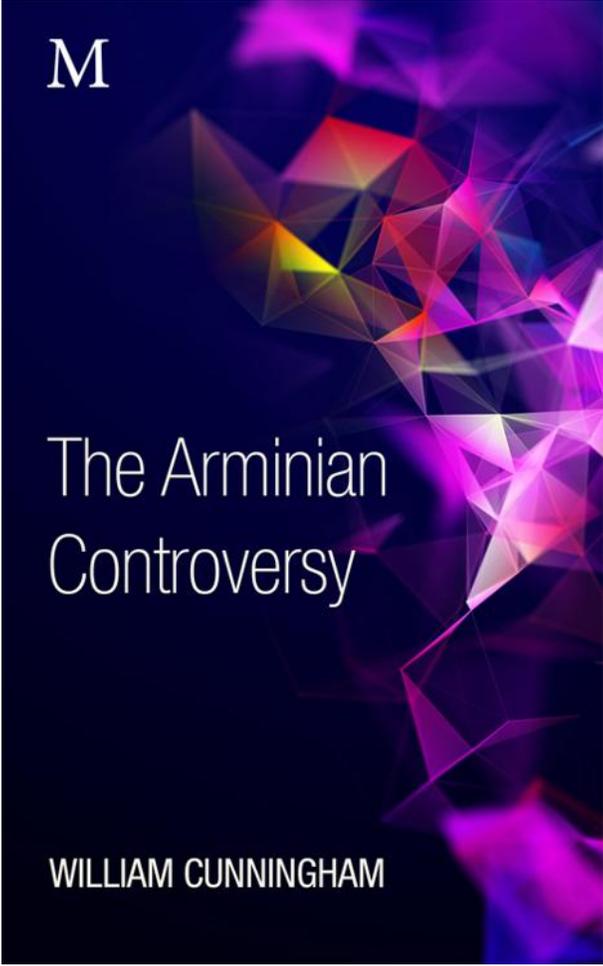


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The Arminian Controversy

WILLIAM CUNNINGHAM



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by William Cunningham

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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 Castellio, 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.¹ 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.² 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."³ 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.*"⁴ 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*.⁵

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.⁶ 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.⁷ 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."⁸ 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.⁹ 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."¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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."¹²

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.¹³

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; nay, 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.¹⁴ 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."¹⁵ 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,¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ 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 Faith²⁰ 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:²³ "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;"²⁴—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,²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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;[27](#) 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 bearing 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."[29](#) 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.³² 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;³³ 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.³⁴ 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;³⁵ 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,³⁶— 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 sentiments³⁷ 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."³⁸

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.³⁹ 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 object 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?"⁴⁰ 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.[41](#)

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*⁴²—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, irrelative, 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 i of his statements, that he did not confine himself to this point, — ? that this w^as 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 varranted, by the whole tenor of Scripture, in maintaining that where God, in His sovereignty, withholds from men the enjoyment)f the means of grace, —an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only way of salvation,—He at the same time, and by the ame means, or ordination, withholds from them the opportunity nd the power of believing and behig saved. These two things re 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 must 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 necessary results,—a limitation which really removes all appearance of unrighteousness in God, and supersedes the necessity of appealing to the incomprehensibility of His

judgments, by as- sserting 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 prin- ciple of the invariable connection, negatively, between the enjoy- ment 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 in- timates 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 themselves, 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 defend 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.⁴⁵ 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*,⁴⁶ 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.⁴⁷

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 develop 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 opponents⁵⁰ 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:⁵¹ " 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 hypothetie et secundum quid."⁵³ 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 steadfast 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](#)

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.; Maastricht, 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. Whately 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.

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