It thus, when viewed as a whole, establishes most firmly the actual, invariable connection between the

means and the end; and in its legitimate application, is at least as well fitted as any other doctrine can be, to keep alive in the minds of men a deep sense of the reality and certainty of this connection. All this Calvinists have conclusively proved, times without number; but Arminians have never been willing to concede it, since it completely disposes of a favourite objection, which, upon a partial and superficial view of the matter, appears very formidable. But Dr Whately admits the validity of the Calvinistic answer to the Arminian objection— that is, he admits that the Calvinistic doctrine of election, when the whole doctrine is taken into account and fully and fairly applied, does not tend to exert an injurious influence upon the improvement of the means of grace and the discharge of practical obligations; while, at the same time, he tries to make a point against Calvinism, by labouring to show, that by the same process by which Calvinists prove their doctrine to be harmless or innocent, it can be proved to be entirely useless, and to admit of no practical application whatever.

“It has indeed been frequently objected to the Calvinistic doctrines, that they lead, if consistently acted upon, to a sinful, or to a careless, or to an inactive life; and the inference deduced from this alleged tendency has been, that they are not true. But this is a totally distinct line of argument, both in premises and conclusion, from that now adverted to; and I mention it, not for the purpose either of maintaining or impugning it, but merely of pointing out the distinction. Whatever may be, in fact, the practical ill tendency of the Calvinistic scheme, it is undeniable that many pious and active Christians, who have adopted it, have denied any such tendency,— have attributed the mischievous consequences drawn, not to their doctrines rightly understood, but to the perversion and abuse of them; and have so explained them to their own satisfaction, as to be compatible and consistent with active virtue. Now if, instead of objecting to, we admit, the explanations of this system, which the soundest and most approved of its advocates have given, we shall find that, when understood as they would have it, it can lead to no practical result

whatever. Some Christians, according to them, are eternally enrolled in the book of life, and infallibly ordained to salvation, -while others are reprobate and absolutely excluded; but as the preacher (they add) has no means of knowing, in the first instance at least, which persons belong to which class, and since those who are thus ordained are to be saved through the means God has appointed, the offers and promises and threatenings of the gospel are to be addressed to all alike, as if no such distinction existed. The preacher, in short, is to act in all respects as if the system were not true.

“Each individual Christian again, according to them, though he is to believe that he either is or is not absolutely destined to eternal salvation, yet is also to believe that if his salvation is decreed, his holiness of life is also decreed; he is to judge of his own state by ‘the fruits of the Spirit’ which he brings forth: to live in sin, or to relax his virtuous exertions, would be an indication of his not being really (though he may flatter himself he is) one of the elect. And it may be admitted, that one who does practically adopt and conform to this explanation of the doctrine will not be led into any evil by it, since his conduct will not be in any respect influenced by it. When thus explained, it is reduced to a purely speculative dogma, barren of all practical results.”

There is here no abandonment of his anti-Calvinistic position, — nothing that should lead either himself or others to believe that he is not an Arminian,—but there is a very explicit abandonment of a favourite and plausible Arminian objection against Calvinism; and this important concession by such an opponent is one of which Calvinists are well entitled to take advantage. We cannot enter upon any exposition of the practical application of the Calvinistic doctrine of election, for .the purpose of answering Dr Whately’s allegation,—that, by the very same process of explanation by which Calvinism escapes from the positive objection of having an injurious or dangerous tendency, it is proved to have no practical application whatever, but to be a mere useless barren speculation. We think we could prove that this notion is a confusion and a fallacy; and that it

can be without much difficulty traced to this cause, that he has not here made the same full and candid estimate, as on some other branches of the argument, of the whole of what Calvinists are accustomed to advance in explaining the practical application of their doctrine, but confines his observation to some of the features of the subject, and these not the most important and peculiar. We think we could prove that it is this alone which gives plausibility to his attempt to show that the Calvinistic doctrine of election, when explained by its more intelligent advocates in such a way as to escape from the imputation of having an injurious tendency, is deprived of all practical effect or utility whatever, and that we should act in all respects as if the doctrine were not true.

In these various ways, and in one or two other points of less importance, Dr Whately has made valuable concessions to Calvinism. In doing so he has been guilty of no inconsistency, and we insinuate no such charge against him; for his deviations from the course pursued by other anti-Calvinists affect, not the meaning and import of any of the main positions actually held, but only the validity of some of the arguments commonly adduced in the course of the discussion. He no doubt believes that he can still produce sufficient and satisfactory evidence against the Calvinistic doctrine of election, though he has felt himself constrained to abandon as unfounded the objections commonly adduced against it from its alleged inconsistency with the divine character and government, and from its supposed injurious practical tendency. We regard these concessions as eminently creditable both to his head and to his heart, to his ability and his courage, to his sagacity and his candour. We value them very highly as contributions—though not so intended—to the establishment of what we reckon important scriptural truth. They have undoubtedly the advantage of being the concessions of an opponent; for Dr Whately admits that he is opposed to Calvinism, though he seems anxious to impress the conviction that he is equally opposed to Arminianism. We so highly admire the ability and candour Dr Whately has shown in the discussion of these topics, and we are so grateful for the valuable concessions he has made to what

we reckon truth, that we would most willingly abstain from saying anything that was disagreeable to him, except in so far as a regard to the interests of truth might require this. But we cannot retract the assertion that he is an Arminian. Were the matter, indeed, now to begin again de novo, we might avoid the use of this expression, knowing, as we now do, that he dislikes it, and feeling that we could express otherwise, by a little circumlocution, all that we meant to convey by it. But having been led to use the expression in all simplicity, without imagining that it could be objected to or complained of,—and feeling confident that we can defend the perfect warrantableness of its application to Dr Whately,—it would be an injury to truth to retract it, or to refuse, when called upon, to defend it. In one aspect, indeed, it is a matter of no importance whether Dr Whately, or any man, may or may not be warrantably called an Arminian; for the application of such terms, even when fully warranted by ordinary usage, settles nothing about the truth or soundness of doctrines. But when a question as to the application of the name comes up in such a form, and is attended with such circumstances as virtually to involve the whole question of what is Arminianism, and wherein does it differ from Calvinism, or what is the true status quaestionis in the great controversy between Calvinists and Arminians on the subject of Election, then the importance of the matter is manifest. Dr Whately's unexpected denial that he is an Arminian, plainly raised the questions, What is Arminianism, and in what respect does it differ from Calvinism? and whether there be any distinct and definite position that can be taken upon the subject of election differing materially from both? The works of Faber and Professor Browne seemed to us to indicate the existence of a great amount of misapprehension and confusion as prevalent upon these questions among the clergy of the Church of England, and suggested to us the desirableness of taking advantage of Dr Whately's groundless repudiation of the charge of being an Arminian, for giving some such explanation of the state of the question as we have attempted. Faber has brought out fully and distinctly the sources and the grounds of the misapprehension under which he, and no doubt many others, have been led to abjure



Arminianism while really believing it; and Dr Whately is just as clearly and certainly an Arminian as Faber was; but he has not brought out formally and in detail the grounds on which he considers himself entitled to deny that he is so. We have, in consequence, not ventured upon any explicit allegations as to the origin and the cause of the strange fallacy under which he labours in repudiating Arminianism as well as Calvinism; but we have examined all the leading points in which —so far as we remembered—he has deviated from the common course of sentiment and expression among Arminian writers; and we have shown, we think, that these deviations—while highly honourable to him, and very valuable concessions to us—imply no 'disbelief or denial of the fundamental distinctive principles of Arminianism, and, indeed, do not affect the true state of the question between the contending parties, but only the soundness and validity of some of the arguments adduced on the opposite sides respectively.

There is one other feature of Dr Whately's mode of dealing with this subject to which we must refer, though we scarcely know what to make of it. It is brought out in the following passages:—

“It is on these principles, viz., that the first point of inquiry at least ought to be, What doctrines are revealed in God's word? and that we ought to expect that the doctrines so revealed should be, not matters of speculative curiosity, but of practical importance—such as ‘belong to us that we may do them;’—it is in conformity, I say, with these principles, that I have waived the question as to the truth or falsity of the Calvinistic doctrine of election, inquiring only whether it is revealed.”

“I am far from thinking harshly of predestinarians, or of deciding that their peculiar doctrines are altogether untrue; though to me they do not appear, at least, to be either practical or revealed truths. I do not call on them to renounce their opinions as heretical, but merely to abstain from imposing on others as a necessary part of the Christian faith a doctrine which cannot be clearly deduced from

Scripture, and which there is this additional reason for supposing not to be revealed in Scripture, that it cannot be shown to have any practical tendency.”

“I wish it, then, to be distinctly understood (1) that I do not impute to any one opinions which he disclaims, nor am discussing any question as to what is inwardly believed by each, but only as to what is, whether directly or obliquely, taught; and (2) that I purposely abstain, throughout, from entering on the question as to what is absolutely true, inquiring only what is or is not to be received and taught as a portion of revealed gospel truth. For no metaphysical dogma, however sound and capable of philosophical proof, ought to be taught as a portion of revealed truth, if it shall appear that the passages of Scripture that are supposed to declare it, relate in reality to a different matter. I would wish it to be remembered,’ says Archbishop Sumner, ‘that I do not desire to argue against predestination as believed in the closet, but as taught in the pulpit.’

And the same general idea is repeated, without the addition of anything else to explain it, in his last work, on the Doctrine of the Sacraments.”

It is not easy to understand what Dr Whately meant by such statements as these. They surely indicate something very like confusion, vacillation, and inconsistency. It would almost seem from them as if he had something like a latent sense that Calvinism, though not taught in Scripture, could yet be defended upon such grounds—in the way of general reasoning of a philosophical or metaphysical kind—as scarcely admitted of an answer; so that he shrank from any formal deliverance on the question of its actual truth or falsehood. We do not wonder much at something like this state of mind being produced, especially in one who discerned so clearly, and who proclaimed so manfully, the weakness of some of the leading anti-Calvinistic arguments based upon topics of an abstract or metaphysical kind. We believe that the arguments in favour of Calvinism, derived from reason or general considerations,

are just as triumphant—viewed as a mere appeal to the understanding—as the arguments from Scripture; and we do not wonder that there should occasionally be men who, while rejecting Calvinism, should have felt greater difficulty in disposing of the metaphysical than of the scriptural proof. This seems to be the case with Dr Whately. He appears to have something of the feeling, that on the field of general abstract discussion he would not like to face a Calvinist; and that this department of the argument he would rather leave in abeyance than fairly grapple with. But, as we have said, we do not know well what to make either of the meaning or the consistency of some of his statements upon this subject. We must in fairness judge of his theological position, chiefly from the views he has expressed as to the meaning and import of the teaching of Scripture; and here, certainly, his position is not negative or ambiguous. He teaches explicitly and unequivocally, that the Calvinistic doctrine of election is not taught in Scripture; and he teaches further, that the only election which Scripture sanctions, is an election to outward privileges or means of grace, and not to faith, holiness, and heaven. This should settle the whole question with all who believe in the authority of Scripture; and the position here maintained is not only anti-Calvinistic, but may, when accompanied with an admission of the divine foreknowledge of all events, be warrantably and fairly designated as Arminian.

We are unwilling to quit this subject without some reference, however brief, to the objections by which the Calvinistic doctrine of election has been commonly assailed. The leading practical lessons suggested by a survey of the controversy, for guiding men in the study of it, are such as these:—1st, That we should labour to form a clear, distinct, and accurate apprehension of the real nature of the leading point in dispute,—of the true import and bearing of the only alternatives that can well be maintained with regard to it. 2nd, That we should familiarize our minds with definite conceptions of the meaning and the evidence of the principal arguments by which the truth upon the subject may be established, and the error refuted. 3d, That we should take some pains to understand the general principles

at least applicable to the solution, or rather the disposal (for they cannot be solved), of the difficulties by which the doctrine we have embraced as true may be assailed. And 4th, That we should then seek to make a wise and judicious application of the doctrine professed, according to its true nature, tendency, and bearing, and its relation to other truths; without allowing ourselves to be dragged into endless and unprofitable speculations in regard to its deeper mysteries or more intricate perplexities, or to be harassed by perpetual doubt and difficulty. A thorough and successful study of the subject implies the following out of all these lessons, and this conducts us over a wide and arduous field. It is on the first only of these four points we have touched,—one on which a great deal of ignorance and confusion seem to prevail. Of the others, the most important is that which enjoins a careful study of the direct and positive evidence that bears upon the determination of the main question on which the controversy turns. The strength of 'Calvinism lies in the mass of direct, positive, and, as we believe, unanswerable proof that can be produced from Scripture and reason, confirmed by much that is suggested by experience and the history of the human race, to establish its fundamental principles of the foreordination of whatsoever comes to pass, and the real and effectual election of some men to eternal life. The strength of Arminianism lies, not in the direct and positive evidence that can be produced to disprove Calvinistic foreordination and election, or to establish anti-Calvinistic non-foreordination and non-election, but mainly in the proof, that God is not the author of sin, and that man is responsible for his own character and destiny; and in the inference, that since Calvinism is inconsistent with these great and admitted truths, it must be false. This view of the state of the case shows the importance of being familiar with the direct and positive evidence by which Calvinism can be established, that we may rest on this as an impregnable foundation. But it shows also the importance of being familiar with the way and manner of disposing of the plausible and formidable difficulties on which mainly the Arminians found their case. These difficulties—that is, the alleged inconsistency of Calvinism with the truths, that God is not the author of sin, and that

man is responsible for his conduct and fate—he upon the very surface of the subject, and must at once present themselves even to the most ordinary minds; while at the same time they are so plausible, that they are well fitted to startle and to impress men, especially if they have not previously reflected much upon the subject. We do not intend to adduce the direct and positive evidence in support of the Calvinistic doctrine; but a few brief hints may help a little to show, that the difficulties attaching to it are, though not admitting of a full solution, yet by no means so formidable as at first sight they appear to be; and at any rate furnish no sufficient ground in right reason for rejecting the body of direct, positive, unanswerable proof by which the fundamental principles of Calvinism can be established. The following are some of the most obvious yet most important considerations bearing upon this matter, that ought to be remembered and applied, and especially that ought to be viewed in combination with each other, as parts of one argument upon this topic.

1st, When the same objections were advanced against the same doctrines as taught by the Apostle Paul, he manifested no very great solicitude about giving them a direct or formal answer; but contented himself with resolving the whole difficulty into God's sovereignty and man's ignorance, dependence, and incapacity. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" He knew that the doctrines were true, because he had received them by inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and we know that they are true, because he and other inspired men have declared them unto us. This should satisfy us, and repress any great anxiety about disposing of objections based upon grounds, the investigation of which runs up into matters, the full comprehension of which lies beyond the reach of our natural faculties, and of which we can know nothing except from the revelation which God has given us.

2d, It is utterly inconsistent with right views of our condition and capacities, and with the principles usually acted upon in regard to

other departments of Christian theology,—as, for instance, the doctrine of the Trinity,—to assume, as these objections do, that we are entitled to make our actual perception of, or our capacity of perceiving, the consistency of two doctrines with each other, the test or standard of their truth. We do not pretend to be able to solve all the difficulties connected with the alleged inconsistency between the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, and the truths that God is not the author of sin, and that man is responsible for his character and conduct, so as to make their consistency with each other plain and palpable to our own minds or the minds of others; but we cannot admit that this affords any sufficient reason why we should reject one or other of the doctrines, provided each separately can be established upon competent and satisfactory evidence.

3d, The difficulties in question do not apply to the Calvinistic system alone, but bear as really, though not perhaps at first view as palpably, upon every system of religion which admits the moral government of God, the prevalence of moral evil among His intelligent creatures, and their future eternal punishment. Indeed, it is easy to show that the leading difficulties connected with every scheme of doctrine virtually run up into one great difficulty, which attaches, and attaches equally, to them all, viz. the explanation of the existence and prevalence of moral evil; or, what is practically the same question in another form, the exposition of the way and manner in which God and men concur (for none but atheists can deny that in some way or other they do concur) in forming men's character and in determining men's fate. This subject involves difficulties which we cannot, in our present condition, fully solve, and which we must just resolve into the good pleasure of God. They are difficulties from which no scheme of doctrine can escape, and which every scheme is equally bound, and at the same time equally incompetent, to explain. Men may shift the position of the one grand difficulty, and may imagine that they have succeeded at least in evading it, or putting it in abeyance or obscurity; but with all their shifts and all their expedients, it continues as real and as formidable as ever. Unless men renounce altogether, theoretically or practically, the moral government of God,

the prevalence of moral evil, and its eternal punishment, they must, in their explanations and speculations, come at length to the sovereignty of God, and prostrate their understandings and their hearts before it, saying with our Saviour, “Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight;” or with the great apostle, “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 to him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

# Council of Trent

The Council of Trent marks a very important era in the history of the church, because, as has been often remarked, its termination, — which took place in the year 1563, the year before the death of Calvin, —virtually marks the termination of the progress of the Reformation, and the commencement of that revived efficiency of Popery which has enabled it to retain, ever since, all at least that was then left to it, and even to make some encroachments upon what the Reformation had taken from it. How far this result is to be ascribed to the Council of Trent, directly or indirectly; and in what way, if at all, it was connected with the proceedings of the council, are very interesting subjects of investigation to the philosophic student of history. But the importance of the Council of Trent, in a more directly theological point of view, depends upon the considerations, that its records embody the solemn, formal, and official decision of the Church of Rome, —which claims to be the one, holy, catholic church of Christ, —upon all the leading doctrines taught by the Reformers; that its decrees upon all doctrinal points are received by all Romanists as possessed of infallible authority; and that every Popish priest is sworn to receive, profess, and maintain everything defined and declared by it.

God was pleased, through the instrumentality of the Reformers, to revive the truths revealed in His word on the most important of all subjects, which had been long involved in obscurity and error. They were then brought fully out and pressed upon men's attention, and the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent show us in what way the Church of Rome received and disposed of them. After full time for deliberation and preparatory discussion, she gave a solemn decision on all these important questions, —a decision to which she must by her fundamental principles unchangeably adhere, even until her eventful and most marvellous history shall terminate in her



destruction, until she shall sink like a great millstone, and be found no more at all.

It is not, indeed, to be supposed that the decisions of the Council of Trent form the exclusive standard of the doctrines to which the Church of Rome is pledged; for it is but the last of eighteen general councils, all whose decisions they profess to receive as infallible, though they are not agreed among themselves as to what the eighteen councils are that are entitled to this implicit submission. Still the Reformers brought out fully at length, —though Luther attained to scriptural views on a variety of points only gradually after he had begun the work of Reformation, —all that they thought objectionable in the doctrines and practices which prevailed in the Church of Rome; and on most of these topics that church gave her decision in the Council of Trent. There were, indeed, some questions, —and these of no small importance, —on which the Council of Trent was afraid, or was not permitted, to decide. One of these was the real nature and extent of the Papal supremacy, —a subject on which, though Bellarmine says that the whole of Christianity hangs upon it, it is scarcely possible to ascertain up to this day what the precise doctrine of the Church of Rome is. The Court of Rome succeeded, in general, in managing the proceedings of the council as it chose; but it had sometimes, in the prosecution of this object, to encounter considerable difficulties, and was obliged to have recourse to bribery, intimidation, and many species of fraud and manoeuvring; and even with all this, it was on several occasions not very certain beforehand as to the results of the discussions in the council on some points in which its interests were involved. On this account the Popes were afraid to allow the subject of their own supremacy to be brought into discussion; and those, whether Protestants or Papists, who wish to know the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this important subject, must go back to the Councils of Constance and Florence, and interpret and reconcile their decisions as they best can.

The Church of Rome, of course, can never escape from the responsibility of what was enacted and decided at Trent; but she may

have incurred new and additional responsibility by subsequent decisions, even though there has not since been any oecumenical council. And there are additional decisions on some doctrinal points discussed in the Council of Trent, which, on principles formerly explained, are binding upon the Church of Rome, and must be taken into account in order to understand fully her doctrines upon certain questions. I refer here more particularly to the bulls of Popes Pius V. and Gregory XIII., condemning the doctrines of Baius, the precursor of Jansenius; the bull of Innocent X., condemning the five propositions of Jansenius; and the bull Unigenitus by Clement XI., condemning the Jansenist or Augustinian doctrines of Quesnel, — documents which contain more explicit evidence of the Pelagianism (taken in a historical sense) of the Church of Rome than any that is furnished by the decrees of the Council of Trent. That the bull Unigenitus is binding upon the Church of Rome is generally admitted, and may be said to be certain; and the obligation of the condemnation of the doctrines of Baius and Jansenius rests upon the very same grounds. This is now generally admitted by Romanists, though, at the time when these bulls were published, there were some who denied their authority, and refused to submit to them. It may be worth while to mention, as an evidence of this, that Moehler, the most skilful and accomplished defender of Popery in the present century, having, in the earlier editions of his Symbolism, spoken of a particular opinion in regard to the moral constitution of man before the fall as generally held by the Romish Doctors, but as not an article of faith or *de fide*, and binding upon the church; and having afterwards found, —as, indeed, he might have seen in Bellarmine,— that the denial of the opinion in question had been condemned by Popes Pius and Gregory in their bulls against Baius, retracts his error, and asserts that the opinion must on this ground be received as a binding article of faith.

This incident, though intrinsically insignificant, may be regarded as relatively of some importance, —not only as showing that the condemnation of the doctrines of Baius is acknowledged to be binding upon the Church of Rome, but still more, as illustrating the

difficulty of ascertaining what are the recognised and authoritative doctrines of that church, when such a man as Moehler, who had been nine years a professor of theology in a celebrated German university before he published his Symbolism, fell into a blunder of this sort. But although it is certain that, in order to have a full and complete view of the doctrines of the Church of Rome, —the doctrines to which that church, with all her claims to infallibility, is pledged, and for which we are entitled to hold her responsible, —we must in our investigations both go farther back, and come later down, than the Council of Trent; still it remains true, that the decrees and canons of that council furnish the readiest and most authentic means of ascertaining, to a large extent, what the recognised doctrines of the Church of Rome are, and exhibit the whole of the response which she gave to the chief scriptural doctrines revived by the Reformers; and this consideration has ever given, and ever must continue to give, it a most important place in the history of theology. The Romanists, of course, demand that all professing Christians, i.e., all baptized persons, —for they hold that baptism, heretical or Protestant baptism, subjects all who have received it to the authority of the Pope, the head of the church, —shall receive all the decrees of the Council of Trent as infallibly true, on the ground that, like any other general oecumenical council, it was certainly guided into all truth by the presiding agency of the Holy Ghost.

The style and title which the council assumed to itself in its decrees was, "The holy (or sacrosanct) oecumenical and general Council of Trent, legitimately congregated in the Holy Ghost, and presided over by the legates of the Apostolic See." The title which they were to assume was frequently matter of discussion in the council itself, and gave rise to a good deal of controversy and dissension. Some members of the council laboured long and zealously to effect that, to the title they assumed, there should be added the words, "representing the universal church." This seemed very reasonable and consistent; for it is only upon the ground that general councils represent the universal church, that that special appropriation of the scriptural promises of the presence of Christ and His Spirit, on which

their alleged infallibility rests, is based. This phrase, however, was particularly unsavoury to the Popes and their legates, as it reminded them very unpleasantly of the proceedings of the Councils of Constance and Basle in the preceding century; for these councils had based, upon the ground that they represented the universal church, their great principle of the superiority of a council over a Pope, and of its right to exercise jurisdiction over him; and the Papal party succeeded, though not without difficulty, in excluding the expression.

It would, indeed, have been rather a bold step, however consistent, if the members of the Council of Trent had assumed the designation, "representing the universal church;" for they were few in number, and a large proportion of them belonged to Italy, —being, indeed, just the creatures and hired agents of the Popes, and some of them having been made bishops with mere titular dioceses, just for the purpose of being sent to Trent, that they might vote as the Popes directed them. In the fourth session, —when the council passed its decrees upon the rule of faith, committing the church, for the first time, to the following positions, of some of which many learned Romanists have since been ashamed, though they did not venture openly to oppose them, —viz., that unwritten traditions are of equal authority with the written word; that the apocryphal books of the Old Testament are canonical; that it belongs to the church to interpret Scripture, and that this must be done according to the unanimous consent of the fathers; and that the Vulgate Latin is to be held authentic in all controversies, —there were only about fifty bishops present, and a minority of these were opposed to some of the decisions pronounced. During most of the sittings of the council there were not two hundred bishops present, and these were almost all Italians, with a few Germans and Spaniards; and during the last sittings, under Pope Pius IV., when the council was fuller than ever before, in consequence of the presence of some French bishops and other causes, the largest number that attended was two hundred and seventy, of whom two-thirds— one hundred and eighty-seven— were

Italians, thirty-one Spaniards, twenty-six French, and twenty-six from all the rest of the universal church.

If all oecumenical councils are infallible, and if the Council of Trent was oecumenical, and if all this can be demonstrated a priori, then of course we are bound to submit implicitly to all its decisions; but Protestants have generally been of opinion that there was nothing about the Council of Trent which seemed to afford anything like probable grounds for the conviction, that it was either oecumenical or infallible. It was certainly, in point of numbers, a very inadequate representative of the universal church. The men of whom it was composed had not, in general, much about them which, according to the ordinary principles of judgment, should entitle their decisions to great respect and deference. The influences under which the proceedings of the council were regulated, and the manner in which they were conducted, were not such as to inspire much confidence in the soundness of the conclusions to which they came. In short, the history of the Council of Trent is just an epitome or miniature of the history of the Church of Rome; exhibiting, on the part of the Popes and their immediate adherents, and, indeed, on the part of the council itself, —for the Popes substantially succeeded in managing its affairs as they wished, though sometimes not without difficulty, —determined opposition to God's revealed will, and to the interests of truth and godliness, and a most unscrupulous prosecution of their own selfish and unworthy ends; indeed all deceivableness of unrighteousness— the great scriptural characteristic of the mystery of iniquity. There is a very remarkable passage in Calvin's admirable treatise, "*De necessitate Reformandae Ecclesiae*," published in 1544, the year before the council first assembled, in which he describes minutely by anticipation what the council, if it were allowed to meet, would do, how its proceedings would be conducted, and what would be the result of its deliberations; and it would not be easy to find an instance in which a prediction proceeding from ordinary human sagacity was more fully and exactly accomplished. Abundant materials to establish its accuracy are to be found not only in Father

Paul, but in Pallavicino himself, and in other trustworthy Romish authorities.

Hallam, in his *History of the Literature of Europe during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*," has, in his great candour, made some statements about the Council of Trent, of which the Papists boast as concessions of "an eminent Protestant authority," though I really do not know that Hallam had any other claim to be called a Protestant, except that he was not a Romanist. He says, "No general council ever contained so many persons of eminent learning and ability as that of Trent; nor is there ground for believing that any other ever investigated the questions before it with so much patience, acuteness, temper, and desire of truth....Let those who have imbibed a different opinion ask themselves whether they have read Sarpi" — i.e., Father Paul— "through with any attention, especially as to those sessions of the Tridentine Council which preceded its suspension in 1547 and he intimates that he regards this view as diametrically opposed to the representations usually given of the subject by Protestants. Now, in regard to this statement of Hallam's, we have to remark, first, that there is good ground to regard it as representing the council in too favourable a light; and, secondly, that there is not at bottom much in it which Protestants in general have disputed, or have any interest in disputing. That the Council of Trent contained some men of eminent learning and ability is undoubtedly true, and has never been questioned. The Church of Rome has almost always had some men of great learning and ability to defend its cause. That it contained at least as many men of learning and ability as any of the previous general councils, —most of them held in times when these qualifications were not particularly abundant, —may also be admitted as highly probable, if we may be allowed to except the first Council of Nice. There is no reason, however, to think, as Hallam alleges, that the Council of Trent contained many men of this description. There is good reason to believe that the learning and ability which existed were to be found much more among the divines and the generals of monastic orders, who were present merely as counsellors or assessors, than among the bishops, who were the only

proper judges of the points that came before the council for decision. It is plain, indeed, from the whole of Father Paul's history, that though there was much disputation in the council upon a great variety of topics, this was confined to a very small number of individuals, —there being apparently but few, comparatively, who were qualified to take part in the discussions. There were very few men in the Council of Trent who have been known in subsequent times for anything except their being members of that council, —very few who have acquired for themselves any distinguished or lasting reputation in theological literature.

Still, that there were men in the Council of Trent who were well acquainted with the fathers and the schoolmen, and who were able to discuss, and did discuss, the questions that came before them, with much ability and acuteness, is undeniable. Father Paul's history fully establishes this, and no Protestant, so far as I know, has ever, as Hallam seems to think, disputed it. As to the alleged patience, temper, and desire of truth with which the discussions were conducted, it is admitted that Father Paul's history does not contain a great deal that openly and palpably disproves the allegation, so far as the divines who usually took part in the discussions were concerned. And this ought to be regarded as an evidence that Father Paul did not studiously make it his object, as Romanists allege, to bring the council into contempt; for it is a curious fact that Cardinal Pallavicino, the professed advocate of the council, whose work Hallam admits he had never read, brings out some facts, not noticed by Father Paul, which give no very favourable impression of the patience and temper of some of the fathers: as, for instance, of one bishop, in the course of a discussion, seizing another by the throat, and tearing his beard; and of the presiding legate and another cardinal who was opposed to the interests of the Pope, discharging against each other fearful torrents of Billingsgate.): As to their alleged desire of truth, it is of course not disputed that the fathers of the council honestly believed the doctrinal decisions which they pronounced to be true, —that where a difference of opinion appeared upon any point, they laboured to convince those who differed from

them of their error, and did occasionally succeed on some minor points in producing a conviction to this effect. The theologians who guided the doctrinal decisions of the Council of Trent, no doubt represented fairly enough the theological sentiments that generally prevailed in the Church of Rome before the council assembled. Those of them who had studied theological subjects were of course acquainted with the Protestant arguments before the council was called; and the Reformers certainly did not expect that the council would make their opponents sounder theologians, or more disposed to submit to scriptural evidence, than they had been before. They appeared in the council just as they had done in their polemical writings against the Reformers; and they certainly afforded no evidence that, in virtue of the supposed presiding agency of the Holy Ghost, they either had a greater desire of truth, or actually attained it more fully than formerly.

Protestants, then, do not dispute that the Council of Trent contained some men of eminent learning and ability; that the doctrinal decisions of the council were in accordance with what the great body of its members really believed to be true; and that considerable pains were taken to put forth their doctrines in the most unobjectionable and plausible form. The leading general statement which Protestants are accustomed to make in regard to the Council of Trent, so far as this aspect of it is concerned, is in substance this, —that there is nothing about it that entitles its decisions to any great respect or deference; and the main grounds upon which they hold this conviction are these: —that its members were few in number, viewed as representing the universal church; that they were not, in general, men at all distinguished for piety, learning, and ability; that, on the contrary, the great body of them were grossly and notoriously deficient in those qualities; that a large proportion of them were the mere creatures of the Pope, ready to vote for whatever he might wish; that the general management of the proceedings of the council was regulated by the Court of Rome, with a view to the promotion of its own selfish interests; that when difficulties arose upon any points in which these interests were, or were supposed to be, involved, all



means, foul or fair, were employed to protect them; and that such was the skill of those who, in the Pope's name, presided over the council, and such the character and the motives of the majority of those who composed it, —that these means, directed to this end, seldom if ever failed of success. All this has been established by the most satisfactory historical evidence; and when this has been proved, it is abundantly sufficient to warrant the conclusion, that the decisions of such a body, so composed, so circumstanced, so influenced, are entitled to but little respect; that there is no very strong antecedent presumption in favour of their soundness; and that they may be examined and tested with all freedom, and without any overpowering sense of the sacredness of the ground on which we are treading.

The two main objects for which the council was professedly called, were, —to decide on the theological questions which had been raised by the Reformers, and to reform the practical corruptions and abuses which it was admitted prevailed in the Church of Rome itself; and its proceedings are divided into two heads, — doctrine and reformation, —the latter forming much the larger portion of its recorded proceedings. It was chiefly on the topics connected with the reformation of the church that the influence of the Pope was brought to bear, —for it was these chiefly that affected his interests; and it was mainly the proceedings upon some of the subjects that rank under this head, which brought out the true character of the men of whom the council was composed, and the influences under which its proceedings were conducted. The Popes were not much concerned about the precise deliverances that might be given upon points of doctrine, except indeed those which might bear upon the government of the church. Upon other doctrinal subjects, it was enough for them to be satisfied that, from the known sentiments of the members of which the council was composed, their decisions would be in opposition to all the leading principles advanced by the Reformers, and in accordance with the theological views that then generally prevailed in the Church of Rome. Satisfied of this, and not caring much more about the matter, the Popes left the theologians of

the council to follow very much their own convictions and impressions upon questions purely doctrinal; and this gave to the discussions upon these topics a degree of freedom and independence, which, had any unworthy interests of the Court of Rome been involved in them, would most certainly have been checked.

The accounts given by Father Paul of the discussions that took place in the council upon doctrinal subjects are very interesting and important, as throwing much light both upon the general state of theological sentiment that then obtained in the Church of Rome, and also upon the meaning and objects of the decrees and canons which were ultimately adopted; and, indeed, a perusal of them may be regarded as almost indispensable to a thorough and minute acquaintance with the theology of the Church of Rome as settled by the Council of Trent. There are two interesting considerations of a general kind which they suggest, neither of them very accordant with "the desire of truth" which Hallam is pleased to ascribe to the council, —first, that the diversity of opinion on important questions, elicited in the discussion, was sometimes so great as apparently to preclude the possibility of their coming to a harmonious decision, which yet seems somehow to have been generally effected; and, secondly, that a considerable number of the doctrines broached and maintained by the Reformers were supported by some members at least in substance, although it seems in general to have been received by the great body of the council as quite a sufficient argument against the truth of a doctrine, that it was maintained by the Protestants. The great objects which the council seems to have kept in view in their doctrinal or theological decisions were these, —first, to make their condemnation of the doctrines of the Reformers as full and complete as possible; and, secondly, to avoid as much as they could condemning any of those doctrines which had been matter of controversial discussion among the scholastic theologians, and on which difference of opinion still subsisted among themselves. It was not always easy to combine these objects; and the consequence is, that on many points the decisions of the Council of Trent are

expressed with deliberate and intentional ambiguity. The truth of this position is established at once by an examination of the decrees and canons themselves, and by the history both of the discussions which preceded their formation, and of the disputes to which they have since given rise in the Church of Rome itself. It was probably this, with the awkward consequences to which it was seen that it was likely to lead, that induced Pope Pius IV., in his bull confirming the council, to forbid all, even ecclesiastical persons, of whatever order, condition, or degree, upon any pretext whatever, and under the severest penalties, to publish any commentaries, glosses, annotations, scholia, or any sort of interpretation upon the decrees of the council, without Papal authority; while, at the same time, he directed that, if any one found anything in the decrees that was obscure, or needed explanation, he should go up to the place which the Lord had chosen, —the Apostolic See, the mistress of all the faithful.

It cannot be denied that a great deal of skill and ingenuity were displayed in the preparation of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and that advantage had been taken of the discussions which had taken place since the commencement of the Reformation to introduce greater care and caution into the statement and exposition of doctrine, and thus ward off the force of some of the arguments of the Reformers. There is certainly not nearly so much Pelagianism in the decrees and canons of the Council of Trent, —so much of what plainly and palpably contradicts the fundamental doctrines of Scripture, —as appears in the writings of the earlier Romish opponents of Luther, though there is enough to entitle us to charge the Church of Rome with perverting the gospel of the grace of God, and subverting the scriptural method of salvation.

The canons of the council, as distinguished from the decrees, consist wholly of anathemas against the doctrines ascribed to the Reformers. And here a good deal of unfairness has been practised: advantage has been taken, to a considerable extent, of some of the rash, exaggerated, and paradoxical statements of Luther, much in the

same way as in the first bull of Pope Leo condemning him; and in this way statements are, with some appearance of authority, ascribed to Protestants which they do not acknowledge, for which they are not responsible, and which are not at all necessary for the exposition and maintenance of their principles. Leo, in his bull, which was directed avowedly against Luther by name, might be entitled to take up any statement that he had made; and Luther did not complain, in regard to any one of the statements charged upon him, that he had not made it. But it was unfair in the Council of Trent to take advantage of Luther's rash and unguarded statements, for exciting odium against Protestants in general, who had now explained their doctrines with care and accuracy.

A further artifice resorted to by the Council of Trent in their canons condemning Protestant doctrines, is to take a doctrine which Protestants generally held and acknowledged, —to couple it with some one of the more extreme and exaggerated statements of Luther or of some one else, —and then to include them both under one and the same anathema, evidently for the purpose of laying the odium of the more objectionable statements upon the other which accompanied it. Some of these observations we may afterwards have occasion to illustrate by examples; but our object at present is merely to give a brief summary of the leading general points that should be remembered concerning the decrees and canons of the council, and kept in view and applied in the investigation of them.

## **The Doctrine of the Will**

The first three canons of the sixth session of the Council of Trent are directed, very unnecessarily, against the Pelagians, and are similar in substance to the canons of the Council of Orange in the sixth century,

by which Pelagian and semi-Pelagian error was condemned. There is nothing in them to which any of the Reformers objected, and the only notice which Calvin takes of them in his "Antidote" is by responding— Amen. These anti-Pelagian canons, viewed in connection with the place which they occupy in the decrees of the Council of Trent, furnish an instance of what the history of theology has very often exhibited, —viz., of men being constrained by the force of the plain statements of Scripture in regard to the natural destitution and helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace as the source of all the holiness and all the happiness to which they ever attain, to make large admissions in favour of what all Calvinists, but not they exclusively, regard as the scriptural doctrine upon these subjects; admissions which, if followed out in a manly and upright way, would lead to thorough soundness of opinion regarding them, but which those who have been constrained to make them endeavour afterwards to explain away or to neutralize by the introduction of erroneous notions, which are really inconsistent with the admissions that had been wrung from them. This was very fully exhibited in most of the works written in the course of last century, and even in the present one, by divines of the Church of England, against the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, under the name of Calvinism, — as, for instance, in Bishop Tomline's Refutation of Calvinism. Many of these men, in deference to the plain meaning of scriptural language, made statements about the natural helplessness of men, and the necessity of divine grace, which in their fair and honest meaning involved all that Calvinists have ever contended for upon these subjects, while they explained them away by the maintenance of positions which, if really true, should have prevented the admissions they had made. The books that have been written by Episcopalians against Calvinism are usually more Pelagian, and more thoroughly opposed to the fundamental doctrines of the gospel, than the decrees of the Council of Trent. In its first three canons it admits that men cannot be justified by their own works without divine grace through Christ; that this grace of God through Christ is necessary, not only to enable men to do what is good more easily than they could have done without it, but to enable them to do it at

all; and that without the preventing inspiration and assistance of the Holy Spirit, a man cannot believe, hope, love, or repent, as it is necessary that he should do, in order that the grace of justification may be conferred upon him. And these doctrines, combined with what they had laid down in the previous session about original sin, as we have already explained it, seem sufficient, if fairly understood and applied, to overturn all notions of human ability and human merit. But we have already seen, in several instances, how they corrupt and pervert these general truths, which are expressed with a good deal of vagueness and generality, by laying down positions of a more definite and limited description, marked by an opposite tendency in their bearing upon the method of a sinner's salvation. And in a similar way we find that the three anti-Pelagian canons, with which they begin their deliverance upon justification, are immediately followed by two on the subject of free-will, in which the way is paved for introducing justification by works and human merit, and for ascribing, partly at least, to the powers and deserts of men themselves, and not wholly to the grace of God, the salvation of sinners.

This subject of free-will is, as it were, the connecting link between the doctrines of original sin and of divine grace— between men's natural condition as fallen, involved in guilt and depravity, and the way in which they are restored to favour, to holiness, and happiness. There is perhaps no subject which has occupied more of the time and attention of men of speculation. I shall not attempt anything like a general discussion of this extensive and intricate subject, but will merely endeavour to explain the views which were generally held upon this topic by the Reformers, and which have been embodied in the Confessions of the Protestant churches, as contrasted with those taught by the Church of Rome and by Arminians.

There is one general observation, in regard to the way in which the subject was discussed at the time of the Reformation, that ought to be attended to, —viz., that the Reformers did not discuss it as a question in metaphysics, but as a question in theology; and that even with respect to what may be called its theological aspects, they did

not give themselves much concern about any other view of it, than that in which it enters into the description which ought to be given from the word of God of fallen man— of man as we now find him; and as thus bearing upon the actual process by which he is restored to the favour and the image of God. And regarding the subject in this light, they were unanimous in asserting it as a doctrine of Scripture, that the will of man is in entire bondage with respect to all spiritual things, because of his depravity, —that fallen man, antecedently to the operation of divine grace, while perfectly free to will and to do evil, has no freedom of will by which he can do anything really good, or dispose or prepare himself for turning from sin and for receiving the grace of God. This was the doctrine of all the Reformers, —it is embodied in all the Reformed Confessions, —and is fully and explicitly set forth in the Confession of our own Church; and this, and this alone, is what the Reformers and the Reformed Confessions mean when, upon scriptural grounds, they deny to men, as they are, all freedom or liberty of will, —when they assert the entire servitude or bondage of the will of unrenewed men in reference to anything spiritually good. Other topics, both of a metaphysical and a theological kind, may have been introduced into the discussion of this question, and may have been appealed to as affording proofs or presumptions either on the one side or the other; but the true and proper question at issue was, whether man, fallen and unregenerate, had or had not any freedom or liberty of will in the sense and to the effect above explained. The Reformers asserted, and undertook to prove, the negative upon this question, and undertook to prove it from Scripture, as a portion of God's revealed truth, —not disdaining, indeed, but still not much concerned about, any corroboration which their doctrine might derive from psychological or metaphysical investigations into men's mental constitution and mental processes, and fully satisfied that a scriptural proof of this one position, which they thought themselves quite able to produce, afforded by itself an adequate basis, in an argumentative point of view, for those ulterior conclusions which they also derived from Scripture, in regard to the whole process of a sinner's salvation;— in short, for a full exposition of all the peculiar doctrines of the gospel.

This doctrine of the entire servitude or bondage of the will of fallen man, with reference to anything spiritually good, they regarded as involved in, or deducible from, the scriptural doctrine of the entire and complete depravity of human nature; while they taught also that it had its own distinct and appropriate scriptural evidence. The Council of Trent plainly insinuated, though it did not venture explicitly to assert, that the loss of the divine image in fallen man, or the corruption or depravity of his nature, was not total, but only partial; and there is one application which the council made of this virtual denial of the entire depravity of human nature, in their decision about the moral character of the works of unregenerate men, denying that they were wholly and altogether sinful. But the main use and application which they intended to make, and which they have made, of it, was as a foundation for the position which they laid down in opposition to the Reformers, that fallen man has still some freedom of will even in reference to what is spiritually good, — some natural power to do God's will, —and can thus do something which really and causally contributes to, or exerts a favourable influence upon, his own salvation. The Church of Rome would not have been very unwilling to have asserted more strongly and explicitly the corruption of human nature, —since she had effectually provided for taking it wholly away in baptism, —had it not been that a denial of man's entire corruption was necessary in order to the maintenance of her idol of free-will, or the assertion of the doctrine that fallen man has still some natural power to do what is spiritually good. The Council of Trent, accordingly, has expressly asserted that fallen man retains some freedom or liberty of will; but, according to the policy which was pursued in the formation of its decisions upon original sin, it has left this whole subject in so dubious and unsatisfactory a condition, that it is not very easy to say precisely what is its doctrine upon this subject, except that it is opposed to that of the Reformers. The council contents itself with anathematizing those who say that the freewill of man was lost and extinguished after the fall of Adam; that free-will— *liberum arbitrium*— is, as Luther called it, a mere name, or a title without a reality, or was a figment introduced by Satan into the church; and with asserting that



free-will in fallen man, " minime extinctum esse, viribus licet attenuatum et inclinatum." Now, considering the discussions which had taken place, not only among the schoolmen, but between the Reformers and the Romanists, previously to the council, on the subject of free-will, the different meanings that might be, and have been, attached to the expression, and the different kinds or degrees of bondage or necessity that might be opposed to it (and all this had been fully explained and illustrated by Calvin in his very important treatise, " De servitute et liberatione humani arbitrii" published in 1543, in reply to Pighius, who attended the council), a decision so vague and general as this could scarcely be said to decide anything directly. The Reformers did not deny that fallen man still retained the will or the power of volition as a mental faculty, —that this continued, with all its essential properties, as a part of the general structure or framework of the mental constitution -with which man was created. They admitted that the exercise of the will as a mental faculty, or the exercise of the power of volition, implied, in the very nature of the case, liberty or freedom in a certain sense, —i.e., what was commonly called spontaneity or freedom from necessity, in the sense of coercion or compulsion. This is the substance of the truth which is intended to be taught in our Confession of Faith, when it lays down, as its first and fundamental position upon the subject of free-will, the following doctrine, —viz., that " God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil." This is evidently intended as a great general truth, applicable to the will of man universally and in all circumstances, after as well as before the fall; and it asserts of man, thus generally considered, little if anything more than what is necessarily implied in his really possessing a power of volition, —a natural capacity of willing or choosing, and of doing this undetermined by any external constraint. The general structure or framework of man's mental constitution, including his power of volition, remains unaffected by the fall; and this power of volition continues to belong to him as a rational being, or to be exercised by him in connection with all that rationality implies. Man by the fall was not changed into a stock or a stone, or into an

irrational animal; he retained that rational power of volition which was a part of the general framework of his mental constitution, and in virtue of which he had, and still has, a natural capacity of willing and choosing spontaneously, and of carrying out his volitions into action. Man retained this natural power or capacity, and he was not, in consequence of the fall, subjected in the exercise of it to any external force or compulsion— to any influence out of himself, and apart from the exercise, of his own power of volition, and from his own actual choice, which determined infallibly whether he should do good or evil.

These, then, are the two points asserted in the statement of our Confession in regard to that natural liberty with which God has endued the will of man, —viz., that there is nothing in the inherent structure of the natural power of volition itself, as it exists even in fallen man, and that there is no external force or compulsion exerted upon him, which certainly deprives him of a capacity of doing good as well as of doing evil. If it be true, as it certainly is, that fallen and unrenewed men do always in point of fact will or choose what is evil, and never what is good, the cause of this is not to be traced to any natural incapacity in their will or power of volition to will or choose good as well as evil, nor to any external force or compulsion brought to bear upon them from any quarter; for this would be inconsistent with that natural liberty with which God originally endued the will of man, and which it still retains and must retain. It must be traced to something else. The Reformers admitted all this, and in this sense would not have objected to the doctrine of the freedom of the will, though, as the phrase was then commonly used in a different sense as implying much more than this, —as implying a

doctrine which they believed to be unscriptural and dangerous, — they generally thought it preferable to abstain from the use of the expression altogether, or to deny the freedom of the will, and to assert its actual bondage or servitude because of depravity, or as a consequence of the fall. I may here remark by the way, though I do not mean to enter upon the discussion of the topic, that orthodox

Protestant divines have usually held that this spontaneity, —this freedom from necessity in the sense of coercion or compulsion from any necessity, arising either from the natural structure and inherent capacity of the power of volition, or from the application of external force, —together with the power of giving effect to his volitions, is all that is necessary to make man responsible for his actions; and though this is a subject involved in extreme difficulties, I think it may be safely asserted that this at least has been proved, —viz., that no proof has been adduced that more than this is necessary as a foundation for responsibility, — no evidence has been brought forward that a rational being of whom this may be truly predicated, is not responsible for the evil which he performs— for the sins which he commits.

There is, however, another aspect in which the decision of the Council of Trent, asserting that free-will, though weakened, is not extinguished in fallen man, is chargeable with being vague and unsatisfactory; and this brings us nearer to the main topic of controversy between Protestants and the Church of Rome. Though Luther and Melanchthon had originally made some very strong and rash statements upon this subject, in which they seemed to assert the bondage of the will, and the necessity of men's actions in every sense, and to deny to men liberty or freedom in any sense, they had, long before the Council of Trent assembled, modified their views upon this subject, and had expressed themselves with greater caution and exactness. Indeed, in the Confession of Augsburg, —the most formal and solemn exposition of the doctrines of the Lutheran Church, — they had expressly said, "*De libero arbitrio docent, quod humana voluntas habeat aliquam libertatem ad efficiendam civilem justitiam, et diligendas res rationi subjectas. Sed non habet vim sine Spiritu Sancto efficiendae justitiae spiritualis.*" And, in accordance with this notion, it was common among the Reformers to ascribe to the will of man a certain power or freedom in actions of an external, civil, or merely moral character, which they did not ascribe to it in matters properly spiritual, —in actions directed immediately to God and the salvation of their souls, as considered in relation to the requirements

of the divine law, —a fact which throws some light upon their general views on the subject of liberty and necessity. If the Council of Trent had intended to make their condemnation of the doctrines of the Reformers upon the subject of free-will precise and explicit, they would have adverted to this distinction, to which the Lutheran Reformers especially— whose statements were chiefly in their mind in the formation of the canons on this subject— attached much weight. At the same time, the distinction is not one of great importance in a theological point of view; and there is no necessity for determining it, —so far at least as concerns the precise kind or degree of power or freedom of will which man has in regard to things civil and moral,— in giving a summary of what the Scripture teaches upon the subject. Calvin did not regard this distinction as of any great importance in a theological point of view, though he held it to be true and real in itself, —maintaining, as Luther did, that man has a power and freedom of will in regard to merely intellectual, moral, and civil things, which he has not in regard to things properly spiritual; and, indeed, he has given a very full and striking description of what natural men can do in these respects, as contrasted with their impotence, helplessness, and inability in all matters pertaining to the salvation of their souls. The Scripture does not tell us anything about the causes or principles that ordinarily regulate or determine men's general exercise of their natural power of volition. This must be ascertained from an examination of man himself, of his mental constitution, and ordinary mental processes. It is a question of philosophy, and not of theology, —a question which the Scripture leaves us at liberty to determine by its own natural and appropriate evidence, unless men, upon alleged philosophical grounds, should deny what Scripture plainly teaches, — viz., that God has foreseen and fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass; or that He is ever exercising a most wise, holy, and powerful providence over all His creatures and all their actions, and thereby executing His decrees; or that, to use the language of our Confession, "fallen man (i.e., man as he is) has lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation." I really do not know that there is any particular theory or doctrine concerning the liberty or bondage of the

human will, which philosophers may deduce upon philosophical grounds from an examination of men's mental constitution and processes, that can be proved to be, in itself or in its consequences, opposed to anything taught us in the word of God, and that is therefore upon scriptural and theological grounds to be rejected.

Although, however, the Council of Trent has thus abstained from giving any formal or explicit definition of what they mean by the freedom of will which they ascribe to fallen man, and which they said had been only weakened, and not destroyed, by the fall, —has given no deliverance as to its nature, grounds, or sphere of operations, — and in this way, perhaps, left room enough for the followers of Augustine, such as the Jansenists, remaining honestly in the communion of the Church of Rome (at least in the state of matters in which their doctrines were first promulgated, —for this state of the case has been greatly changed since by the decisions pronounced in the course of the Jansenist controversy), yet there are sufficiently plain proofs that the council intended to deny the great doctrine of the Reformers, —that fallen man has no freedom of will, no actual available capacity for anything spiritually good, —and to assert that he retained the' power of doing something that was really acceptable to God, and that' contributed in some way, by its goodness and excellence, to his reception of divine grace, and his ultimate salvation. Accordingly, Bellarmine lays down this as his first and leading position, in stating the doctrine of the Church of Rome upon this subject: "Homo ante omnem gratiam, liberum habet arbitrium, non solum ad opera naturalia, et moralia, sed etiam ad opera pietatis, et supernaturalia," —a position which is just precisely what the Council of Trent ought to have put forth explicitly, if they had intended to bring out their own sentiments fully and honestly, and to decide this point in a fair and manly way, by following out the principles laid down. This has been the doctrine generally taught by Romish writers; and the deviations from it which we find among them, have been towards views still more Pelagian. Baius and Quesnel taught the same doctrine as the Reformers upon this point; and the church's condemnation of the doctrine, as taught by them,

was much more explicit than anything we find in the Council of Trent. Baius taught, " Liberum arbitrium sine gratiae Dei adiutorio non nisi ad peccandum valet;" and Quesnel, " Peccator non est liber nisi ad malum;" and by condemning these doctrines, the Church of Rome has become more clearly Pelagian than she could be proved to be from the decisions of the Council of Trent.

## I. The Will before and after the Fall

In considering the grounds on which the Protestant doctrine on this subject rests, chiefly with the view of explaining somewhat more fully what the doctrine really is, it is necessary to advert to the opinion entertained by the Reformers as to the freedom or liberty of will man possessed before he fell from the condition in which he was created; because the truth is, —and the Reformers were fully alive to this consideration, —that the fall produced so great a change in men's character and condition, that there is scarcely any question in that department of theological science, — which is now often called Anthropology, or a view of what Scripture teaches as to what man is, —which can be fully and correctly stated and explained without a reference to the difference that subsists between man fallen and man unfallen. Now, upon this point, it is certain that the Reformers in general held that man, before he fell, had a liberty or freedom of will which fallen man does not possess, —a freedom or liberty of will similar to that which Pelagians and Socinians usually ascribe to man as he is. And it is in full accordance with the theology of the Reformation, that our Confession of Faith, immediately after laying down the position, formerly quoted and explained, about the natural liberty with which God has endued the will of man, and which it has retained amidst all changes, proceeds thus: "Man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good and well-pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it and, in like manner, in the Catechisms it is said, that " our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will," sinned and fell. I refer to this subject at present, chiefly for the purpose of pointing out that the fact of this doctrine having been held throws much light upon the general views maintained upon this whole subject by the Reformers, and by the compilers of our standards. They ascribed to man freedom or liberty of will, —full power to will and to do what was spiritually good before the fall, and denied it to him after he had fallen.

Now, this fact affords materials for some important conclusions as to the real nature of the necessity or bondage which they ascribed to the will of fallen man, and the grounds on which they rested their doctrine regarding it. The compilers of our standards believed, as the Reformers did, that God has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass, and that, of course, He had fore-ordained the fall of Adam, which thus consequently became in a certain sense necessary— necessary, by what was called the necessity of events, or the necessity of immutability. Still, they also believed that man fell, because he was left to the freedom of his own will, and because, having free-will, he freely willed or chose to sin. It follows from their holding at once both these doctrines, that they did not regard God's fore-ordination of the event as inconsistent with man's liberty of will; and, of course, they did not, and could not, regard the bondage which they ascribed specially to the will of fallen man as in any way, or to any extent, proceeding from, or caused by, God's decrees with respect to their actions. They believed, further, that God's providence, executing His decrees, was concerned in the fall of Adam, in the same sense, and to the same extent, to which it is concerned in the sinful actions which men perform now; but neither did they regard this as taking away his liberty, and neither of course did they consider the entire subjection of the will of fallen man to sin, or the actual sins which he commits, as the effect or result of that providence which God constantly exercises over all His creatures and all their actions. They believed, — and there is, indeed, no reason to doubt, —that the general laws which regulate men's mental processes, —which determine, for instance, the connection (invariable and necessary, or otherwise) between the conclusions of the judgment and the acts of volition, — operate now as they did before the fall, because the general framework of man's mental constitution remains unchanged, and because all the departments of his intellectual and moral constitution are equally vitiated, so far as spiritual things are concerned, according to their respective natures and functions, by the introduction of depravity. But the operation of these laws, whatever they may be, did not deprive man, unfallen, of his freedom or liberty of will, and of course it is not the cause of the bondage or servitude to



which his will is now subjected. Man, according to the doctrine of the Reformers and of our standards, before he fell had freedom or liberty of will, notwithstanding God's fore-ordination and providence, and notwithstanding any laws, whatever these may be, which God had impressed upon his mental constitution for the regulation of his mental processes. He no longer has this freedom or liberty of will, but, on the contrary, his will is in bondage or subjection to sin; so that, in point of fact, he can only will or choose what is sinful, and not what is spiritually good. The inference is unavoidable, that, according to this scheme of doctrine, the necessity, or bondage to sin, which now attaches to the human will, is a property of man, not simply as a creature, but as a fallen creature, — not springing from his mere relation to God, as the fore-ordainer of all things, and the actual ruler and governor of the world, nor from the mere operation of laws which God has impressed upon the general structure and framework of man's mental constitution, but from a cause distinct from all these— from something superinduced upon his character and condition by the fall.

The decree of God, fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass— the providence which He is ever exercising over all His creatures and all their actions— the laws which He has impressed upon man's mental constitution for the regulation of his mental processes, —may indeed produce or imply some sort of necessity or bondage as attaching to the human will— may be inconsistent with freedom or liberty of will in the sense in which it is often ascribed to men, and I have no doubt this can be shown to be the case; but if it be true, as our standards plainly teach, that, all these things being the same, man once had a freedom or liberty of will which he has not now, it follows that there does now attach to men a necessity or bondage which is not directly dependent upon these causes, as to its actual existence and operation, and which, therefore, may be proved, by its own direct appropriate evidence, to exist and to operate, without requiring the proof or the assumption of any of these doctrines as a necessary medium of probation, and though it could not be shown to follow from them in the way of inference or conclusion. My object in

making these observations is not to give any opinion upon the arguments in support of necessity, as it is commonly understood, that may be deduced from fore-ordination, providence, and the laws that regulate men's mental processes, but merely to show that, according to the judgment of the Reformers, and of the compilers of our standards, there is a necessity or bondage attaching to the will of man as fallen, which is not involved in, or deducible from, these doctrines, and does not necessarily require a previous proof of them, or of any of them, in order to its being sufficiently established. The only necessity or bondage taught by the Reformers and by the standards of our church as a scriptural doctrine, is that which attaches to man as fallen, and is traceable to the depravity which the fall introduced, as its source or cause. And it is important, I think, that this doctrine should be viewed by itself, in its own place, in its native independence, and in connection with its own distinct and appropriate evidence. The Reformers and the compilers of our standards did not see any other kind or species of necessity or bondage to be taught in Scripture, and did not regard the assertion of any other as necessary for the full exposition of the scheme of evangelical truth. The question, whether liberty of will, in the common sense, is shut out, and necessity established, by a survey of the laws that regulate our mental processes, is a question in philosophy and not in theology, and it is one on which I cannot say that I have formed a very decided opinion. I am inclined, upon the whole, to think that liberty of will, as that phrase is commonly employed, can be disproved, and that necessity can be established upon metaphysical or philosophical grounds; but I do not consider myself called upon to maintain either side of this question by anything contained in Scripture or the standards of our church; and I rejoice to think that, upon the grounds which I have endeavoured to explain, the doctrine of the utter bondage of the will of fallen man, in reference to anything spiritually good, because of depravity, is not dependent for its evidence upon the settlement of any merely philosophical question.

With respect to the bearing of the fore-ordination and providence of God upon the question of the liberty or bondage of the will, —or, what is virtually the same thing, with respect to the liberty or bondage of the will of man, viewed, not as fallen and depraved, but simply as a creature entirely dependent upon God, and directed and governed by Him according to His good pleasure, —the word of God and the standards of our church say nothing beyond this, — that man before his fall, or viewed simply as a creature, had, notwithstanding God's fore-ordination and providence, a freedom and power to will and to do good, which fallen man has not. The Reformers, while all strenuously maintaining the utter bondage of the will of fallen man as a scriptural truth, usually declined to speculate upon the bearing of God's fore-ordination and providence upon the freedom of the will of His creatures, simply as such, or, what is the same thing, of man before the fall, as a subject mysterious and incomprehensible in its own nature, —one on which scarcely any definite information was given us in Scripture, and one the settlement of which was not necessary for the full exposition of the scheme of gospel truth; and Calvin, in particular, who never made such strong statements as Luther and Melancthon did in their earlier works, about the connection between fore-ordination and necessity, has, with his usual caution and wisdom, set forth these views upon many occasions.

This practice of distinguishing between the freedom of man's will in his unfallen and in his fallen condition was not introduced by the Reformers. The distinction had been fully brought out and applied by Augustine. It had a place in the speculations of the schoolmen. Peter Lombard, in his four Books of Sentences, the text-book of the Scholastic Theology, distinguishes and explains the freedom of man's will in his four-fold state, —viz., before the fall; after the fall, but before regeneration; after regeneration in this life; and, lastly, after the resurrection in heaven. The subject is explained in these same aspects in the Formula Concordiae of the Lutheran Church very much as it is in our own Confession of Faith. This view of the matter is also usually taken in the works of the great theologians of the

seventeenth century. But in more modern times the tendency has rather been to consider the whole subject of the freedom of the will as one great general topic of investigation, and to examine it chiefly upon philosophical grounds, without much attention, comparatively, to its theological relations, and to the distinctions and divisions which the generally admitted doctrines of theology required to be introduced into it. In this way, we think that the respective provinces of the philosopher and the theologian have been somewhat confounded, to the injury, probably, of both parties; a good deal of confusion has been introduced into the whole subject, and an impression has been created, that the maintenance of some of the most important of the peculiar doctrines of the Christian system is much more intimately connected with, and much more entirely dependent upon, the establishment of certain philosophical theories, than an accurate and comprehensive view of the whole subject would warrant. A very general impression prevails, first, that the doctrine of the liberty of the will, as implying what is commonly called a liberty of indifference, and the self-determining power of the will, is an essential part of the Arminian system of theology, —i.e., that, on the one hand, Arminianism requires it as a part of the position which it must occupy, —and that, on the other hand, the proof or admission of it establishes Arminianism; and, secondly, that an exactly similar relation subsists between the doctrine of philosophical necessity and the Calvinistic system of theology. There may be some foundation for this impression, in so far as Arminianism is concerned, though upon the consideration of this point I do not mean to enter. What I wish to notice is, that whether the impression be just or not, in so far as concerns liberty and Arminianism, I do not regard it as well founded, in so far as philosophical necessity and the Calvinistic system of theology are concerned, and that I reckon this an important advantage to Calvinism in an argumentative point of view.

The doctrine of philosophical necessity is a certain theory or opinion as to the principles that regulate the exercise of the will of man as a faculty of his nature, and that determine the production of men's volitions, and their consequent actions. The theory is usually

founded partly upon an examination of our mental processes themselves in the light of consciousness, —certainly the most direct and legitimate source of evidence upon the subject, — and partly upon certain deductions from the foreknowledge, fore-ordination, and providence of God, in their supposed bearing upon the volitions and actions of men. This latter department of topics, and the proofs they afford, may be contemplated either in the light of revelation or of natural religion, —which also suggests some information regarding them; and, accordingly, the doctrine of philosophical necessity, in the same sense in which it has been maintained by many Calvinistic divines, has been very ably defended upon both these grounds, by men who did not believe in the authority of revelation, —such as Hobbes and Collins. It is, however, only the first class of proofs that can really establish the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as usually understood, —i.e., as it is opposed to liberty of indifference and the self-determining power of the will; for although conclusive arguments may be deduced from the foreknowledge, fore-ordination, and providence of God, in favour of the necessity of volitions and actions, —i.e., in favour of the certainty of their being just what they are, and of the improbability in some sense of their being other than they are, —yet no conclusion can be validly deduced from this source as to the immediate or approximate cause of our volitions, or the precise provision made in our mental constitution, and in the laws that regulate our mental processes, for effecting the result, though foreseen and foreordained, and therefore in itself certain; unless, indeed, it be contended that it is impossible for God certainly to foresee and certainly to order the volitions and actions of men without having established those very laws for the regulation of their mental processes, and especially for the determination of their volitions, which the doctrine of philosophical necessity involves; and this is a position which, from the nature of the case, it is scarcely possible to establish. There can seldom be a very secure ground for deduction or inference, — when it is needful, with that view, to take up the position, that God could not have accomplished His purpose, or effected a particular result with certainty, except only in one way, and by some one specified provision. Even then, though it could be

proved or rendered probable on merely psychological or metaphysical grounds, that the doctrine of philosophical necessity is unfounded, and that, on the contrary, man has a liberty of indifference, and his will a self-determining power, we would not regard ourselves as constrained to abandon the Calvinistic doctrines concerning the predestination and providence of God, inasmuch as, leaving every other consideration out of view, these doctrines could merely prove that the certainty of the event or result is in some way provided for and secured, and would not afford any adequate grounds for the conclusion that God could not have accomplished this in the case of a class of rational and responsible beings, who were mentally constituted in accordance with the libertarian view of the laws that regulate their mental processes, and determine their volitions. If the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as opposed to a liberty of indifference and a self-determining power in the will, can be established by the direct evidence appropriately applicable to it as a psychological question, —as I am inclined to think it can, —then this affords a strong confirmation of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and providence: for, on the assumption of the truth of this philosophical position, inferences may be deduced from it in support of these theological doctrines which it does not seem practicable to evade, except by taking refuge in atheism; but, upon the ground which has been stated, it does not seem to me to follow, e converso, that if this philosophical position is disproved, the theological doctrines must in consequence be abandoned. And if this view be a sound one, it certainly tends to illustrate the firmness of the foundation on which the Calvinistic argument rests.

But it is not my intention to discuss this subject; and I must return to the topic which has suggested these observations, —viz., that the Reformers and the older Calvinistic divines ascribed to man before his fall a freedom or liberty of will which they denied to man as he is, and that the only necessity or bondage which they ascribed to man as he is, was an inability to will what is spiritually good and acceptable to God, as a result or consequence simply of the entire depravity of his moral nature, —i.e., of his actual dispositions and

tendencies. This was the only necessity they advocated as having anything like direct and explicit sanction from Scripture, or as indispensably necessary to the exposition and defence of their system of theology, —not a necessity deduced from anything in God's purposes and providence, or from anything in men's mental constitution applicable to men, as men, or simply as creatures, but from a special feature in men's character as fallen and depraved. This necessity or bondage under which they held man fallen, as distinguished from man unfallen, to be, resolved itself into the entire absence in fallen man of holy and good dispositions or tendencies, and the prevalence in his moral nature of what is ungodly and depraved; and thus stood entirely distinct from, and independent of, those wider and more general considerations, whether philosophical or theological, applicable to man as man, having a certain mental constitution, or as a dependent creature and subject of God, on the ground of which the controversy about liberty and necessity has been of late commonly conducted.

I have said that, in modern times, this distinction between the case of man before and after his fall has been too much neglected by theologians, even by those who admitted the distinction, and would have defended it if they had been led to discuss it. It has been too much absorbed or thrown into the background, and kept out of view by the more general subject of liberty and necessity, in the form in which it has been commonly treated. This result, I think, has been injurious, and unfavourable to the interests of sound doctrine.

## **II. The Bondage of the Will**

We proceed now more directly, though very briefly, to explain the great doctrine, taught by all the Reformers and condemned by the Council of Trent, with respect to man's want of free-will, or the utter bondage or servitude of the will of fallen man to sin because of depravity; and after the explanations already given of the relation of this doctrine to other topics, we shall not consider it needful to do

more than advert to the grounds on which it has been advocated, and to those on which it has been opposed. Having had occasion to quote and comment upon the first two propositions in the ninth chapter of our Confession of Faith, which treats of free-will, —setting forth, first, the natural liberty with which God hath endowed the will of man, and which it retains, and must retain, in all circumstances; and, secondly, the full freedom and power which man in his state of innocency had to do God's will, —we shall continue to follow its guidance, because it exhibits upon this, as upon most other topics, a more precise and accurate statement of the leading doctrines taught in Scripture and promulgated by the Reformers, than any other production with which we are acquainted. The doctrine in question is thus stated in our Confession: " Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

If man, in his natural state, cannot do anything spiritually good, the cause, the sole proximate cause of this is, that he does not will to do it, because by universal admission man has the power (of course within a certain range, since he is not omnipotent) to do what he wills to do. And if no man in his natural condition has ever in fact done, or willed to do, anything spiritually good, the inference is well warranted, that men are not naturally able to will what is good; for had such an ability existed, it would certainly have been more or less put forth in act by some men. Besides the connection thus plainly subsisting between the more general doctrine of the entire corruption of man's moral nature, and his inability to will what is spiritually good, there are some of the scriptural descriptions of man's natural character and condition which bear more directly and immediately upon this specific topic, —such as those which represent natural men as the servants or slaves of sin, as led captive by Satan at his will, —while it is certain that Satan exerts no external compulsion upon them; and especially those which describe them as dead in sin, and blind and darkened in their minds. "We cannot dwell upon these



passages, and we need not repeat the cautions, necessary to be observed in treating of original sin, against either passively and carelessly forming only a very vague and indefinite conception of their import, or actively and zealously explaining them away, departing from what they naturally and obviously mean or imply, without a clear scriptural warrant enforcing the necessity of the deviation, and pointing out the extent to which it is to be carried.

If man, in his natural state, without divine grace, cannot turn from sin unto God, or prepare himself for turning, this must arise wholly from his inability to will to do it; for there is no external obstacle to his turning to God, or doing anything spiritually good. If he does not turn from sin to God, it is because he does not will to turn; and if he cannot turn, it is because he has no ability to will to turn. He is just as able to turn to God, and to will to turn to God, as he is to do, or to will to do, any other thing that is spiritually good; for there is certainly no peculiar obstacle, external or internal, in the way of men turning from sin unto God, that does not equally stand in the way of their doing anything else which He requires, or which is pleasing and acceptable to Him. If, then, natural men cannot by their own strength turn to God, they have no ability of will to anything spiritually good. Now, we have very solemn and explicit declarations of our Saviour, that no man is able to come to Him (which is virtually identical, or inseparably connected, with turning from sin unto God), except it be given him of the Father— except the Father draw him; i.e., —as can be easily and fully proved from Scripture, —unless and until he become the subject of the omnipotent gracious agency of the Holy Spirit. And, besides, the general descriptions given us in Scripture of the change which is effected, —of the result which is produced when any man does come to Christ or turn to God, —are manifestly fitted and intended to convey to us the idea that man, by the exercise of his own natural power of volition, did not, and could not, do anything to commence it, or set the process in operation. I refer, of course, more especially to those passages where this process is not only ascribed wholly to God's agency, but where it is more specifically described as an opening of the eyes of the blind— a

creation— the creation of a new heart— a new birth— a resurrection from the dead. Unless these statements are to be wholly explained away, and perverted from their natural and obvious meaning, —and this can be done legitimately only when it is proved that Scripture itself warrants and requires it, —they must be regarded as teaching us that, in the originating of the process of turning to God, men's own natural power of volition can exert no real influence, no proper efficiency; and if so, that, upon the grounds already explained, he has no ability of will to anything spiritually good accompanying salvation. Whatever proves, in general, that man in his fallen condition has no ability of will to anything spiritually good, proves equally, in particular, that he cannot will to turn to God; while anything which proves that men by their own strength are unable to will to come to Christ or to turn to God, not only directly establishes the great practical conclusion which gives to the general doctrine of man's inability to will what is good its chief importance, but, by the process of thought already explained, establishes that general doctrine itself: and by the application of these obvious considerations, the doctrine of man's inability in his natural state to will anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, may be shown to be supported by an extensive range of scriptural statements, as well as by the analogy of faith, —by its indissoluble connection with other important scriptural doctrines.

### **III. Bondage of the Will— Objections**

With respect to the objections to this doctrine of fallen man's inability to will anything spiritually good or to turn to God, or the grounds and reasons on which it is opposed by Romanists and others, the first and most important consideration to be attended to is this — that it is not alleged that there is any specific statement in Scripture which directly opposes or contradicts it; i.e., it is not alleged that any statement can be produced from the word of God which directly, or by anything like plain implication, tells us that fallen man has any ability of will to anything spiritually good, or is

able by his own strength to turn to God, or to prepare himself thereunto. The objections commonly adduced against the doctrine of the Reformers, and of our standards, upon this subject, are not inferences or deductions from specific statements of Scripture, alleged to bear immediately upon the point in dispute, but only inferences or deductions from certain general principles which Scripture is alleged to sanction. And there is an important difference, in point of certainty, between these two classes of inferences or deductions. The objections to the doctrine of fallen man's inability may be said, to be all ultimately resolvable into this one general position, that in Scripture commands and exhortations are addressed to men, requiring them to abstain from sin and to turn to God; that they are responsible for rendering obedience to these commands, and incur guilt by disobeying them; and that these commands would not have been issued, that this responsibility would not attach to them, and that this guilt could not be incurred, unless they were able to will and to do the things commanded. Now, it is obvious that this whole argument resolves, as to its sole real basis and foundation, not into anything which is actually stated in Scripture, directly or by implication, but into certain notions with respect to the reasons why God issued these commands or exhortations, —the grounds on which alone moral responsibility can rest; subjects, both of which are in their very nature profound and mysterious, which do not lie very fully within the range or cognisance of our faculties, and with respect to which men are certainly not entitled to pronounce dogmatically through the mere application of their own powers of reasoning, and unless guided plainly and distinctly by the Scriptures themselves.

The argument or objection, though in reality one, may be said to resolve itself into these two positions: First, God would not, or rather could not, have addressed such commands or exhortations to men unless they were able to obey them; and the reason commonly assigned is, that it could at least serve no good purpose to issue commands to men to which they were unable to render obedience; and, secondly, an ability to do, and of course to will to do, what is commanded, is necessary in order that men may incur responsibility

and guilt by not doing it. Now, it is admitted that God commands fallen men— men as they are— to do what is spiritually good, and to turn unto Himself, and that they are responsible, or incur guilt, by not doing what is thus commanded; and this being universally admitted as clear and certain from Scripture, the question is, How are the inferences or conclusions of the objectors to be met? This subject has been most abundantly discussed in every age, and leads into the examination of some questions which never have been solved, and never will be solved in man's present condition. I can make only a few remarks upon it, rather in the way of indicating where the answers to the objections lie, than of expounding or developing them. Let it be remembered, then, what is the true state or condition of the argument. There has been produced from Scripture what seems to be very strong and conclusive evidence that fallen man has wholly lost, and does not now possess, any ability of will to anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, —evidence which cannot be directly answered or disposed of, and which is not contradicted by anything like direct evidence from Scripture in support of the opposite position; and the proper question is, Is there anything in the general reasonings of the objectors above stated, that is so clearly and certainly both true and relevant, as to warrant us, on that ground alone, —for there is no other, —summarily to reject this evidence, or to resolve at all hazards to explain it away?

With respect to the first and less important of the two positions into which it has been shown that the argument of the objectors resolves itself, —viz., that God could not, or would not, have issued such commands and exhortations, unless men had been able to obey them, —it is, obviously enough, unwarranted and presumptuous in its general character and complexion, as it assumes that men are capable of judging of the reasons, nay, of all the reasons, that could or should regulate the divine procedure. This general and radical defect is quite sufficient to deprive the argument founded upon it of all such certain and concluding power or cogency, as to make it adequate to overturn or neutralize the strength of the direct scriptural evidence on which the doctrine of man's inability rests. We

are entitled to set aside this objection as unsatisfactory and insufficient, simply upon the ground that, for aught the objectors know or can establish, God might have had good and sufficient reasons for addressing such commands and exhortations to men, even though they were unable to obey them. The objector virtually asserts that God could have no good reasons for addressing such commands to men, unless they were able to obey them. We meet this with the counter assertion, that He might have sufficient reasons for addressing such commands to men, though they were unable to comply with them; and as, from the condition of the argument, as above explained, the onus probandi lies upon the objectors, our mere counter assertion is a conclusive bar to their progress and success, unless they can produce a positive proof in support of their position, or a positive disproof of ours.

But though we are entitled to stop here, and to hold the objection sufficiently disposed of in this way, we do not need to confine ourselves within the strict rules of logical requirement, and can adduce materials which bear much more directly upon the disposal of the objection; and especially we can show that there are indications given us in Scripture of reasons that explain to some extent why these commands and exhortations were addressed to men, though they were unable to obey them. This subject is fully discussed and illustrated in Luther's great work, "De Servo Arbitrio" in reply to Erasmus, which is, perhaps, upon the whole, the finest specimen he has left of his talents as a theologian, and which is thoroughly Calvinistic in its doctrinal views. It is discussed by Calvin himself in the fifth chapter of the second book of his Institutes, and in his treatise on Free-will; and there is a brief but very able summary of the views generally held by Calvinists on this topic in Turretine.

The commands and exhortations addressed to men by God in Scripture, in reference to things spiritual, may be divided into two classes: First, those which are directly comprehended under the original moral law, and obligatory upon men, simply as rational and

responsible creatures, and which are summed up in the duty of loving God with all our hearts, and our neighbour as ourselves; and, secondly, those which have reference more immediately to the remedial scheme of grace revealed to men for their salvation, such as repentance or conversion— turning from sin unto God— faith in Christ Jesus, and thereafter progressive holiness. These two classes of obligations might, for brevity's sake, be considered as comprehended in, or indicated by, the two great duties of love to God and faith in Christ. That these things are imposed upon men by being expressly commanded by God in His word, —that men are responsible for doing them, and incur guilt by not doing them, —is unquestionable; while yet we allege that men in their natural condition are unable to do them, because unable to will to do them. We are not, however, at present considering them in connection with the general subjects of responsibility and its grounds, —to that we shall afterwards advert more fully, —but only in connection with the more limited objection that there could be no ground for imposing such commands unless men were able to obey them. After the explanations which have already been given, we have now simply to consider whether we can discover or imagine any reasonable grounds why these commands might be imposed upon fallen men, notwithstanding their inability to comply with them.

In regard to the first class, —those directly comprehended in the original moral law, and summed up in supreme love to God, — there is no difficulty in seeing the reasons why God might address such commands to fallen and depraved men. The moral law is a transcript of God's moral perfections, and must ever continue unchangeable. It must always be binding, in all its extent, upon all rational and responsible creatures, from the very condition of their existence, from their necessary relation to God. It constitutes the only accurate representation of the duty universally and at all times incumbent upon rational beings— the duty which God must of necessity impose upon and require of them. Man was able to obey this law, to discharge this whole duty, in the condition in which he was created. If he is now in a different condition, — one in which he is no longer

able to discharge this duty, —this does not remove or invalidate his obligation to perform it; it does not affect the reasonableness and propriety of God, on the ground of His own perfections, and of the relation in which He stands to His creatures, proclaiming and imposing this obligation — requiring of men to do what is still as much as ever incumbent upon them. On these grounds, there is no difficulty in seeing that there are reasons— and this is the only point we have at present to do with— why God might, or rather would, continue to require of men to love Him with, all their heart, even although they were no longer able to comply with this requirement. It was right and expedient that men should still have the moral law, in all the length and breadth of its requirements, enforced upon them, as a means of knowledge and a means of conviction, even though it was no longer directly available as an actual standard which they were in fact able to comply with. Notwithstanding our inability to render obedience to it, it is still available and useful as a means of knowledge, —as affording us materials of knowing God's character, and the relation in which we stand to Him, and the duty which He requires and must require of us. It is available and useful also, —nay, necessary, —as a means of conviction— conviction of our sin and of our inability. If men are sinners, it is important that they should be aware of this. The only process which is directly fitted in its own nature to effect this, is stating and enforcing duty, —calling upon men to do what is incumbent upon them, —and then pointing out where and how far they come short. If men are really unable to discharge the duties incumbent upon them, it is important that they should be aware of this feature in their condition; and the only means of securing this, in accordance with the principles of their constitution as rational beings, is by requiring of them to do what is obligatory upon them.

It is quite unreasonable, then, to assume, or lay down as a principle, that the only consideration which justifies or explains the imposition of a command is, that men may obey it, as implying that they can obey it, since it is plain enough that there are reasons which may warrant or require the imposition of a command, even when men

cannot obey it; and that good may result from the imposition of it, even in these circumstances. The objection which we are considering, assumes that when God addresses a command to men, He thereby, by the mere fact of issuing the command, tells them that they are able to obey it; but we have said enough, we think, to show not only that a statement to this effect is not necessarily implied in the issuing of the command, but that it is quite possible, at least, that the very object of issuing the command may be to teach and to impress a position precisely the reverse of this, —viz., that they are not able to obey it. There is nothing unreasonable or improbable in this, and therefore the assumption of the certain truth of the opposite position affords no sufficient ground for setting aside the strong scriptural evidence we can adduce to prove that this is indeed the actual state of the case, —and that one object which God has in view in requiring of fallen men the performance of the whole duty which is incumbent upon them, is just to convince them that they cannot discharge it in their own strength, or without the assistance of His special grace, without the supernatural agency of His own Spirit.

With respect to the other class of spiritual duties required of men in Scripture, those which have more immediate reference to the remedial scheme of grace, —viz., repentance and faith, —there are some points in which they differ from those directly comprehended under the original moral law; but these points of difference are not such as materially to affect our present argument. It is true, indeed, that God was not bound in the same sense, and on the same grounds, to impose, or to continue the imposition of these duties; and that men were not originally, and by the mere condition of their existence, subject to an obligation to obey them. They originate, as to their existence and obligation, in the gracious scheme which God has devised and executed for the salvation of lost man; and in the provision which He, in His sovereignty and wisdom, has made for bestowing upon men individually an interest in the benefits of that salvation. But this difference does not affect the point now under consideration. The same general views which we have stated in regard to the former class of duties, apply also to this— to the effect



of showing that God might possibly, and even probably, have good and sufficient reasons for imposing upon men commands which they were not able to obey; and that the imposition of the command, so far from implying necessarily that men have power to obey it, might just be intended to teach them the reverse of this. That men are not able to repent and believe by their own strength, without the special grace of God, is generally admitted, both by Papists and Arminians, who are accustomed to press this objection. If this be so, then it is important that men should be aware of it; that they may realize their own helplessness and dependence, and may thus be led to seek that grace of God of which they stand in need; and, in accordance with a favourite saying of Augustine's quoted with approbation by Calvin, "Jubet Deus quae non possumus, ut noverimus quid ab ipso petere debeamus." It is in entire accordance with the great principles which obviously regulate God's moral administration, His communication of spiritual blessings, that He should have regard to the production of this result in the commands which He imposes. And, with respect to this class of duties, there is another consideration which tends towards an explanation of the imposition of the command, in accordance with men's assumed inability to obey it, —viz., that we have good ground in Scripture to believe that it is a part of God's wise and gracious provision to make the imposition of the command, and the felt inability to comply with it, the occasion, and in some sense the means, of His communicating to men strength to enable them to comply with it; so that He may be said to issue the command to repent and believe, not because men are already and previously able to obey, but in order that, having convinced them of their inability, He may then, in the wisest and most beneficial manner, impart to them the grace and strength, that are necessary to enable them to obey. This principle has been often illustrated, and very pertinently, by a reference to some of our Saviour's miracles, —as, for example, when He commanded a lame man, to walk, which he was at the time wholly unable to do, but when, at the same time, in connection with the command, and in a sense through its instrumentality, He communicated a power or strength that made him able to comply with it.

On these grounds it is easy enough to dispose of the objection against the doctrine of man's inability in his natural condition, and without divine grace, to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation, founded upon the fact that God commands and requires these things. These considerations, however, though quite sufficient to dispose of this objection, do not go to the root of the difficulty connected with this subject; for the great difficulty lies not in the mere fact that such commands and exhortations are addressed to men while they are unable to obey them (and this is all that we have yet examined), but in the fact that they are responsible for obeying, and incur guilt by disobeying, notwithstanding their inability to render, because of their inability to will to render, obedience. This is the great difficulty, and we must now proceed to consider it; but as the objection is often put in the form of an allegation, that God would not, and could not, impose such commands unless men were able to comply with them, —it being assumed that the mere fact of the issue of the command implies that men are able to render obedience to it, —we have thought proper to advert, in the first place, to the objection in this form, and to suggest briefly the very obvious considerations by which it can be conclusively shown to be destitute of all real weight and cogency.

The great objection commonly adduced against everything like necessity or bondage, when ascribed to man or to his will, is, that this is inconsistent with man being responsible for his actions, and incurring guilt by his sins and shortcomings. That man is responsible for his actions, —that he incurs guilt, and justly subjects himself to punishment, by his transgressions of God's law, —is universally admitted, on the testimony at once of Scripture and consciousness. Of course, no doctrine is to be received as true, which is inconsistent with this great truth. It has been often alleged of certain doctrines, both theological and philosophical, that, if true, they would subvert men's responsibility for their actions; and on no subject, perhaps, has there been a larger amount of intricate and perplexing discussion than has been brought forward in the attempt to settle generally and abstractly what are the elements that constitute, and are necessary

to, the responsibility of rational beings, and to apply the principles so settled, or supposed to be settled, to a variety of positions predicated of men, viewed either by themselves or in their relation to God, which have been affirmed or denied,'respectively, to be consistent with their being responsible for their actions.

We have no great fear of men being ever led in great numbers to deny their responsibility, or practically to shake off a sense of their being responsible for their actions, because, or through means, of any speculative opinions which they may have been led to adopt. The Author of man's constitution has made such effectual provision for men feeling that they are responsible, that there is not much danger that this conviction will ever be very extensively eradicated by mere speculations. When men have been led to deny their responsibility, and seem to have escaped from any practical sense of it, this has been usually traceable, not to speculation, but to the brutalizing influence of gross immorality— though sometimes speculation has been brought in to defend, or palliate, what it did not produce. On this ground we have no great sympathy with the extreme anxiety manifested by some to shut out, or explain away, all doctrines with regard to which it may be alleged with some plausibility that they are inconsistent with responsibility.

Of course, each case in which this allegation is made must be tried and decided upon its own proper merits; but a proneness to have recourse to objections against doctrines propounded, derived from this source, is, we think, more likely, upon the whole, to lead to the rejection than to the reception of what is true, and can be satisfactorily established by its own appropriate evidence. And when a controversy arises between men of intelligence and good character, as to whether certain opinions maintained by the one party, and denied by the other, are or are not consistent with human responsibility, we think there is a pretty strong presumption, in the mere fact that the point is controverted between such men, that the opinions in question are not inconsistent with responsibility. It may, indeed, be alleged, that the men who hold these opinions, and

maintain their innocency, are better than their principles, —that they do not really believe them and follow them out to their practical consequences; but this is a very forced and improbable allegation, — and if the opinions in question have prevailed long and widely, it is altogether unwarrantable.

Upon the ground of these general and obvious considerations, we are inclined to think that Calvinists need not give themselves very much concern about the allegations which have been so often and so confidently made, that their doctrines are inconsistent with men's responsibility, and should be chiefly occupied with the investigation and the exposition of the direct and proper evidence by which their doctrines may be proved to be true. Still, objections that have a plausible appearance cannot be altogether disregarded; and it is necessary that men who would hold their views intelligently, should have some definite conception of the mode, whether it be more general or more special, in which objections should be disposed of. We shall therefore make a few observations on the great difficulty of the alleged incompatibility of the doctrine of the inability of fallen man to will anything spiritually good, with responsibility and guilt, without attempting to give anything like a full discussion of it; and especially without pretending to investigate the general subject of the constituents, grounds, and necessary conditions of moral responsibility, — a subject which belongs rather to the province of the philosopher than the theologian.

It seems very like an irresistible dictate of common sense, not only that there are influences that might be brought to bear upon men, which would deprive them altogether, and in every sense, of their character of free agents, and that, consequently, there may be necessities which would be inconsistent with responsibility and guilt; but also, moreover, that men cannot be justly held guilty, and of course liable to punishment, for not doing what they are unable, in any sense or respect, to will or to do. And, accordingly, the defenders of the doctrine of man's inability have usually admitted that there is, and must be, some sense or respect in which man may be said to be

able to will and to do what is required of him. They have then tried to show how or in what sense it is that man may be said to be able to do what is required of him; while it may also be true, in a different sense, though not inconsistent with this, that he is unable to do it; and then they have further undertaken to show, that the ability which they can concede to man, consistently with the inability which they also ascribe to him, is a sufficient ground for responsibility and guilt; or, at least, —and this is certainly all that is argumentatively incumbent upon them, —that it cannot be proved that it is not. This, I think, may be said to be a correct and compendious description of the general outline of the course of argument usually employed by the defenders of the doctrine of man's inability, in answer to the objection which we are now considering about its alleged incompatibility with responsibility. This mode of dealing with the objection is, in its general scope and character, a perfectly fair and legitimate one; and if the different positions of which it may be said to consist can be established, it is sufficient fully to dispose of it. For the whole case stands thus.

The sacred Scriptures teach, very plainly and explicitly, that fallen men in their natural condition, and before they become the subjects of God's regenerating grace, are unable to will or to do anything spiritually good accompanying salvation; while they teach, also, that they incur guilt, and expose themselves to punishment, by not willing and doing what God requires of them. And as common sense seems to dictate that men cannot incur guilt, unless they are in some sense or respect able to will and to do what is demanded of them, the very obvious difficulty on which the objection is founded at once arises. In these circumstances, —this being the state of the case, —these being the actual realities with which we have to deal, —the very first question that would, naturally suggest itself to a man of real candour, anxious only about the discovery of truth, —about really ascertaining what it was his duty to believe upon the subject (I speak, of course, of men admitting the divine authority of the sacred Scriptures), — would be this: Is there any way in which these two doctrines can be reconciled; or in which, at least, it can be shown that they cannot be

proved to be irreconcilable, or necessarily exclusive of each other? Is there any sense in which man may be said to be able to will and to do what God requires of him, which can be shown to be consistent with what Scripture seems so plainly to teach as to his inability, or which at least cannot be proved to be inconsistent with it, and which, moreover, may also be shown to be sufficient as a basis or foundation for his responsibility and guilt, —or, at least, cannot be shown to be insufficient for this conclusion? These are the questions which would naturally and at once suggest themselves to any fair and candid man in the actual circumstances of the case. And if so, then it is plain that an attempt to answer them, and to answer them in the affirmative, is entitled to a fair and impartial examination. Any attempt that may be made to answer these questions, must in fairness be carefully considered, conclusively disposed of, and proved to be unsatisfactory, before we can be warranted in rejecting the doctrine of man's inability, —which the Scripture seems so plainly to teach, — and even before any violent effort can be warrantably made, — and a very violent one is certainly required, —to explain away the natural and obvious meaning of the declarations which it makes upon this subject. I have no doubt that these questions have been answered satisfactorily, so far as can be shown to be necessary, by the defenders of the, doctrine of man's inability to will anything spiritually good; and I think it could be shown that any errors into which they may have fallen in the discussion of this subject, or any want of success in the mode in which any of them may have conducted their argument, have usually arisen from their attempting more in the way of explanation and proof, than the conditions of the argument, as they have now been stated, required them to undertake.

From the explanations which we have given upon this subject, it is evident that the examination of the objection is narrowed very much to this question: Is there any sense, and if so, what, in which men may be said to be able to do what is spiritually good, and with respect to which it cannot be proved, either, first, that it is inconsistent with the inability which the Scripture so plainly ascribes to him; or,

secondly, that it is insufficient as a basis or foundation for responsibility and guilt? or, —what would be equally satisfactory in point of argument, —can anything answering this description be predicated of man, which, in so far as the matter of responsibility and guilt is concerned, is equivalent to an assertion of his responsibility. Now, it has been very common for the defenders of the Scripture doctrine upon this subject, to base their arguments, in reply to the objection about responsibility, upon the distinction between natural and moral inability, —alleging that man, though morally unable to do what God requires, has a natural ability to do it, and is on this ground responsible for not doing it. Natural inability is described as that which directly results from, or is immediately produced by, some physical law, or some superior controlling power, or some external violence, —any of which, it is of course admitted, deprives men of their responsibility, and exempts them from guilt; and, where none of these causes operate, men are said to possess natural ability. Moral inability is usually described as that which arises solely from want of will to do the thing required, from the opposition of will or want of inclination as the cause or source of the thing required not being done, —there not being in the way any external or natural obstacle of the kind just described. In accordance with these definitions and descriptions, men may be said to have a natural ability, or to have no natural inability, to do a thing, if their actual or de facto inability to do it arises solely from their want of will to do it, —so that it might be said of them, that they could do it, or were able to do it, if they willed or chose to do it. And to apply this to the subject before us: In accordance with these definitions and descriptions, it is contended that man may be said to have a natural ability, or to have no natural inability, to do what is spiritually good and acceptable to God, because there is no physical law, no superior controlling power, no external violence, operating irrespectively of his own volition, that prevents him from doing it, or is the cause of his inability to do it, if he has any; while he may also, at the same time, be said to be morally unable to do God's will; because, while there is an inability de facto, —i.e., according to the views of those who are conducting this argument in answer to the objection, —the

cause of this lies wholly in his will— i.e., in his want of will— to do it, —in his not choosing to do it. In this way there is set forth a sense in which man may be said to be able to do what is required of him, as well as a sense in which he is unable to do it, —he is naturally able, but morally unable; and if these two things cannot be shown to be inconsistent with each other, and if natural ability, or the absence of natural inability, cannot be shown to be insufficient as a ground for responsibility, then the objection is wholly removed.

Now, I have no doubt that this distinction between natural and moral inability is a real and actual, and not merely a verbal or arbitrary one, and that it has an important bearing upon the subject of man's responsibility, and on the discussions which have taken place regarding it; but I am not quite satisfied that, taken by itself it goes to the root of the matter, so as to explain the whole difficulty. The distinction is undoubtedly a real one, for there is a manifest difference between the condition of a man who is subjected to external force or coercion, —whereby his volitions are prevented from taking effect, or he is compelled to do what he is decidedly averse to, —and that of a man who is left free to do whatever he wills or chooses to do. The distinction, thus real in itself or in its own nature, is realized in the actual condition of man. It is admitted by those who most strenuously maintain man's inability, that there is no physical law operating like those regulating the material world, which imposes upon men any necessity of sinning, or produces any inability to do God's will, or to turn from sin, and that there is no superior controlling power or external violence brought to bear directly either upon men's power of volition, or upon the connection between their volitions and their actions. What man ordinarily does he does voluntarily or spontaneously, in the uncontrolled exercise of his power of volition. No constraint or compulsion is exercised upon him. He does evil, because he chooses or wills to do evil; and the only direct and proximate cause of his doing evil in his natural condition — only evil, and that continually— is, that he wills or chooses to do so. Now, it may be fairly contended that a rational and intelligent being, who, without any compulsion or coercion external to himself,



spontaneously chooses or wills evil, and who does evil solely because he chooses or wills to do it, is responsible for the evil which he does, or, at least, cannot be easily shown to be irresponsible, whatever else may be predicated or proved concerning him.

This seems to be the sum and substance of all that is involved in, or that can be fairly brought out of, the common distinction between natural and moral ability or inability, as usually held by those who maintain the moral inability of man to do God's will and to turn from sin. This is the way in which they apply it, and this is the only and the whole application which they can make of it, with reference to this matter of responsibility. Now, this distinction, and the application thus made of it, are of great value and importance, when the subject is treated merely upon metaphysical principles, when the question is discussed as between liberty of will and what is usually called philosophical necessity; and, accordingly, the most valuable and important object accomplished in Edwards' great work on the freedom of the will, is, that he has proved that nothing more than natural ability— a power of doing as men will or choose— can be shown to be necessary to their responsibility, —that a moral as distinguished from a natural inability, attaching to them, does not exempt them from fault, inasmuch as this admits of its being said of them, that they could do what is required of them if they would. Valuable and important, however, as is the distinction thus applied in this department, I have some difficulties about receiving it as a complete solution of the objection under consideration, which has been adduced against the theological doctrine of man's inability as taught by the Reformers, and set forth in the standards of our church.

The difficulty is this, that the distinction, when applied to man's outward conduct or actions as distinguished from the inward motive or disposition, seems to apply only to man's inability to do God's will, and to leave untouched his inability to will to do it. It is important to show that man, in doing evil, as he does unceasingly until he is renewed by God's grace, acts spontaneously, without compulsion—

does only what he wills or chooses to do; but if the doctrine which the Reformers and the compilers of our standards deduced from Scripture, —viz., that man in his natural state is not able to will anything spiritually good, —be true, the whole difficulty in the matter does not seem to be reached by the establishment of this position. The inability is here distinctly predicated of the will, and this must be attended to and provided for in any principle that may be laid down in answer to the objection about its inconsistency with responsibility. If the general substance of the answer to this objection be, as we have seen it must be, that there is some sense or respect in which man may be said to have ability with reference to the matter under discussion, as well as a sense in which inability attaches to him in this respect, then it is manifestly not sufficient to say that he has ability, because he can do whatever he wills or chooses to do. For this statement really asserts nothing about an ability to will; and as, in the doctrine objected to, this inability is predicated of the will, and not of the capacity for the outward action, good or evil, so also must the corresponding ability— the assertion of which in some sense, or of something equivalent to it, is to form the answer to the objection— be also predicated of the will. The distinction between natural and moral inability, as sometimes explained and applied, does not seem to afford sufficient ground or basis for ascribing, in any sense or any respect, ability to the will, or anything equivalent to this, but only for ascribing to man an ability to do as he wills or chooses; and, therefore, upon the grounds which we have explained, it seems to be inadequate to meet the whole difficulty. If the inability be predicated of the will, as was done by the Reformers, and by the compilers of our standards, and if it be conceded, as we think it must be, that the obvious objection about the inconsistency of this inability with responsibility can be removed only by showing that, in some sense or respect, ability may be predicated of the will, as well as inability, then it follows that the common distinction, as sometimes explained and applied, is insufficient, because it does not go to the root of the matter, and leaves somewhat of the mystery untouched.

There is another ground for doubt as to the sufficiency of the common answer to this objection when urged as a complete solution of the difficulty, —viz., that this mode of answering the objection seems to imply that the want of will is the only or ultimate obstacle or preventative. Now, although perhaps this statement could not be shown to be erroneous, if we were discussing the subject only on metaphysical grounds, and had to defend merely the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as commonly understood, yet it is at least very doubtful whether such a statement can be made to meet or explain the theological doctrine as taught by the Reformers and in the standards of our church.

According to the theological doctrine, the want of will to do good is not, strictly speaking, —as is sometimes implied in the application of the distinction between natural and moral ability, to answer the objection about responsibility, —the only cause why men do not do what God requires of them. For though this want of will is the sole proximate cause of the non-performance of spiritual duties, to the exclusion of all external controlling influences, operating irrespectively of, or apart from, man's power of volition, yet, upon scriptural and theological principles, the inability to will is itself resolved into the want of original righteousness, and the entire corruption of man's moral nature. If this theological doctrine, of man's inability to will what is spiritually good, is taught in Scripture at all, it is represented there as involved in, or deducible from, the doctrine of original sin or native moral depravity; and the state of matters which this doctrine describes is traced to the will or power of volition as a faculty of man's nature, being characterized and being determined in all its exercises by the bent or tendency of man's actual moral character, of his dispositions and inclinations. According to the doctrine of the Reformers and of our standards, "man, in his state of innocency, had freedom and power to will and to do that which is good;" and he had this freedom and power just because he had been created after the image of God, in righteousness and holiness— because this was the character and tendency of His moral constitution. And according to the same scheme of doctrine, to

adopt again the words of our Confession, " man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation," and has lost this ability of will just because he has lost the image of God, and fallen under the reigning power of depravity, or has become, as our Confession says, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil."If this be so, then it is not true that the sole or ultimate cause why men in their fallen state do not perform what is spiritually good, is that they do not choose or will to do it, since even this want of will itself, or the inability to will, is traceable to something deeper and ulterior as its source or cause.

On these grounds I am much inclined to think that the common distinction between natural and moral ability, however true in itself, and however important in some of its bearings, does not, as sometimes applied, afford a complete explanation of the difficulty connected with the theological doctrine, that man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to spiritual good; and, upon the whole, I am disposed to adopt upon this topic the following statement of Turretine, whose discussion on this subject of free-will, constituting his tenth Locus in the end of the first volume, is deserving of careful perusal: — *'Nec melius elabuntur, qui pertendunt impotentiam istam moralem esse, non naturalem, atque ita rem non absolute et simpliciter homini esse impossibilem, sed illam hominem posse si velit. Nam sive naturalis, sive moralis dicatur impotentia ista (de quo postea); certum est esse homini ineluctabilem, et frustra dici hominem hoc vel illud posse si velit, cum constet eum non posse velle; non quod destituatur potentia naturali volendi, quia sic differt abrutis; sed quod caveat dispositione ad bene volendum, de qua in hac quaestione unice agitur.'*

Since, then, it would seem that this distinction of natural and moral inability cannot be so applied as to afford a full explanation of the difficulty charged against the theological doctrine of man's inability by nature and without divine grace to will anything spiritually good, the question still remains, Whether there be any other view or

consideration which affords a more complete ground for predicating of man, in some sense, an ability of willing what is good, or of predicating of him something which is virtually equivalent to this, so far as the matter of responsibility is concerned, and may thus afford a fuller answer to the objection founded on the alleged inconsistency between inability and guilt? Before proceeding to consider this question, I must repeat that a survey of the discussions which have taken place regarding it suggests two very obvious reflections, —viz., first, that nothing can now be said upon this subject which has not been said in substance a thousand times before; and, secondly, that the subject is involved in difficulties which never have been fully explained, and never will be fully explained, at least until men get either a new revelation or enlarged faculties.

The subject is one in dealing with which we are entitled, as well as necessitated, to draw largely upon general considerations, which ought to have great weight and influence in satisfying the mind, — even though they do not bear directly and immediately upon the particular difficulties or objections adduced, and may be, as it were, common-places— valuable and important common-places — applicable to other subjects than this. We refer to such considerations as the unreasonableness of rejecting either of two doctrines, both of which seem to be sufficiently established by their direct and appropriate evidence, —evidence which cannot be directly assailed with success or even plausibility, —to reject either of two such doctrines merely because they appear to us to be inconsistent with each other, or because we are unable to point out in what way their consistency with each other can be demonstrated, — a position which we are not warranted to assume until we have first proved that our capacity of perceiving the harmony of doctrines with each other is the standard or measure of their intrinsic truth or falsehood. Akin to this, and embodying the very same principle, is the unwarrantableness of rejecting a matter of fact, when sufficiently established by its appropriate evidence, even though it may be in some of its aspects and bearings inexplicable, and though it may appear to be inconsistent with other facts, also established and

admitted. The inability of man to will anything spiritually good, and his responsibility for not willing and doing it, may be regarded as at once doctrines and facts. They are doctrines clearly taught in Scripture; they are facts in the actual condition of man, established indeed by scriptural statements, but neither of them dependent wholly and exclusively for their evidence upon the authority of Scripture. The right and reasonable course in such a case is to receive and admit both these doctrines, or the facts which they declare, if they appear, after the most careful scrutiny of the evidence, to be sufficiently established, — even though they may continue to appear to us to be irreconcilable with each other.

We need not dwell upon these general considerations, as we have had occasion to advert to them before, —especially when we were considering the doctrine or fact of the entire corruption of human nature in connection with the doctrine or fact of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity as the ground or cause of it. What was then said upon these general topics, and especially with respect to the extent to which it was either needful on the one hand, or practicable on the other, to explain difficulties or to solve objections, is the more pertinent to our present subject, because, as we have had occasion fully to explain, the inability to will anything spiritually good, which we have shown to be an actual feature in the condition of fallen man, and which we are now called upon to defend, as far as may be necessary and practicable, against the objections of opponents, is, and is represented by all who maintain it as being, a part or a necessary consequence of the state of sinfulness into which man fell, as implied in, or traceable to, the corruption or depravity which has overspread his moral nature. It was "by his fall into a state of sin," as our Confession of Faith says, that man lost all ability of will to anything spiritually good, and that of course he has not now any such ability of will until his will be renewed by divine grace. This being the true import and ground of the doctrine, as we maintain it, —this being the true state of the case, as we represent it, —we may expect to find that difficulties and objections, the same in substance, will be adduced against this doctrine of an inability of will

as against the more general doctrine of an entire depravity of moral nature, in which it is involved, and from which it results; and that they may and should be dealt with in both cases in substantially the same way: we may expect to find that the extent to which it is at once needful and practicable to explain the difficulties and to solve the objections, is in both cases the same. More particularly, we may expect to find here, as we found there, that there are difficulties and mysteries connected with the full exposition of the subject, which it is impossible to explain— which run up into questions that he beyond the cognisance of the human faculties— that run up indeed into the one grand difficulty of the existence and prevalence of moral evil under the government of God. We may expect to find that the discussions connected with these objections turn very much upon questions as to the particular place which the really insoluble difficulty is to occupy, and the precise form and aspect in which it is to be represented; and that little or nothing more can be done in the way of dealing with objections than throwing the difficulty further back, —resolving it into some more general principle, and thus bringing it perhaps more into the general line of the analogy of views which we cannot but admit— of considerations which we are somewhat prepared to embrace.

Keeping these general considerations in view, and allowing them their due weight, we would return to the more particular examination of the objection about the incompatibility of inability with responsibility. Now, upon the grounds which have been already indicated, we are satisfied that the principle which contributes more fully than any other to furnish an answer to the objection, —an explanation of the difficulty, —is just the scriptural doctrine which leads us to regard man in his whole history, fallen and unfallen, or the whole human race collectively in their relation to God, as virtually one and indivisible, so far as regards their legal standing and responsibilities, —to contemplate the whole history of the human race as virtually the history of one and the same man, or, what is substantially and practically the same thing, to regard the inability of will to anything spiritually good— which can be proved to

attach to man de facto— as a penal infliction, —a punishment justly imposed upon account of previous guilt—the guilt, of course, of Adam's first sin imputed to his posterity. We had formerly occasion to explain, in considering the subject of original sin, that there is no great difficulty in understanding that, by Adam's personal, voluntary act of sin, his own moral nature might become thoroughly ungodly and corrupt, in the way of natural consequence or of penal infliction, or of both; and that, of course, in this way, and through this medium, he might lose or forfeit all the ability of will he once possessed to anything spiritually good, and become subject to an inability of will that could be removed only by supernatural divine grace. And if the guilt of his first sin was imputed to his posterity, then this might, nay should, carry with it in their case all its proper penal consequences, including depravity of will, and the inability which results from it; and there is thus furnished, pro tanto, an explanation or rationale, in the sense and with the limitations already stated, of the inability of will to anything spiritually good attaching to men in their natural condition. The doctrine of our Confession is, that man, —not men, observe, but man, as represented by Adam under the first covenant, —lost this ability of will by his fall into a state of sin; and if the history of the human race in its different stages or periods, considered in relation to God, is thus viewed in its legal aspects and obligations as virtually the history of one man, placed in different circumstances, then the special and peculiar difficulty supposed to be involved in the doctrine of man's actual inability, in his existing condition, to do what God requires of him, is so far removed, —that is, it is resolved into the one great difficulty of the fall of man or of the human race; and that, again, is resolvable, so far as the ground of difficulties and objections is concerned, into the introduction and continued prevalence of moral evil, —a difficulty which attaches equally in substance, though it may assume a variety of forms and aspects, to every system which admits the existence and moral government of God.

We formerly had occasion to explain, that the doctrine commonly held by Calvinists with respect to the fall of man, and the imputation



of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, may be reasonably enough regarded as involving this idea, that the trial of Adam was virtually and legally the trial of the human race; that God, in His sovereignty and wisdom, resolved to subject to trial or moral probation, and did try, a creature constituted in a certain manner, endowed with certain qualities and capacities, possessed of full power to stand the trial successfully, and placed in the most favourable circumstances for exercising this power aright; and that God further resolved to regard this trial of one specimen of such a creature as virtually and legally the trial of all the creatures of the same class, so that God might at once treat them, or resolve on treating them, so far as regards their legal obligations, as if they had all failed in the trial, and had thereby justly subjected themselves to the penal consequences of transgression. If the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity be true, it would seem as if it must involve some such idea as this; and then this idea applied to our actual condition does tend to throw some light upon it, —to break the force of some of the objections commonly adduced against it, especially those based upon its alleged injustice in subjecting men to penal inflictions on account of a sin which they did not commit. It affords materials which obviously enough admit of being applied in the way of showing that it cannot be proved that there would be any ground for alleging that God would do them any real injustice in treating them, so far as its penal consequences are concerned, as if they had committed Adam's sin, —that is, as if they had been tried themselves, and had failed in the trial; and that they could not, if so treated, make out any substantial ground for complaint.

We must further observe, as bearing upon this subject, that orthodox divines have generally taught, as a principle sanctioned by Scripture, that sin may be in some sense the punishment of sin. Orthodox divines have usually held this principle, and have, moreover, commonly admitted that it enters as one element into the full exposition of what they believe to be the doctrine of Scripture

concerning the fall; and, accordingly, this principle is explained, proved, and defended from objections, in Turretine.

I have thus given a brief summary of what is implied in, or results from, our general doctrine with respect to the fall of man or of the human race, and its bearing upon his character and condition; because it is upon this doctrine as a whole, that the fullest answer to the objection about responsibility, in so far as it can be shown to be necessary to answer it, is based: and nothing can be more reasonable than this, that when we are called upon to explain or defend anything which we have asserted of fallen man, we must be permitted to introduce and apply the whole of the doctrine which we regard Scripture as teaching upon the subject; and to insist that our whole doctrine shall be fairly looked at and examined in its different parts and in its various relations.

Now, to apply these views to the matter in hand, let us consider how they bear upon the alleged inconsistency of inability with responsibility and guilt. There is manifestly no inconsistency between saying that man before his fall had freedom and power to do that which is good, and that he has no such freedom and power now, having wholly lost it by his fall into a state of sin. And, with respect to the difficulty about responsibility, the substance of our position in answer to the objection, —a position based on, and deduced from, those general views of which we have just given a brief summary, —is this: That man is responsible for not willing and doing good, notwithstanding his actual inability to will and to do good, because he is answerable for that inability itself, having, as legally responsible for Adam's sin, inherited the inability, as part of the forfeiture penally due to that first transgression. If the history of the human race is to be regarded, in so far as concerns its legal relation to God, as being

Turretin., Locus ix., Qusest. xv.

virtually the history of one man in different circumstances, —in other words, if the guilt of Adam's first sin imputed is one of the constituent elements of the sinfulness of the estate into which man fell, —then this position, which we have just enunciated, is both true and relevant. Its truth, —that is, ex hypothesi, upon the assumption of the truth of our fundamental doctrines in regard to the fall of man, —I need not further illustrate; and its relevancy to the matter in hand, as an answer to the objection we are considering, lies in this, that though it does not furnish us with a ground for saying, literally and precisely, of man as he now is, that there is a sense in which we can assert that he has ability of will to what is spiritually good, it at least affords us a ground for saying what is equivalent to this, —what is substantially the same thing, so far as responsibility and guilt are concerned, —namely, that he, that is, man, or the human race, as represented in Adam, had ability to will and to do what is good, and lost it by his sin; and that, therefore, he is responsible for the want of it, —as much responsible, so far as regards legal obligations, for all that results from inability, as if he still had the ability in which he was originally created, and which he has righteously forfeited. It is in full accordance with the dictates of right reason and the ordinary sentiments and feelings of mankind, that an ability once possessed, and thereafter righteously forfeited or justly taken away, leaves a man in the very same condition, so far as responsibility and guilt are concerned, as a present or existing ability. And this generally admitted principle, viewed in connection with our fundamental doctrines upon the subject, is legitimately available for showing that the objection cannot be established.

I am not satisfied that there is any sense in which it can be literally and precisely said with truth, that man now has an ability of will to what is spiritually good, —except the statement be referred merely to the general structure and framework of man's mental constitution and faculties as a rational being, having the power of volition, which remained unaffected by the fall; and this, we have shown, does not furnish any complete explanation of the difficulty now under consideration. I am not persuaded that any solution meets the

difficulty of asserting that man is responsible for his sins and shortcomings, notwithstanding his inability to will and to do what is good, except by showing that he is responsible for his inability. It is true, indeed, that this inability is involved in, or produced by, the corruption or depravity of nature which attaches to fallen man, and should therefore be admitted as a fact, a real feature of man's actual condition, if supported by satisfactory evidence, even though it could not be explained. But I know of no principle or process by which it can be so fully and completely shown that man is responsible for it, as by regarding it as a penal infliction— a part of the punishment justly imposed on account of previous guilt. This principle does go some length towards explaining the difficulty; for it shows satisfactorily that there is no peculiar difficulty attaching to this subject of inability, as distinguished from that general corruption or depravity characterizing all men, of which it is a component part, or a necessary consequence. There is no reason, then, why we should hesitate about receiving the Scripture doctrine, that man in his fallen state has no ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, and that he is unable, by his own strength, to convert himself or to prepare himself thereunto, on account of its supposed inconsistency with his being responsible for not doing what the divine law requires; for not only have we sufficient direct evidence to establish its truth, — such evidence as would warrant us in at once putting aside all objections that have been adduced against it as mere difficulties, even though no explanation could be given of them, — but, moreover, when we take into view the whole doctrine which Scripture teaches in connection with this subject, we get materials which go some length, at least, in explaining how it is that man is responsible for this inability, and is therefore, a fortiori, responsible, notwithstanding it; while, at the same time, we must admit that this profound and mysterious subject is still left involved in such darkness and difficulty, as to impress upon us the duty of carefully abstaining from presumptuous reasonings and speculations of our own, and of humbly and implicitly receiving whatever God may have been pleased to reveal to us regarding it.

I would further notice how fully this discussion confirms and illustrates the truth of observations which I had formerly occasion to make: first, about the importance of. rightly understanding the whole scriptural doctrine concerning man's fall and its consequences, and of having clear and distinct ideas, so far as Scripture affords us materials, of the constituents of the sinfulness of the state into which he fell; secondly, about the doctrine of the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, tending to throw some light upon this profound and mysterious subject, instead of involving it, as seems to be often supposed, in greater darkness and difficulty; and, thirdly, about the necessity of our having constant regard, in all our investigations into these topics, at once to the virtual identity with respect to judicial standing and legal obligation, and the vast difference, with respect to actual character and condition, between man fallen and man unfallen. There is but one view of the general condition of the human race that at all corresponds, either with the specific statements of Scripture, or with the phenomena which the world in all ages and countries has presented to our contemplation, regarded in connection with the more general aspects of God's character and government, which the Scripture unfolds to us; and that is the view which represents the whole human race as lying under a sentence of condemnation because of sin, —the execution of that sentence being suspended, and many tokens of forbearance and kindness being in the meanwhile vouchsafed to the whole race; while, at the same time, a great and glorious provision has been introduced, and is in operation, fitted and intended to secure the eternal salvation of a portion of the inhabitants of this lost world, who will at last form an innumerable company. This is the view given us in Scripture of the state of the human race: it is confirmed by a survey of the actual realities of man's condition; it throws some light upon phenomena or facts which would otherwise be wholly inexplicable; and, while neither Scripture nor reason affords adequate materials for explaining fully this awful and mysterious reality, we may at least confidently assert, that no additional darkness or difficulty is introduced into it by the doctrine which Scripture does teach concerning it, —namely, that by one man sin

entered into the world, and death by sin; that by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; that by one offence judgment came upon all men to condemnation.

## **IV. The Will in Regeneration**

The Council of Trent, —being a good deal tied up, according to the principles which they professed to follow as to the rule of faith, by the ancient decisions of the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, in opposition to the Pelagians, and by some differences of opinion among themselves, —could not well embody in their decisions so much of unsound doctrine as there is good reason to believe would have been agreeable to the great majority of them, or bring out so fully and palpably as they would have wished, their opposition to the scriptural doctrines of the Reformers. At the same time, it was absolutely necessary, for the maintenance of many of the tenets and practices which constituted the foundation and the main substance of Popery, that the doctrines of grace should be corrupted, —that the salvation of sinners should not be represented, as it was by the Reformers, as being wholly the gift and the work of God, but as being also, in some measure, effected by men themselves, through their own exertions and their own merits. We have already fully explained to what extent this policy was pursued in their decree upon original sin, and how far it was restrained and modified in its development by the difficulties of their situation. In the decree on original sin there is not a great deal that is positively erroneous, though much that is vague and defective. But when, in the sixth session, they proceeded to the great doctrine of justification, they then made the fullest and widest application of all that was erroneous and defective in their decree upon original sin, by explicitly denying that all the actions of unrenewed men are wholly sinful, —that sinful imperfection attaches to all the actions even of renewed men, —and that man, by his fall, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation. This denial, however, of the great Protestant doctrine of the utter bondage or servitude of the will of unrenewed men to sin, —

of their inability to will anything spiritually good, —was not the only application they made of their erroneous and defective views about the corruption and depravity of human nature, in their bearing upon the natural powers of men with reference to their own salvation. They have further deduced from their doctrine, —that the free-will of fallen men, even in reference to spiritual good accompanying salvation, is only weakened or enfeebled, but not lost or extinguished, —the position that man's free-will co-operates with divine grace in the process of his regeneration, and this in a sense which the Reformers and orthodox Protestant churches have regarded as inconsistent with scriptural views of man's natural capacities and of the gospel method of salvation.

Their doctrine upon the co-operation of the free-will of man with the grace of God in the work of regeneration, is set forth also, like the Romish errors we have already been considering, in the preliminary part of the decree of the sixth session; being intended, like them, to pave the way for their grand and fundamental heresy on the subject of justification. It is this: "If any one shall say that the free-will of man, moved and excited by God, does not co-operate by assenting or yielding to God, exciting and calling him, in order that he may predispose and prepare himself to receive the grace of justification, or that he cannot refuse his assent, if he chooses, but that he acts altogether like some inanimate thing, and is merely passive, —let him be anathema." Now, here it is asserted, by plain implication, not only that there is free-will, or an ability of will to what is good, in operation before regeneration, but that man, in the exercise of this free-will to good, co-operates with the grace of God in the preliminary movements that precede and prepare for regeneration; and it was, of course, mainly as a foundation for this doctrine of the co-operation of the free-will of man with the grace of God in preparing for, and producing regeneration, that the freedom of the will of fallen man to good was asserted. In this way, the work of regeneration is manifestly assigned, partly to the operation of God's grace, and partly to the exercise of the freewill of man, —a power possessed by man in his natural condition, though not made really

and effectively operative for his regeneration, until, as the council says in another part of their decree, it be "excited and assisted" by divine grace. If fallen man hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, —which we have shown to be the doctrine of Scripture, —there can, of course, be no such co-operation as this— no such partition of work between God and man, either in preparing for, or in effecting, man's regeneration, because there is nothing in man, in his natural condition, on which such a co-operation can be based, or from which it can spring. There would, therefore, be no great occasion for dwelling further on this subject, were it not that it is intimately connected with a fuller exposition of the doctrine of the Reformers and of the Reformed confessions with respect to the passivity which they ascribed to man in the process of regeneration, —the renovation of the will which they held to be indispensable before men could will anything spiritually good, — and the freedom of will which they undoubtedly ascribed to men after they were regenerated; and to these topics we would now very briefly direct attention.

The Reformers generally maintained that man was passive in the work of regeneration; and they held this position to be necessarily implied in the doctrines of the entire corruption and depravity of man's moral nature, and of his inability to will anything spiritually good, and also to have its own appropriate and specific scriptural evidence in the representation given us in the word of God of the origin and nature of the great change which is effected upon men by the operation of the divine Spirit. But as the subject is rather an intricate one, and as the doctrine of the Reformers, which is also the doctrine of our standards upon this subject of passivity as opposed to co-operation, is liable to be misunderstood and misrepresented, it may be proper to give some explanation of the sense in which, and the limitations with which, they maintained it.

The Reformers did not, as the Council of Trent represents them, describe man as acting in this matter the part merely of an inanimate object, such as a stock or a stone, though some incautious



expressions of Luther's may have afforded a plausible pretence for the accusation. Calvin, adverting to the unfair use that had been made by the Romanists of some of Luther's expressions upon this subject, asserts that the whole substance of the doctrine that had been taught by Luther upon this subject, was held and defended by all the Reformers: "Quod summum est in hac quaestione, et cujus gratia reliqua omnia dicuntur, quemadmodum initio propositum fuit a Luthero et aliis, ita hodie defendimus, ac ne in illis quidem, quae dixi ad fidem non adeo necessaria esse, aliud interest, nisi quod forma loquendi sic fuit mitigata, ne quid offensionis haberet." Now, the Reformers, as I formerly showed, held that man retained, after his fall, that natural liberty with which, according to our Confession, God hath endowed the will of man, so that he never could become like a stock, or a stone, or an irrational animal, but retained his natural power of volition along with all that rationality implies. The passivity which the Reformers ascribed to man in the process of regeneration, implied chiefly these two things, —first, that God's grace must begin the work without any aid or co-operation, in the first instance, from man himself, there being nothing in man, in his natural state, since he has no ability of will to anything spiritually good, from which such aid or co-operation can proceed; and, secondly, that God's grace must by itself effect some change on man, before man himself can do anything, or exercise any activity in the matter, by willing or doing anything spiritually good; and all this, surely, is very plainly implied in the scriptural doctrines of man's depravity and inability of will, and in the scriptural representations of the origin and nature of regeneration.

Again, the Reformers did not teach that man was altogether passive, or the mere inactive subject of the operation of divine grace, or of the agency of the Holy Ghost, in the whole of the process that might be comprehended under the name of regeneration, taken in its wider sense. Regeneration may be taken either in a more limited sense, — as including only the first implantation of spiritual life, by which a man, dead in sins and trespasses, is quickened or made alive, so that he is no longer dead; or it may be taken in a wider sense, as

comprehending the whole of the process by which he is renewed, or made over again, in the whole man, after the image of God, —as including the production of saving faith and union to Christ, or very much what is described in our standards under the name of effectual calling. Now, it was only of regeneration, as understood in the first or more limited of these senses, that the Reformers maintained that man in the process was wholly passive, and not active; for they did not dispute that, before the process in the second and more enlarged sense was completed, man was spiritually alive and spiritually active, and continued so ever after during the whole process of his sanctification. This is what is taught in the standards of our church, when it is said, in the Confession of Faith, that in the work of effectual calling man "is altogether passive, until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it and in the Larger Catechism, that God in effectual calling renews and powerfully determines men's wills, "so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer His call."

Neither did the Reformers teach, as they are often represented by Papists, that God regenerates or converts men against their will; for their doctrine upon this point, —and it is in entire accordance with all they teach upon the whole subject, —is, that He makes them willing by renewing their wills, or by making their wills good in place of bad. These were the doctrines which were taught by the Reformers upon this point, and which were condemned, and intended to be condemned, by the Council of Trent, in the canon which we have quoted.

Some of the very strong and incautious expressions which were used by Luther in setting forth the passivity of man in the work of regeneration, —and which Calvin apologizes for in the context of the passage above quoted from him, —seem to have occasioned some reaction of sentiment in the Lutheran church upon this subject, and to have thus produced, though not till after Luther's death, what was

called the Synergistic Controversy, or the dispute about the co-operation of man with God in this matter. Melancthon seems to have given some countenance to the error of the Synergists, as they were called, by using, on a variety of occasions, —though not, it would appear, till after Luther's death, —expressions which seemed, in all fairness, to imply that, when divine grace began to operate upon men, with a view to their regeneration or conversion; it found in them at the very first, and antecedently to any real change actually effected upon them, not merely rationality and the natural power of volition, which rendered them the fit subjects, the suitable recipients, of a supernatural spiritual influence, but such a natural capacity of willing what was spiritually good, as rendered them capable at once of actively co-operating or concurring even with the first movements of the divine Spirit. This controversy continued to agitate the Lutheran church for many years, both before and after the death of Melancthon, -Strigelius being the chief defender of the doctrine of co-operation, and Flaccus Illyricus its principal opponent. It was at length settled, like many of their other controversial differences, by the "Formula Concordiae," finally adopted and promulgated in 1580, which, though it explicitly condemned what were understood to be the views of the defenders of the doctrine of co-operation, was subscribed by Strigelius himself. As the "Formula Concordiae" contains a very distinct condemnation of the doctrine of co-operation even in its mildest and most modified form, as asserted by some of the followers of Melancthon, —and as it contains, indeed, a full exposition of the whole subject, carefully prepared after the whole matter had been subjected to a long and searching controversy, —it is fitted to throw considerable light upon the difficulties, intricacies, and ambiguities of the question, and it may conduce to the explanation of the subject to quote an extract from it. It condemns this doctrine, "(cum docetur), licet homo non renatus, ratione liberi arbitrii, ante sui regenerationem infirmior quidem sit, quam ut conversionis suse initium facere, atque propriis viribus sese ad Deum convertere, et legi Dei toto corde parere valeat: tamen, si Spiritus Sanctus praedicatione verbi initium fecerit, suamque gratiam in verbo homini obtulerit, turn hominis voluntatem, propriis et

naturalibus suis viribus quodammodo aliquid, licet id modiculum, infirmum et languidum admodum sit, conversionem adjuvare, atque cooperari, et se ipsam ad gratiam applicare" et "praeparare."

I may mention here by the way, that Bossuet, in the Eighth Book of his History of the Variations, has, by a bold stroke of his usual unscrupulous policy, attempted to convict even the Formula Concordiae of the heresy of semi-Pelagianism on the subject of cooperation, though, beyond all question, it contains nothing which makes so near an approach to Pelagianism as the decrees of the Council of Trent. Bossuet, indeed, shows satisfactorily that some of the Lutheran statements connected with this point are not very clear and consistent; but the only fair inference deducible from any inconsistencies which he has been able to produce, is one which might equally be illustrated by an examination of the decrees of the Council of Trent, and of the symbolical books of churches that have been far sounder in their doctrinal views than the Church of Rome, —namely, that it is not possible for any man, or body of men, to be thoroughly and consistently anti-Pelagian, even on the subjects of the depravity and impotency of human nature, and regeneration by the power of the Holy Spirit, though they may intend to be so, and think that they are so, unless they admit what are commonly reckoned the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism.

The great practical conclusion which the Reformers deduced from the doctrine they maintained as to the passivity of man in the work of regeneration, —and, indeed, the substance of what they held to be implied in this doctrine, —was the necessity of a renovation of man's will by the sole power of God, as antecedently indispensable to his exerting any real activity in willing or doing anything spiritually good. If man has not by nature any ability of will for spiritual good, he must receive it wholly from grace; if he has no power of will in himself, he must receive it from God; if it does not exist in him, it must be put into him by God's power. That all this is necessary, is plainly implied in the scriptural descriptions of man's natural condition; that all this is done in the process of regeneration, is

plainly implied in those scriptural descriptions which represent it as a quickening or vivifying of those who were dead in sins and trespasses, —as giving men new hearts, —as taking away their stony hearts, and giving them hearts of flesh. The Reformers, accordingly, were accustomed to describe the process as involving a renovation of men's wills, —a changing them from evil to good; not, of course, the creating and bestowing of a new and different power of volition, but giving it different capacities, and bringing it under wholly different influences. It is this renovation of the will that stands out as that in the whole process of regeneration, —taking the word in its most extensive sense, that of effectual calling, —which most imperatively demands the immediate and exclusive agency of divine power, — the special operation of the Holy Ghost, —for its accomplishment.

What are usually regarded, on scriptural grounds, as constituting the leading steps in the work of effectual calling, are the conviction of sin, the illumination of the understanding, and the embracing of Christ. These may all seem to be natural and easy processes, which might be supposed, perhaps, to result, without any supernatural divine agency, from the influence of the views opened up to us in Scripture, or at least without anything more than the gracious power of God exciting and assisting us, as the Council of Trent says, — exciting us to attend to what is said in Scripture, and assisting our own efforts to understand and realize it, —exciting us to exercise our natural power of attention, and assisting us in the exercise of our natural power of acquiring knowledge, and of our natural capacity of receiving impressions from what we know. Were nothing more necessary, the exciting and assisting power of divine grace might appear to be plausibly represented as sufficient. But the grand obstacle which man's natural character and condition present to his reception of the truth and his embracing Christ, is the entire aversion of his will to anything spiritually good, his utter inability to will anything that is pleasing to God, his entire bondage or servitude to sin. Hence the necessity, not only of the conviction of sin and the illumination of the understanding, but also of the renovation of the will, in order to men's embracing Christ. The aversion or enmity of

his natural mind to God and divine things must be taken away, —a new and different disposition, taste, or tendency from anything that exists in unrenewed men, or that can be elicited from the ordinary operation of their natural principles, must be communicated to them; and this can proceed only from the immediate operation of divine grace, —the special agency of the Holy Spirit. The process needful for removing this aversion, and communicating a different and opposite tendency, must be something very different from merely exciting, stirring up what is lazy or languid, and assisting what is weak or feeble; and yet this is all which the doctrine of the Council of Trent admits of. Orthodox Protestants have been accustomed to contrast the strong and energetic language of Scripture upon this subject with the feeble and mincing phraseology of the Romish council, and to ask whether exciting and assisting the will, which was in itself weak and feeble, was anything like creating a new heart; and whether God's working in us to will as well as to do, resembled our willing what was good by our own powers, with some assistance furnished to us by God. The contrast is quite sufficient to show that the Church of Rome ascribes to man what man has not, and cannot effect, and takes from God what He claims to Himself, and what His almighty power alone can accomplish.

Much, indeed, is said even by the Council of Trent about the necessity of divine grace, and about the impossibility of men being converted or regenerated if left wholly to their own unaided resources and exertions; and so far the Church of Rome has not incurred the guilt of teaching open and palpable Pelagianism, as many bearing the name of Protestants have done; but, by ascribing more to man than man can effect, and by ascribing less to God in the process than He claims to Himself, she has sanctioned anti-scriptural error in a matter of vast importance, and error of a kind peculiarly fitted to exert an injurious influence. Men are strongly prone to magnify their own powers and capacities, to claim for themselves some influential share in anything that affects their character and their happiness. General declarations of the necessity of divine grace to aid or assist them in the process, will be but feeble

barriers against the pride, and presumption, and self-confidence of the human heart. Men may admit the truth of these declarations; but if they are taught, also, as the Church of Rome teaches, that they have in themselves some natural power or freedom of will, by which they can co-operate with God's grace from the very time when it is first exerted upon them, or, as Moehler expresses it, that "by the mutual interworking of the Holy Spirit and of the creature freely co-operating, justification really commences," they will be very apt to leave the grace of God out of view, and practically to rely upon themselves. Experience abundantly proves, that it is of the last importance that men's views upon all these subjects should be both correct and definite, and that any error or deviation from Scripture is not only wrong in itself, and directly injurious in its influence so far as it reaches, but tends, even beyond its own proper sphere, to introduce indefinite and confused impressions.

Nothing is more common than to hear men admit the necessity of divine grace in the work of regeneration, who make it manifest that they attach no definite practical idea to the admission; and the cause is to be found not so much in this, that they do not in some sense believe what they admit, but that they also hold some defective and erroneous views upon the subject, —some error mingled with the truth regarding it, —which introduces indefiniteness and confusion into all their impressions concerning it. Thus it is that the admission by Papists of the necessity of divine grace in the work of regeneration, so long as they also hold that man has some natural power or freedom to will what is spiritually good, and that, in the exercise of this natural power of free-will, he actively co-operates with God in the production of the whole process, tends only to produce confusion of view, and indefiniteness of impression, in regard to the whole matter. The doctrine of Scripture, on the contrary, is fitted to produce distinct and definite impressions upon this subject, by denying to man any natural ability to will anything spiritually good, and by asserting the necessity of the renovation of the will by the sole operation of God's gracious power before any spiritual activity can be manifested— before any good volitions can

be produced. Here is a clear and definite barrier interposed to men's natural tendency to magnify their own natural powers. If men admit this, their impressions of their own utter helplessness and entire dependence upon divine grace must be much more precise and definite than they can be upon any other theory; while the tendency of the doctrine of the Church of Rome, or of any similar doctrine, which leaves no one part of the process of regeneration to divine grace alone, but represents man as co-operating more or less in the exercise of his natural power of free-will in the whole of the process, is to lead men to rely upon themselves, and to claim to themselves some share in everything that contributes to promote their own happiness and welfare.

We are not, however, considering at present the general, subject of regeneration, conversion, or effectual calling, but only that of free-will in connection with it; and we must proceed to notice very briefly, in conclusion, the freedom ascribed by the Reformers to the will of men after they are regenerated. And here, again, we may take the statement of what was generally taught by the Reformers from our own Confession of Faith, which says, "When God converts a sinner, and translates him into the state of grace, He freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by His grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good." Here, again, is freedom of will ascribed to man in his regenerate state, —that is, an ability to will good as well as to will evil, —whereas, formerly, he had power or freedom only to will evil. In the regeneration of his nature, the reigning power of depravity is subdued, and all the effects which it produced are more or less fully taken away. One of the principal of these effects was the utter bondage or servitude of the will to sin, because of the ungodly and depraved tendency of the whole moral nature to what was displeasing and offensive to God. This ungodly and depraved tendency is now in conversion to a large extent removed, and an opposite tendency is implanted. Thus the will is set free, or emancipated, from the bondage under which it was held. It is no longer subjected to a necessity, arising from the general character and tendency of man's moral nature, to will only what is evil, but is



able also freely to will what is good; and it does freely will what is good, though, from the remaining corruption and depravity of man's nature, it still wills also what is evil. It is not emancipated from the influence of God's decrees fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass; it is not placed beyond the control of His providence, whereby, in the execution of His decrees, He ever rules and governs all His creatures and all their actions. It is not set free from the operation of those general laws which God has impressed upon man's mental constitution for directing the exercise of his faculties and regulating his mental processes; but it is set free from the dominion of sin, exempted from the necessity of willing only what is evil, and made equally able freely to will what is good. It has recovered, to a large extent, the only liberty it ever lost, and is determined and characterized now, as it had been in all the previous stages of man's history, both before and after his fall, by man's general moral character and tendencies, —free to good, —when man had the image of God and original righteousness, but yet mutable, so that it could will evil; in bondage, —when man was the slave of sin, so that it could will only evil, and not good; emancipated, — when man was regenerated, so that it could freely will good as well as evil, though still bearing many traces of its former bondage and of its injurious effects; and, finally, to adopt again the language of our Confession of Faith, in closing the admirable chapter on this subject, to be made " perfectly and immutably free to do good alone in the state of glory only.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that the views held by the Reformers and by the compilers of the standards of our church, with regard to the liberation of the will in regeneration from entire bondage, or servitude from sin, and the power or freedom which thereafter it enjoys and exercises to will good as well as evil, decidedly confirm the statements we formerly made as to the general import and relations of their whole doctrine on the freedom or liberty of the will of man, and the servitude or necessity that might be ascribed to it. But as we have taken the liberty of pointing out the defectiveness of the discussion of this subject by some very eminent

orthodox theologians, as if it were entirely comprehended in the discussion of the question as to the truth or falsehood of the doctrine of philosophical necessity, it may be proper now to observe that there is nothing in our standards inconsistent with the doctrine of philosophical necessity, as it is commonly understood. From the explanations which have been given, it is plain enough, that while, on the one hand, neither the doctrine of the entire servitude or bondage of the will of fallen and unrenewed man to sin because of depravity, nor any other doctrine of Calvinism, necessarily requires the adoption and maintenance of the doctrine of philosophical necessity; so, on the other hand, neither the general liberty which our Confession ascribes to the will of man absolutely and in all circumstances, nor the special liberty which it ascribes to the will of man unfallen and of man regenerated, excludes, or is inconsistent with, that doctrine. Men who believe the whole Calvinistic system of theology, as set forth in the standards of our church, are, I think, fully warranted, in consistency with their theological convictions, to treat what is commonly called philosophical necessity purely as a question in philosophy; and to admit or reject it according to the view they may have formed of the psychological and metaphysical grounds on which it has been advocated and opposed.

## **V. God's Providence, and Mans Sin**

There is one other topic, —and only one, —of those that were subjects of controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome, and that are adverted to in the preliminary part of the decree of the sixth session of the Council of Trent, to which I mean to advert, —namely, what is usually called the cause of sin, and especially the providence of God in its relation to the sinful actions of men. This is the most difficult and perplexing subject that ever has been, or perhaps ever can be, investigated by the mind of man; and it has been the cause or the occasion of I a great deal of very unwarranted and presumptuous speculation. Indeed, it may be said to be the one grand difficulty into which all the leading difficulties involved in our speculations upon

religious subjects may be shown to resolve themselves. The difficulty is a very obvious one, —so obvious, that it must occur to every one who has ever reflected upon the subject. It is, indeed, virtually the question of the origin of moral evil, —the question why moral evil, with all its fearful and permanent consequences, was permitted under the government of a God of infinite power, wisdom, holiness, and goodness; and why it is to continue without end to exert its ruinous influence upon the character and destiny of God's creatures, —an inquiry which, from the very nature of the case, lies plainly beyond the range of men's faculties, and about which we can know nothing certain or satisfactory, except what God Himself may have been pleased to reveal to us regarding it.

The general question, indeed, of the origin and prevalence of moral evil has usually been admitted by men to be beyond the range of the human faculties; but there are other questions of a more limited description, connected with this subject, on which many have thought themselves more at liberty to indulge in speculation, though, in truth, the difficulties that attach to them are as great— and, indeed, the very same— as those which beset the general question. The question which was discussed between the Reformers and the Church of Rome upon this topic, was chiefly this: What is the nature of the agency which God exerts in regard to the sinful actions of His responsible creatures; and, more especially, whether the agency which the Reformers usually ascribed to Him in this matter afforded ground for the allegation that they made Him the author of sin. The general subject of the origin of moral evil was not, to any considerable extent, formally discussed between them. Neither can it be said that the subject of God's predestination, or of His fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass, forms one of the proper subjects of controversy between the Reformers and the Church of Rome; for although Romish writers in the sixteenth century, and ever since, have most commonly opposed the doctrine of the Reformed churches upon this subject, and denied God's fore-ordination of all events, yet the Church of Rome can scarcely be said to be committed on either side of this question. The subject, indeed,

was discussed in the Council of Trent; and it is a curious and interesting fact, that the two sides of this question (for it has only two sides, though many elaborate attempts have been made to establish intermediate positions, or positions that seem to be intermediate) were defended by opposite parties in the council, and that the respective grounds on which the opposite opinions are founded were fully brought forward.

From an unwillingness to go directly in the teeth of Augustine, and from the difference of opinion that subsisted among themselves, the council gave no decision either on the more general question of God's predestination of all events, or on the more specific question of election of men individually to everlasting life, though these subjects occupied a prominent place in the theology of the Reformers, and though an opposite view to that taught by the Reformers has usually been supported by Romish writers. The council anathematized, indeed, in the seventeenth canon of this sixth session, the doctrine that the grace of justification is enjoyed only by those who are predestinated to life, and who finally attain to it; but in this error they had some countenance from Augustine, who generally included regeneration in justification, and who held that some men who were regenerated, though none who were predestinated to life, —for he made a distinction between these two things, which are most clearly and fully identified in Scripture, —might fall away, and finally perish. They taught, also, that believers could not, without a special revelation, attain to a certainty that they belonged to the number of the elect; but this does not necessarily imply any deliverance upon the subject of election itself. Accordingly, we find that it was not so much the decrees of God, as the execution of His decrees in providence, that formed the subject of controversy between the Reformers and the Romanists in the sixteenth century. The Reformers, —from the views they held as to the entire corruption and depravity of man, and his inability of will, in his unregenerate state, to anything spiritually good, —were naturally led to speak of, and discuss, the way and manner in which the sinful actions of men were produced or brought into existence, —in other words, the cause of

sin. This, therefore, —namely, the cause of sin, or the investigation of the source or sources to which the sinful actions of men are to be ascribed, —became an important topic of discussion, as intimately connected with the depravity of human nature, and the natural bondage of the will to sin.

Most of the theological works of that period have a chapter upon this subject, " De causa peccati." Calvin, in the beginning of the second book of his Institutes, after discussing the fall, the depravity of man, and the bondage of his will, has a chapter to explain, "Quomodo operetur Deus in cordibus hominum," before he proceeds to answer the objections adduced against his doctrine, and in defence of free-will. The Romanists eagerly laid hold of the statements of the Reformers upon this subject, —upon the cause of sin, and the agency, direct or indirect, of God in regard to men's sinful actions, —and laboured to extract from them some plausible grounds for the allegation that their doctrine made God the author of sin. The Council of Trent, accordingly, in the canon which immediately succeeds the two on free-will already discussed, anathematizes the doctrine imputed by implication to the Reformers, "that God works (operari) evil actions as well as good ones, not only permissively (non permissive solum), but also properly and per se, so that the treachery of Judas was His proper work no less than the calling of Paul." It is a remarkable fact, that the ground, and the only ground, they had for ascribing this offensive statement about Judas and Paul to the Reformers was, that Melancthon made a statement to that effect in the earliest edition of his Commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans while none of the other Reformers, and least of all Calvin, had ever made any statements of a similar kind. Indeed, Calvin, in his Antidote, Â§ expresses his disapprobation of the statement which Melancthon had made, that the treachery of Judas was the proper work of God as much as the calling of Paul. Independently, however, of such rash and offensive statements as some of those contained in the earlier writings of Melancthon, the Romanists charged the Reformers in general with so representing and describing the agency of God, in regard to the sinful actions of man, as to make Him the

author of sin. And in Romish works, not only of that, but of every subsequent age, this has been one of the leading accusations brought against them.

As early as 1521, the Faculty of the Sorbonne charged Luther with Manichaeism, as Augustine had been charged on the same ground by the Pelagians; and in our own day, Moehler, who belongs to the more candid class of Romish controversialists, —though that is no great praise, and though his candour, after all, is more apparent than real, —gravely assures us that Luther's views approximated to the Gnostice-Manichasan, while Zwingle's resembled the Pantheistic. Bellarmine has urged this charge against the Reformers, —that they make God the author of sin, —at great length, and with great earnestness, having devoted to it the whole of the second of his six books, *de Amissione gratioe et statu peccati*, the first being occupied with an elaborate attempt to establish the proper distinction between mortal and venial sin, —a position of much more importance, both theoretically and practically, in the Popish system than it might at first sight appear to be. The Lutherans, before Bellarmine's time, had abandoned most of the doctrines of their master that afforded any very plausible ground for this charge; and Bellarmine accordingly lets them off, and directs his assault against Zwingle, Calvin, and Beza. Melancthon, indeed, had gone from one extreme to another upon this subject, and, in the later editions of his *Loci Communes*, resolved the cause of sin into the will of man choosing sin spontaneously, which is certainly true so far as it goes, and important in its own place, but which very manifestly does not go to the root of the matter, and leaves the main difficulty wholly untouched. After the death of Melancthon, the Lutherans generally exhibited the most bitter virulence against Calvin and his followers, and usually made common cause with the Papists in representing them as making God the author of sin, as we see in the answers of Calvin and Beza to the furious assaults of Westphalus and Heshusius. It was in order to establish this charge that an eminent Lutheran divine wrote a book which he called "*Calvinus Turcisans*," or Calvin Turkising, —that is, teaching the doctrine of the Turks or Mahometans, —phrases often

occurring in this connection in the theology of the latter part of the sixteenth and the early part of the seventeenth centuries. Bellarmine admits that Zwingle, Calvin, and Beza disclaimed the doctrine that God was the author of sin, and that they maintained that no such inference was deducible from anything they had ever taught; but he professes to show that their doctrines respecting the agency or providence of God, in regard to the sinful actions of men, afford satisfactory grounds for the following startling conclusions: first, that they make God the author of sin; secondly, that they represent God as truly sinning; and, thirdly, that they represent God alone, and not man at all, as the sinner in the sinful actions of men; and then he formally and elaborately proves that God is not a sinner, or the author of sin, and that, consequently, the doctrine of these Reformers upon this subject is false.

The Reformers, of course, regarded these conclusions, which the Papists and Lutherans deduced from their doctrines, as blasphemies, which they abhorred as much as their opponents, and denied that they had ever afforded any good grounds for charging these blasphemies upon them. The substance of their defence against the charge may be embodied in the following propositions: first, that they ascribed to God's providence no other part or agency in respect to the sinful actions of men than the word of God ascribed to it, and that the word of God ascribed to it something more than a mere permission; secondly, that ascribing to God something more than a mere permission with regard to the sinful actions of men, did not necessarily imply that He was the author of sin, or at all involve Him in the guilt of the sinful actions which they performed; and, thirdly, that the difficulties attaching to the exposition of this subject, — difficulties which they did not profess to be able to solve, — afforded no sufficient grounds for refusing to receive what Scripture taught regarding it, or for refusing to embody the substance of scriptural teaching upon the point, in propositions or doctrines that ought to be professed and maintained as a portion of God's revealed truth. Now, it is plain from this statement, that everything depends upon the answer to the question, "What is the substance of what Scripture

teaches upon the subject, —the subject being, not whether God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, though that is intimately connected with it, but what is the nature and extent of His agency in providence, with respect to the sinful actions which men perform; and then, thereafter, whether this which He does in the matter, — that is, which the Scripture appears to ascribe to Him, —can be proved to involve Him in the guilt of their sins, or to exempt them from guilt. Now, the investigation of these questions has given rise to an almost boundless extent of intricate discussion, —an almost endless number of minute and perplexing distinctions. I can only allude to the most obvious and important features of the question, without entering into any detail. It is important to notice, in the first place, that the Reformers all felt and acknowledged the difficulty of embodying, in distinct and explicit propositions, the sum and substance of what seems plainly indicated in Scripture, as to the providence or agency of God in connection with the sinful actions of men. The Scriptures very plainly teach that God is not the author of sin, —that He incurs no guilt, and commits no sin, when His intelligent and responsible creatures violate the law which He has given them. And yet they also seem so plainly to ascribe to Him an agency or efficiency, both in regard to the introduction and continuance of that general system of things, of which the sinful actions of His creatures constitute so prominent a feature, — and likewise in regard to the particular sinful actions which they perform, —that a difficulty must at once be felt by every one who attempts to embody, in distinct propositions, the sum and substance of what the doctrine of Scripture upon this subject is. It has been very common to represent this as the substance of what Scripture teaches upon the point, —namely, that, while God is to be regarded as the author or cause of the good actions of His creatures, He only permits their wicked actions, but is not in any sense the author or the cause of them; permits them, —not, of course, in the sense of not prohibiting them, for every sin is forbidden by Him, and is an act of disobedience to His revealed will, — but in the sense of not preventing them from taking place. It is, of course, true that in this sense God permits—that is, does not prevent—the sinful actions which yet He prohibits,



and as undoubtedly He could prevent them, if He so willed. Even this position of His permitting them presents to us difficulties with respect to the divine procedure, and the principles by which it is regulated, which we are utterly incompetent fully to solve.

But the main question, upon the point we are now considering, is this, Does the position, that God permits the sinful actions of His creatures, exhaust the whole of what the Scripture teaches us as to His agency in connection with them? The Church of Rome maintains that it does, for this is plainly implied in the canon formerly quoted ("permissive solum"); while the Reformers, in general, maintained that it did not, and held that the Scriptures ascribed to God, in regard to the sinful actions of men, something more than a mere permission, or what they were accustomed to call *nuda, otiosa, et inefficax permissio*; and it was, of course, upon this something more, that the charge of making God the author of sin was chiefly based. The Reformers felt the difficulty of embodying this in distinct and definite propositions, and some of them have made rash and incautious statements in attempting it. But they decidedly maintained that a mere permission did not fully bring out the place which the Scripture ascribes to God's agency in relation to the sinful actions of men. They usually admitted, indeed, that permission, if it were understood not negatively, but positively, —not as indicating that God willed nothing and did nothing in the matter, but as implying that He, by a positive act of volition, resolved that He would not interpose to prevent men from doing the sin which they wished to commit, — might be employed ordinarily, in common popular use, as a compendious and correct enough description of what God did in regard to sinful actions, especially as there was no other ready and compendious way of expressing the scriptural doctrine upon the subject, but what was liable to misconstruction, and might be fitted to produce erroneous impressions. But they held the Scripture evidence for something more than permission, even in this positive sense, to be conclusive, even while they felt and acknowledged the difficulty of embodying in distinct and definite statements, what this was. And, accordingly, Calvin, after expressing his concurrence with

the canon of the Council of Trent in rejecting the position that the treachery of Judas was as much the work of God as the calling of Paul, proceeds immediately to say: "Sed permissive tantum agere Deum in malis, cui persuadeant, nisi qui totam Scripturse doctrinam ignorat?" And after referring to some scriptural statements, and giving some quotations from Augustine, he adds: "Nihil enim hic audimus quod non iisdem prope verbis, Scriptura docet. Nam et inclinandi et vertendi, obdurandi, et agendi verba illic exprimuntur." The Reformers, Calvin, in explaining their views upon this subject, were accustomed to say, that the wicked actions of men, —that is, deeds done by them in disobedience to God's prohibition, and justly exposing them to the punishment which God had denounced against all transgressors, —were yet not done "Deo inscio," or "ignorante," without God's knowledge; or "Deo invito," against His will, or without His consent, —that is, without His having, in some sense, willed that they should take place; or "Deo otiose spectante,"— that is, while He looked on simply as an inactive spectator, who took no part, in any sense, in bringing them about. And if it was true negatively, that wicked actions were not performed "Deo inscio, invito, vel otiose spectante" (and to question this, was plainly to deny that infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, are actually exercised at all times in the government of the world, in the, administration of providence), it followed that His agency in regard to them was something more than a mere permission, a mere resolution adopted and acted upon to abstain from interfering to prevent them.

But without enlarging on the explanation of subtleties in which men have often found no end in wandering mazes lost, I would proceed at once to state in what way this very difficult and perplexing subject is explained in our Confession of Faith, in entire - accordance with the doctrine of the Reformers, and in opposition to the "mere permission" of the Council of Trent. It is in this way: "The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in His providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it a most wise and

powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to His own holy ends; yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God; who, being most holy and righteous, neither is nor can be the author or approver of sin." In this statement there is apparent at once the deep conviction of the necessity, in order to bringing out fully the whole substance of what Scripture teaches upon the subject, to ascribe to God something more than a bare permission in regard to men's sinful actions, combined with the felt difficulty of stating, with anything like fulness, and at the same time explicitness, what this something more is; while another observation I have already made, in regard to the course pursued by the Reformers in discussing this subject, is also illustrated by the fact, that, in the next chapter of the Confession, the word "permitted" is used alone as descriptive of what God did in regard to the fall of Adam, from the felt difficulty, apparently, of using any other word without needing to introduce along with it explanations and qualifications, in order to guard against error and misconstruction.

But, perhaps, it may be asked, why maintain anything doctrinally beyond permission, when it seems so difficult practically to explain and develop it with precision and safety? Now, the answer to this question is just, that which was given by Calvin, — namely, that no man can believe in a mere permission, unless he be entirely ignorant of the whole doctrine of Scripture on the subject of the providence or agency of God with respect to the sinful actions of His creatures; and that, therefore, any one who professes to give the sum and substance of what Scripture teaches upon the point, must deny the doctrine of a mere permission, and assert that God, in His providence, does something more, in regard to men's sinful actions, than merely resolving to abstain from interfering to prevent what He has certainly prohibited. The evidence to this effect may be said to pervade the word of God. It is found not only in general statements as to the character and results of the providence which God is constantly exercising over all His creatures and all their actions, and more especially His agency and operations in connection with the

motives and conduct of wicked men, but also in the views unfolded to us there with respect to the connection that subsists in fact between the sinful actions which men perform, and the actual accomplishment of some of God's purposes or designs of justice or of mercy; and perhaps still more directly in statements which explicitly ascribe to God a very direct connection with certain specific wicked actions, as well as to those who performed them. We may select an instance from this last department of scriptural evidence, and illustrate it by an observation or two, merely to indicate the nature of the proof.

It is said, (e The anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah." With respect to the same transaction, it is said in First Book of Chronicles, " Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Now, this numbering of Israel was undoubtedly a sinful action of David's, done by him freely and spontaneously, without any compulsion, in the cherished indulgence of a sinful state of mind or motive. It stood, in this respect, on the same footing as any other sin which David himself, or any other man, ever committed; and it would be quite just to apply to it the Apostle James's description of the generation of sin, " Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust" (or evil desire), "and enticed. Then, when lust" (or evil desire) " hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." And yet this action of David, in which he was doing what God had forbidden, — transgressing God's law, and incurring guilt and the divine displeasure, —is expressly ascribed in Scripture also to God, and to Satan, in terms which, in all fair construction, imply that Satan had some share, exerted some efficiency, in bringing it about, and that God also contributed in some sense, and to some extent, to bring it about, —intending to employ it as a means of executing His just and righteous purpose or design of punishing Israel for their sins. It seems scarcely possible for any man to receive as true the statement of Scripture upon this point, without being constrained to admit that there was, and must have been, a sense in which God willed that David should number the people, and accordingly

did something, or exerted some efficiency, in order to bring about this result. If, then, we would fully bring out the substance of what Scripture teaches us upon this point, we must say that God, Satan, and David, were all in some way or other concerned or combined in the production of this sinful action. We are bound, indeed, to believe, —for so the word of God teaches, — that the sinfulness of the action proceeded only from the creature, that is, from Satan and David, — Satan incurring guilt by what he did in the matter in provoking David to number Israel, but not thereby diminishing in the least David's guilt in yielding to the temptation, —and that God was not the author or approver of what was sinful in the action; but we are also bound to believe, if we submit implicitly, as we ought to do, to the fair impression of what Scripture says, that in regard to the action itself, which was sinful as produced or performed by Satan and David, God did more than merely permit it, or abstain, even in a positive sense, from interfering to prevent it, and that in some sense, and in some manner, He did do something in the way of its being brought about. From the difficulty, indeed, of conceiving and explaining how God could have moved David to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah," while yet the sinfulness of the action was David's only, not God's, we might be tempted to make a violent effort to explain away the statement, were there nothing else in Scripture to lead us to ascribe to God anything more in regard to men's sinful actions than a mere permission. But the inference to which these passages so plainly point is in entire accordance with what Scripture teaches in many places; and, indeed, with all it teaches us generally in regard to God's providence and men's sins.

There are not, indeed, many instances in Scripture in which, with respect to specific acts of sin, we have an explicit ascription of some share in bringing them about to God, to Satan, and to man. But we have other instances of a precisely similar kind, as in the robberies committed upon Job's property, and in that which was at once the most important event that ever took place, and the greatest crime that ever was committed, —the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. In these cases, the agency of God, the agency of Satan, and the agency of

wicked men, are distinctly recognised and asserted; and it is, therefore, our duty to acknowledge, as a general truth, that all these parties were concerned in them, and to beware of excluding the agency of any of them, or perverting its true character, because we cannot fully conceive or explain how these parties could, in conformity with the general representations given us in Scripture of their respective characters and principles of procedure, concur in that arrangement by which the actions were brought about. It is our part to receive each portion of the information which the Scripture gives us concerning the origin of men's sinful actions, and to allow each truth regarding it to exert its own distinct and appropriate influence upon our minds, undisturbed by other truths, kept also in their proper place, and applied according to their true import and real bearing; not allowing the scriptural truth concerning God's agency and Satan's agency, with respect to sinful actions, to diminish in the least our sense of man's responsibility and guilt, and not allowing the conviction which Scripture most fully warrants, —that God's agency is connected in some way with men's sins, —to lead us to doubt, or to fail in realizing, His immaculate holiness and irreconcilable hatred to all sin, —but employing it only to deepen our impressions of His "almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness."

We cannot dwell longer upon the scriptural proof in support of the doctrine of the Reformers and of our Confession of Faith, and in opposition to that of the Council of Trent, upon this subject. As to any further attempts to explain the kind and degree of God's agency in connection with men's sinful actions, and to unfold precisely what it is that He does in contributing, in some way and in some sense, to bring them about, the Reformers usually confined themselves to the expressions which Scripture itself employs, being aware that upon a subject so difficult and mysterious it became them to abstain from merely human speculations, and to take care to assert nothing about God's hidden and unseen agency but what He Himself had clearly warranted. But while they did not, in general, profess directly to explain, except in scriptural language, the way and manner in which

God acted in respect to men's sinful actions, they were sometimes tempted to engage in very intricate discussions upon this subject, in answering the allegation of their opponents, that, by ascribing to God anything more than a mere permission in regard to men's sins, they made Him the author of sin; discussions which too often resulted in some attempt to explain more fully and minutely than Scripture affords us materials for doing, what it was that God really did in connection with men's sinful actions, and what were the principles by which His procedure in this matter was regulated, and might be accounted for.

It would have been much better if the defenders of the truth upon this subject had, after bringing out the meaning and import of Scripture, confined themselves simply to the object of proving, — what was all that, in strict argument, they were under any obligation to establish, —namely, that their opponents had not produced any solid proof, that the doctrine apparently taught in Scripture, concerning God's agency in regard to sinful actions extending to something beyond mere permission, warranted the conclusion that He was thus made the author of sin. It is easy enough to prove, by general considerations drawn from the nature of the subject, —its mysterious and incomprehensible character, its elevation above the reach of our faculties, its intimate connection with right conceptions of the operations of the divine mind, —that this conclusion cannot be established. And with the proof of this, which is all that the conditions of the argument require them to prove, men ought to be satisfied; as this is all that is needful to enable them to fall back again upon the simple belief of what the word of God so plainly teaches as a reality, while it affords us scarcely any materials for explaining or developing it. The objections and cavils of the enemies of truth should be disposed of in some way; but the conduct of the apostle, when he contented himself with disposing of an objection which was in substance and principle the same as this, merely by saying, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?" combines with the unsatisfactory character of many of the

statements of those who have attempted directly to answer such objections in much greater detail, in impressing upon us the necessity of guarding against being led by the objections of adversaries into the minute discussion of matters which he beyond the reach of our faculties, —with respect to which Scripture gives us little or no information, —and in the investigation of which, therefore, we can have no very firm ground to stand upon. Let us believe firmly, —because Scripture and reason concur in assuring us, — that every sinful action is a transgression of God's law, justly involving him that performs it in guilt and liability to punishment; and that its sinfulness proceeds wholly from the creature, and not from God, who cannot be the author or approver of sin; but let us also believe, —because Scripture and reason likewise concur in teaching us this, —that God's providence extends to and comprehends the sins of men, and is concerned in them by something more than a mere permission, and especially in directing and overruling them for accomplishing His own purposes of justice or of mercy; and let us become the less concerned about our inability to explain fully how it is that these doctrines can be shown to harmonize with each other, by remembering, —what is very manifest, —that the one grand difficulty into which all the difficulties attending our speculations upon religious subjects ultimately run up or resolve themselves, and which attaches to every system, except atheism, is just to explain how it is that God and man, in consistency with their respective attributes, capacities, and circumstances, do, in fact, concur, combine or co-operate in producing men's actions, and in determining men's fate.



# **The Principles of the Reformation not the cause of Sects and Heresies**

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There is no more common and favourite allegation of the Papists than that the history of the Reformed Churches in general has fully established the unsound and dangerous character of the principles on which the Reformation was based, and especially of the two great Protestant principles of the right of private judgment, and of the sufficiency, perfection, and exclusive authority of the written Word as the rule of faith, the only available external source from which men's convictions of truth and duty ought to be derived; and there is no doubt, that in skimming over the history of the Reformed Churches, they can easily enough collect materials which enable them to present a picture that seems at first sight to afford some countenance to the allegation. The topic on which chiefly they delight to dwell, when discussing this subject, is of course the number and variety of the different sects that have sprung up among Protestants, the differences and disputes that have arisen among men who all profess to be exercising the same right of private judgment, and to be following the same standard—the written Word. They are fond of stringing together the names of all the different sects that have sprung up among the Reformed Churches, the most obscure and insignificant as well as the most numerous and influential (often swelling the number by misrepresentation and by fabricating sects from the names of particular individuals, who may have held some peculiar opinions, but who had few or no followers in their singularities), and then representing the prevalence of all these sects

as the natural and legitimate result and consequence of the Protestant principles above referred to. This has a plausible appearance to superficial thinkers, and it is not to be wondered at, that it should have a considerable influence on the minds of those who have been trained in the Church of Rome, in prejudicing them against Protestantism, and in preventing anything like a fair and impartial examination of its claims.

It is, however, no difficult matter to perceive and expose the futility of all this, when it is seriously and deliberately propounded as an argument. The case stands thus. The Papists allege that the two great Protestant principles, of the right of private judgment and of the exclusive authority of the written Word, are unsound and dangerous; and the chief proof which they adduce of this position, that on which they most delight to dwell, and that which alone possesses any plausibility, is, that the history of the Reformed Churches shows, that the maintenance and application of these principles lead to injurious consequences, as is evidenced by the multitude of sects which hold opposite opinions upon many points—a state of things of course involving the prevalence of a large amount of error or opposition to God's revealed truth. In dealing with this allegation, it is proper in the first place to direct attention to the real nature and import of the main position, and to the standard by which its truth or falsehood ought to be determined. The main position is, that the Protestant principles of the right of private judgment and of the exclusive authority of the written Word are false; and the evidence adduced in support of this assertion is that the practical tendency and results of them are injurious. Now we object to proceeding so hastily to a consideration of alleged practical tendencies and results, and founding so much upon these, without first examining whether the truth or falsehood of the principles themselves may not be ascertained more directly and immediately, by an investigation of evidence directly and properly applicable to this point. Men are very inadequate to judge fully and certainly of the tendencies of things, and very apt to fall into mistakes in estimating the relations of cause and effect in complicated questions; and therefore it is the right and

safe course, when we are called upon to determine upon the truth or soundness of a principle, to examine, first, the evidence, if there be any, that bears directly upon the question of its truth and soundness, before we venture to involve ourselves in the uncertainties of an examination of all its tendencies and results. The truth and soundness of the principle itself is the main point, and this, when once ascertained, settles the whole question. A false and unsound principle has, of course, an injurious tendency, and will certainly produce injurious results; and its falsehood or unsoundness may often be confirmed and rendered more palpable by a practical exhibition of these. A true and sound principle, on the other hand, can never have any injurious tendency, or be in itself the proper cause or source, though it may be made the occasion, of injurious results; and the injurious results ascribed to it either stand in no relation to it whatever, or else are to be regarded as exhibiting only the abuse or perversion of the principle, and not its natural and legitimate application. If the direct investigation or the truth or falsehood of the principle propounded, on its own proper merits and evidence, be attended with much difficulty, and the fair result, after all, seem to be involved in some uncertainty, then our examination of its alleged tendency and consequences may be more reasonably allowed to have some weight in affecting the conclusion; though in general, and in all ordinary cases, the right and safe course is to begin with examining and making up our minds, if possible, on the direct and appropriate evidence, and then applying the ascertained truth or falsehood of the principle itself for enabling us to thread our way through the often complicated mass of alleged tendencies or results, and especially to distinguish accurately between what are natural and legitimate consequences, and what are merely abuses or perversions. These observations are of universal application. They are, I think, of some practical importance in controversial discussion; and they admit of being very obviously applied to the subject before us.

Let it be considered, in the first place, whether or not the Protestant principles, of the right of private judgment and the exclusive

authority of the written Word, as the rule of faith, are in themselves true and sound, and if their truth and soundness can be clearly established, then let it be maintained upon this basis, as of itself sufficient, that the evils which may have arisen in connection with the application of them, are not to be traced to these principles as their proper sources or causes, but are to be regarded as perversions or misapplications of them, as exhibiting only the abuse of the principles, and not their natural and legitimate application. Now, there need be no hesitation in asserting that the Protestant principles of the right of private judgment and the exclusive authority of the written Word, can be incontrovertibly established, on their own proper evidence, as true and sound, and that nothing can be adduced against them that has any measure even of plausibility, except their alleged tendency and consequences. I do not mean to enter upon anything like a discussion of those topics, but it may be proper to state briefly their true nature and grounds, as this will be sufficient to show something of the conclusive character of the evidence on which their truth and soundness rest, and at the same time, to illustrate the futility of assigning to these principles any proper tendency to produce, or any causal efficacy in producing, the evil consequences which Papists commonly ascribe to them.

The Protestant principle of the right of private judgment does certainly not imply, as Papists commonly represent it, that men have a right to form any opinions they please, or that they are at liberty to gratify their own caprice and mere inclination in adopting their religious profession. There is nothing whatever in the Protestant principle upon this point, which is in the least inconsistent with the maintenance of these great truths, that men are responsible to God for all the opinions they form on religious subjects, that they bear guilt by the adoption of erroneous opinions, that therefore they are bound to conduct all their inquiries into divine things under a deep sense of their being responsible, not only for the application of the right means to reach that truth, but for actually reaching a right result, and that they are bound to employ all suitable means to attain a clear and certain knowledge of the truth, with perfect impartiality,

with unwearied diligence, and unshrinking perseverance. All these positions are true in themselves, and of great practical importance. They are perfectly consistent with the Protestant principle of the right of private judgment, and they have been maintained by all true Protestants, and indeed, by all but infidel or semi-infidel rationalists. It is chiefly by insinuating that the Protestant principle of private judgment involves or produces a denial of these great truths, that Papists contrive to excite a prejudice against it, as if it were something very much akin to, or rather identical with, the infidel notion, that men are not responsible for their opinions, but may adopt any opinions upon religious subjects they please, without guilt and without danger. Now, not only does the Protestant principle afford no countenance to the infidel one, but, on the contrary, there is no ground on which men's responsibility for the soundness of their opinions can be firmly based, or so clearly brought out, as in connection with the Protestant principle of the right of private judgment.

This Protestant principle may be viewed either negatively or positively. Viewed negatively, it is just a denial of the right of any man, or body of men, to dictate to me or to any other man, what we are to believe or to practice in religious matters, so as to impose upon us an obligation to believe and to practice as they have prescribed, and just because they have so prescribed. And surely this denial is abundantly warranted, for it is manifest that such a right to dictate or prescribe can be rationally based only upon the infallibility of the party claiming it, or at least on his ability to answer for us, and to bear us scatheless, at the tribunal of Him to whom we are responsible; and the claims which Papists put forth to such an infallibility and power, on behalf of councils, Popes, and other ecclesiastical authorities, rest upon no foundation whatever, and are scarcely worthy of a serious answer. There is no man or body of men upon earth who can put forth a claim to a right to dictate or prescribe to others, which has any real plausibility to rest upon. All such claims, therefore, may be openly and unhesitatingly denied; and to deny all such claims is just virtually to assert, that each man must

ultimately judge for himself upon his own responsibility—in the diligent and careful use, indeed, of all the available means of forming a right judgment, but certainly without receiving the doctrine of any man or body of men as of itself conclusive in determining what he ought to believe or to do. Now, this negation of all right to dictate or prescribe to others with conclusive authority, is just in substance the Protestant principle of the right of private judgment; and it is not absolutely necessary that any one, in maintaining that principle, should do more in argument than establish this negation.

The principle, however, may be warrantably and safely regarded in a somewhat more positive aspect. If no man or body of men has the right to prescribe to me what I shall believe in religious matters, so that I can righteously and innocently follow his dictation, then the consequence is unavoidable, that I must form my opinion for myself—that I have a right to do so—and am under an obligation to do so—that it is my duty and my privilege to be “fully persuaded in my own mind,” and to receive nothing as true unless and until I am myself satisfied, through some competent and legitimate medium of probation or standard of reference, that it is true. Now, this is all that is involved in the Protestant principle of the right of private judgment; as thus explained, it is clearly and incontrovertibly true; and it stands perfectly clear of all connection, real or apparent, with those infidel or semi-infidel principles with which Papists labour to confound it. It is indeed, only when this right, and the corresponding duty—a right, which viewed in relation to the unfounded claims and pretensions of other men, and a duty, when viewed in relation to men’s allegiance to God and the promotion of their own best interests—are duly recognised and acted upon, that men can have any adequate sense of their responsibility for the formation of right opinions, or will be likely to use due care and diligence in the use of the right means for the attaining of truth; and nothing is more certain, and more fully established by experience, than the tendency of Popery to eradicate from men’s breasts a sense of personal responsibility, and to lead them to devolve this responsibility upon

others, who have never produced any evidence of their ability to discharge it.

The general substance of these observations applies equally to the other great Protestant principle to which I have referred—viz., the exclusive authority of the written Word, as the only standard of faith. The truth and soundness of this principle can also be clearly and conclusively established—so clearly and conclusively, indeed, that no apparent injurious tendency, and no alleged injurious consequences, should in the least shake our convictions on this point. It, too, as well as the former, may be regarded both in a negative and in a positive aspect. Viewed negatively, it is just a denial that there is any other source than the written Word, from which the mind and will of God on matters of religion can be fully and certainly learned. In this aspect, its truth is to be established by examining and disposing of the claims of other pretenders to anything like co-ordinate authority in determining our faith—such as antiquity, tradition, the consent of the Fathers, the authority of the Church, or the decrees of Popes and Councils. This examination is not attended with any great difficulty. The claims of all these pretenders can be disposed of, and disposed of triumphantly, and the practical result is that we are fully warranted in maintaining as a principle conclusively established, that there is no other external source but the written Word, from which we can learn with accuracy and certainty the mind and will of God.

The principle, in the more positive form, is just the assertion of what Protestants have been accustomed to call the sufficiency of the written Word in point of fullness and clearness, and its perfection or completeness as a rule of faith. This may be regarded as a fair deduction from the principle in its negative form, for if the Bible be the written Word of God, and there be no other external source from which we can accurately and certainly learn the mind and will of God, then it follows that the written Word must have been intended to be the only rule and standard of our faith, and must have been fitted by its author of the accomplishment of this object; and these

are positions moreover which we can prove to be asserted by the Bible with regard to itself. The Protestant principle of the exclusive authority of the written Word no more implies, as Papists commonly assert, that men may put any interpretation they please upon the statements of Scripture, than the principle of the right of private judgment implies, that they may adopt generally any opinions they please. All deference to mere inclination or caprice is excluded. The true and real meaning of the statements of Scripture as they stand there is to be ascertained. All means naturally fitted as means to contribute to the attainment of this end, are to be employed under a deep sense of responsibility, with perfect impartiality and with unwearied diligence, and God by the promise of His Spirit has made provision that men, in the due use of these means, shall attain to a correct knowledge of his revealed will, and shall not fall into error, except through their own faults; and it is only when these views are recognised and acted upon, that men can be expected to be duly solicitous about the adoption of all the means, though the use of which they may attain a correct knowledge of the meaning of Scripture, and be animated in their investigation of it by a due sense of their responsibility.

The Protestant principles, then, of the right of private judgment, and of the exclusive authority of the written Word, as the only source from which the mind and will of God can be accurately and certainly learned, are clearly and conclusively established—so clearly and conclusively established upon their own direct and appropriate evidence, that we are fully warranted in refusing to enter into an investigation of their alleged tendency and results, for the purpose of ascertaining from this source whether they are true and sound or not. If the Papists could produce direct evidence of their falsehood and unsoundness that was possessed of plausibility, so as to leave the controversy upon this point doubtful, they might have some fair ground for challenging us to a discussion upon their alleged tendency and consequences. But when the direct evidence of their truth is so satisfactory, and when all that has been adduced on the other side is so weak and frivolous, we are entitled to take our stand upon their



proved truth and soundness, and to maintain as a position necessarily involved in this, that any injurious consequences which have been ascribed to their operations, are not their natural and legitimate results, but arise from the perversion or misapplication of them. But though we are fully entitled, upon the grounds which have been explained, to dispose in this way of the common Popish allegation as to the conclusion deducible from the history of the Reformed Churches, and though it is important that we should ever remember, that in all discussions of this sort, with whomsoever conducted, the primary question is, are the principles themselves true and sound, or are they not?—yet we do not need to shrink from a direct investigation of the tendency and results of the principles under consideration, and we can at least easily show, that nothing can be proved to have resulted from them, which in right reason should lead us to entertain any doubt either of their being true and sound, or of their being safe and salutary; or, in other words, the evils which have been ascribed to their operation, cannot be shown to be their natural and legitimate consequences, but rather can be shown to be traceable to other principles which may have been held by some Protestants along with them, but with which they have no natural or necessary connection. If men calling themselves, or called by others, Protestants, probably upon no other or better ground than merely that they were not Papists, have openly professed, or have acted as if they believed, that it was of little or no importance what opinions they held upon religious subjects, provided they were sincere; or if they have allowed their opinions to be formed merely by the outward circumstances in which they were placed, or the influences to which they were subjected, without being at the pains to ascertain what was the right standard, and to follow it steadily and faithfully; or if they have sought fame and distinction by indulging in paradoxes, or by propounding what they expected to excite the surprise, and perhaps to shock the feelings of others; or if they have in any measure regulated their professed opinions by a regard to personal and selfish objects, or by mere whim and caprice—assuredly in these cases the Protestant principle of the right and duty of private judgment was not responsible for the errors into which they fell.

They were not applying this principle in a right and legitimate way, but were abusing or perverting it under the sway of sinful principles and motives, which they cherished and indulged in place of mortifying and subduing. These sinful motives, these corrupt influences, were the true and real sources of the evils and the errors, and not the true and sound principle which these views led them to misapply and pervert.

In like manner it is very easy to point out, in surveying the history of the Church, mistakes, errors, and sins in the mode in which the Scriptures have been read and applied; and these ought to be regarded as the true sources or causes of the errors into which men have fallen in the interpretation of the Bible, and not the true and sound general principle, that the written Word is the only authentic standard of faith and practice. Independently of those directly sinful motives and influences to which we adverted under the former head, as perverting men in the exercise of the right or the discharge of the duty of private judgment, and which have also operated largely in the perversion of the interpretation of Scripture, it has been very common for men, while professing to be searching into the meaning of the Word of God, to bring their own preconceived notions and fancies to the Scriptures, and to labour to procure for them some countenance from that quarter, instead of really drawing their opinions from Scripture by an impartial and conscientious investigation of the meaning and import of its statements. It has been no uncommon thing for men to engage in the work of interpreting Scripture in a light and frivolous or in a merely controversial, spirit, without any adequate sense of their obligation to investigate carefully its true meaning, and to submit implicitly to its authority. Many have entered upon this work while they had erroneous and defective notions of the principles by which it ought to be conducted, and while they are very scantily furnished with those resources and appliances, which are manifestly useful, if not indispensable, as means to aid and assist in the interpretation of such a book as the Bible is. Many have professed to interpret the Bible without any sense of the necessity of the promised agency of

the Spirit to guide them into all truth, a principle true in itself, and always maintained by the Reformers and by all their genuine followers, as a necessary part of their whole doctrine in regard to the rule of faith; and being involved in ignorance or error upon this important point, they have failed to plead the promise of the Spirit, to realise their dependence upon his agency, and to seek his guidance; and on this account, or from this cause, they have fallen into great and dangerous error.

These things are the true causes, the legitimate and satisfactory explanations, of a large portion of the errors which have been broached by men who professed to be acting upon the Protestant principle of using the Bible as the only standard of faith. They are not involved in that principle, or fairly and naturally deducible from it. They are not exhibitions of its legitimate application; on the contrary, they are abuses and perversions for which the principle itself is in no way responsible. They are to be traced not to the natural and legitimate operation of the principle, but to a failure to follow it out fully and fairly, or to the operation of errors and perverting influences which have no natural or necessary connection with it, but which being *de facto* combined with it in the same persons, have been the real causes of the evils which are unwarrantably ascribed to it.

Even, when we cannot distinctly and specifically trace the errors into which men have fallen in the interpretation of the Bible, to these or to any other abuses or misapplications of the Protestant principle—to these or to any similar errors or perverting influences which have *de facto* accompanied its application, we are still entitled to maintain the general position, that this principle, rightly used and applied, is not the proper cause or source of error in the interpretation of Scripture, inasmuch as we might contend, that in a strict and proper sense the principle is then only rightly used and applied when the true and real meaning of the Scripture is correctly brought out. The principle, viewed in its tendency and practical bearing, and laying out of view its established truth and soundness, cannot be

shown to involve or to bring into operation any source or cause of error, or to exert any influence directly or indirectly in producing it. It simply asserts, that the truth of God is accurately and certainly set forth in the statements of Scripture and nowhere else, and on this ground directs men to go to the Bible, and to labour in the use of all appropriate means to ascertain its meaning, assuring them at the same time, that by the right use of the right means they will attain this end, and will not fail of it except through their own fault. There the principle stops, its influence and application go no further.

These two great questions, what is the only authentic source of the knowledge of divine things; and 2nd, what are the true and correct views of divine things derived from this source are perfectly distinct from each other, and should never be intermingled or confounded together. Men may be agreed in regard to the first, who differ widely in regard to the second. Each of these questions should be answered and disposed of upon its own proper grounds. If a man, who agrees with me upon the first question, differs from me upon the second, that is surely no reason why I should renounce the principle of the exclusive authority of Scripture as the only rule of faith—a principle which we hold in common, but only a reason why I should attempt to convince him, in the use of all legitimate and appropriate means, that he has made a wrong use, or application of the principle, and that from some cause or other he has mistaken the true meaning and import of Scripture statements. It is true that I have no right to dictate or prescribe authoritatively to him what he is to receive as the true and real meaning of Scripture, any more than he has to dictate or prescribe to me; but the want of any such right to dictate is in no way inconsistent with the doctrines, that the Bible is the only standard of faith, that all its statements are true, that these statements have a certain definite meaning, and that that meaning may be ascertained. It may be true, that I cannot lay my hand upon the motives or influences which have led him astray in the interpretation of Scripture, but such motives or influences may have been in operation, though the Searcher of hearts may have reserved the judgment of them to his own tribunal. Experience, indeed, proves

that it is no easy matter to convince men, that the views which they may have formed of the meaning of Scripture are erroneous, and may suggest the apprehension, that controversies and errors upon religious subjects are not likely to be soon brought to an end, without some special enlightening and sanctifying influence from on high; but this only proves, that it was not the plan of God's wisdom so to fashion and form His Word, or so to regulate in other respects the communication of his gifts and benefits, as to secure that all men who have the Bible in their hands, and who profess to be searching into its meaning, should be preserved from all error, and guided into all truth, while it affords no presumption, that he has established any other means, or made any more effectual provision for securing this end, and while it is important to observe that the provisions for effecting this, which the Church of Rome ascribes to the all-wise God, besides being wholly unsanctioned by Him, have in point of fact just as much failed in accomplishing it as the Bible, regarded and treated in the way in which Protestant principle represents it.

The great Protestant principles, then, of the right and duty of private judgment, and of the exclusive authority of the written Word, are undoubtedly true and sound in themselves, liable to no objection that is possessed of plausibility; and therefore they cannot be the direct and proper causes of schisms and heresies. Much error, indeed, has been taught by many who professed to hold and to act upon these principles; but it is easy to show that they are not responsible for the errors which have been ascribed to them, and that the errors are really traceable to the abuse or perversion of them. These considerations should convince us of the utter futility of the common Popish allegation, professedly founded upon a survey of the history of the Reformed Church, viz., that these principles are the true causes or sources of the errors and heresies which have sprung up and still exist; and while they should warn us of the numerous and varied sources of error to which we are exposed in the investigation of divine things, and in the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures, and constrain us to be most diligent and faithful in the use of all the means by which these dangers may be averted, and the

whole truth of God may be secure and held fast, they should just lead us to cleave more closely to the written Word, to take it as the only light unto our feet, to study it under a deeper sense of our responsibility for ascertaining its true meaning, and especially to abound more in prayer, that God would give us His Spirit to preserve us from all error, and to guide us into all truth.

But while it is easy enough to show, as a mere matter of logic or dialectics, that the Popish argument which we have been considering is destitute of all real weight, and that the only fair result of an impartial examination of the whole subject, must be to confirm us in our conviction of the certain truth of the great principles of the Reformation, and to impress us at the same time with a deeper sense of our responsibility for applying them rightly, so as to bring out a true and accurate result, yet it should not be forgotten, that practically, and in point of fact, the schisms and heresies which have sprung up among Protestants have done a great deal to injure the cause of the Reformation, and to strengthen the hold of the Church of Rome on the minds of her votaries. The Romanists are well aware of the practical influence of this consideration, and take care to turn it to good account. One of the most eminent Popish controversialists of the present day—M. Malou, formerly Professor of Theology in Louvain, and now Bishop of Bruges—goes so far as to say, that the reason why the ecclesiastical authorities think it safe to allow the Romanists a much greater indulgence in regard to reading the sacred Scriptures, in Great Britain and the United States than in Popish countries, is, because the contentions and divisions among Protestants more than neutralise any mischief which the reading of the Scriptures might produce, and prove a powerful and permanent preservative against error. (*La Lecture de la Sainte Bible on langue Vulgaire*, par J. B. Malou, Louvain, 1846. Tom. i. p. 69; tom. ii. p. 277.) There may be some bluster and insincerity in this allegation. But the fact that such an allegation was openly made, is well fitted to impress, and to fix our attention upon one great source of Protestant weakness and Popish strength. It is well fitted, not only to remind us of the responsibility connected with the formation of all our opinions

upon religious subjects, but also to constrain us to have it for a great object of desire, and prayer, and effort—first, that all who profess to take God’s Word as their rule and standard should, as far as possible, be of one mind and of one heart; and second, where this cannot in the meantime be accomplished, that the unity of mind and heart—the oneness both in judgment and in affection, which really does exist among all true Protestants, and especially upon the most essential topics bearing upon the answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?” should be openly and consistently proclaimed, should be publicly and palpably exhibited, and should, so far as may be practicable, be embodied in united and strenuous efforts in opposing the great adversary, and in advancing the cause and the kingdom of their one common Lord and Master.

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