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ON CALVINISM.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HULL,

PERPETUAL CURATE OF ST. GREGORY'S, NORWICH.

Τουτον γαρ άπαση ψυχη φυσικον νομον βοηθον αυτη και συμμαχον επι των πρακτεων ό των όλων δημιουργος ύπεστατο. Δια μεν του νομου την ευθειαν αυτη παραδειξας όδον· δια δε της αυτη δεδωρημενης αυτεξουσιου ελευθεριας την των κρειττωνων αίρεσιν επαινου και αποδοχης αξιαν αποφηνας, γερων τε και μειζωνων επαθλων.—Eusebius.

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TO

THE HONOURABLE AND VERY REVEREND

DR. PELLEW,

DEAN OF NORWICH.

SIR,

WHEN I venture to inscribe to you the following pages, I am fearless of having applied to me Johnson's definition of a dedicator, "one who inscribes his work to a patron with compliment and servility." Adulation, Sir, from any quarter, *you* would resent as an indignity, and the tenor of my own life and writings will secure me from the imputation of *servile* deference to others, with whatever reverence I may contemplate their rank, their talents, or their virtues.

When, Sir, under unusual circumstances, I engaged in the ministry of the Church, the presentation which I received from the Chapter was, on my part, unsolicited and unexpected, and, on yours, a favour done on public principle to one who was personally unknown to you.

In respectfully presenting to your attention this short treatise, I do not prejudge your opinion of its contents, whether favourable or adverse. The responsibility rests exclusively with the writer.

But I cherish the persuasion that it contains no sentiments, and expresses no feelings, which can be justly displeasing to a dignified clergyman, who has firmly professed his attachment to the great principles of the Church in times more dangerous to her interests, and more difficult for her ministers, than any which have heretofore occurred since the great Rebellion.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

your obliged and faithful servant,

WILLIAM HULL.

Eaton next Norwich,
Sept. 1841.

PREFACE.

THAT strenuous attempts are now in progress to propagate Calvinism in its most objectionable forms, by impressing into its service that spirit of earnest, but often misinformed piety which has been awakened within the bosom of the Church, is too notorious to require proof or to admit of refutation.

The following sheets have been written, and are now published, under the solemn conviction, that the danger to be apprehended from the extensive diffusion of this creed, both to religion and the Church, renders it impossible that it should be allowed to pursue its unmolested course, without correspondent efforts, on the part of sound Churchmen, to counteract its baleful influence.

Superstition, which lays undue stress on outward forms, and fanaticism, which gives credit to preternatural impulses, and professes a particular kind of inspiration differing not at all from infallibility, are the Scylla and Charybdis, through which, over stormy waters or serene, we have to make our steady way. Both are equally intolerant, and both are condemned by the genius of Protestantism, the constitution of the Church, and the spirit of the Bible.

It is devoutly to be desired, that none who are more regardful of truth than of party, that none who are alive to the real state of the times, and to the character of the respective interests which may hereafter be brought into unhappy collision, may hesitate, through fear or favour, to act in this crisis with moral courage tempered with holy charity. Let them discountenance all extreme innovations, from whatsoever quarter they may proceed, or by whatsoever distinguished names they may be sanctioned. Let them rise with manly integrity above the mean suggestions of temporizing policy, and look only to the substantial and permanent interests of the Church, which are those of truth and charity, of freedom in alliance with order, of Christianity in its most ennobling form, and of the public welfare of the British Empire.

If the spirit of rigid Calvinism, under any plausible disguise, should be widely diffused through the Anglican Church, we need no prophetic mind to announce, that it will lead to consequences fatal to her peace and liberty, introducing a spiritual despotism whose power will be felt throughout the length and breadth of the land, overawing, as in the days of John Knox, the majesty of princes, and spreading its morbid gloom to the sequestered cottage of the peasant, in the remotest regions and most unfrequented provinces.

History proves, that the men who are deeply imbued with this spirit, merge all other interests in their devoted zeal to its propagation.

Those of that party who, like Mr. Noel, think "our venerable Church" means no more than "our venerable *selves*," will be ready to betray her into the hands of her adversaries, whensoever they may be deemed strong enough to carry her outworks, and to supplant the orthodox clergyman by the Calvinistic minister;—while those who reverence the Apostolical succession, or the general order of the Church, will form within our pale an intolerant party, intriguing for dominion, restless and oppressive, never to be satisfied until they have crushed or excluded all who have dared to profess their rejection of the Calvinistic theology.

In the spirit already exemplified by the Pastoral Aid Society, for the detection of whose sectarian principles we are indebted to the Christian courage of Dr. Molesworth, they will throw obstacles in the way of candidates for ordination or parochial cures, if they come not up to the doctrinal standard of their *triers*: the episcopal functions will be usurped or controlled by the ruthless zeal of an ecclesiastical faction; the Church societies for the extension of Christian knowledge and piety will lose their catholic character, dwindling into ignoble channels for spreading abroad the bigotry of an exclusive school; and gone for ever will be those beautiful charities, and that liberal regard to the just exercise of Christian and clerical freedom, which have been recently elicited, and expressed with deliberate solemnity, in the correspondence of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, with the reverend Canon Wodehouse, on the subject of subscription.

The author of this tract has aimed at conciseness, so far as the nature of the argument would allow, not employing "those arts by which a big book is made." But if the smallness of the work does not seem to accord with the magnitude of the subject, it is not to be inferred that the sentiments have been hastily formed or rashly vindicated. For many years they have been taking deep root in the mind of the writer; nor would he have engaged in the ministry of the Church, but on the conviction, after serious inquiry, that her faith was primitive and not Calvinistic.

He has spared no "plainness of speech," in his exposure of dangerous error, but from principle and feeling he has abstained from the malice of personal vituperation. His warfare is with pernicious opinions, not with those who hold them, many of whom are impressed with the religious persuasion, that what they have believed they have received from divine teaching, and that in upholding their creed they glorify God.

Such divine teaching as the Calvinist claims, and which, if it means any thing, amounts to plenary

inspiration, the writer does not suppose to have superintended his own thoughts while engaged in the composition of these pages. He would deem it unwarrantable presumption to look for such miraculous effusion of the Spirit in the ordinary condition of the Church. But he confidently believes, that, to those who seek it in humble faith, such grace is given as may purify the dispositions of the heart, and thus guard it from all predilection for error and all prejudice against *the truth*. Entertaining these views of the office of the Holy Spirit under the evangelical dispensation, the writer humbly commits this work, not executed without dependence on his preventing grace, to Him who is the eternal source and the faithful patron of truth; uniting in the prayer of this beautiful collect, with all those, who, whatsoever their doctrinal views of religion, seek for truth as the richest of treasures.

“O Lord, from whom all good things do come; grant to us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration, we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.”

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ON CALVINISM.

PART I.

GENERAL REMARKS.

To St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in Africa, belongs the equivocal distinction of having originated in the Christian Church a controversy respecting the Divine decrees, a controversy which dates its origin from the fifth century, and which, after the lapse of thirteen hundred years, exhibits no symptoms of approaching to its

end. In the Roman Communion, it was the source of those bitter animosities, which reciprocally exasperated the Jesuits and Jansenists. The Protestant Churches, in the early days of the Reformation, were disturbed by the agitation of this perplexed and perilous subject. And when Calvin appeared as the vindicator of the Divine sovereignty in predetermining the fates of men, he only introduced to the Churches of the Reformation a doctrine which had been transmitted from earlier times, but which, perhaps, he defined with more precision, expounded with more fearless consistency, and invested with the authority of his own great and illustrious name. In the present discussion the word *Calvinism* is used, not to signify those doctrines of the Church which Calvin held in common with the fathers of the Reformation, but those only which relate to his extreme views of the Divine decrees, to his predestinarian theology, and to his modification of other scripture truths to render them harmonious with his principal tenets.

Whatever therefore may be the merits or the final result of this grave and earnest controversy, it leaves untouched the corruption of human nature, the deity and atonement of Christ, justification by faith, the necessity of Divine influence to renew and purify the heart, and the scriptural doctrine of predestination, according to the fore-knowledge of God. This distinction is important; since, if it be overlooked, the rejectors of Calvinism may be supposed to have also rejected the capital doctrines of the Reformed faith. Fuller has unwarrantably, perhaps undesignedly, given his sanction to this imputation in his "Calvinistic and Socinian Systems compared¹." But the rejectors of *Calvinistic* predestination may be not less remote from Socinianism, and much nearer to genuine Christianity, than the most rigid disciple of that eminent Reformer, who, in the protestant city of Geneva, committed Servetus to the flames. The Socinian controversy relates to doctrines, which are the common faith of the Catholic Church; with the peculiarities of Calvinism it has no concern. And it is worthy of remark, that if one class of doctrinalists more than another symbolizes in any instance with Socinians, the followers of Calvin form that class; since it is not easy to discover where lies the essential difference between the doctrine of *philosophical necessity*, as held by the greater number of Socinians, and that of *predestination*, as maintained by Calvinists.

Both parties rest their dogmas on the same metaphysical grounds. At the same time, as moral reasoners, the palm of superiority must be awarded to Socinians, who reject most consistently the doctrine of human corruption, and the atonement of Christ, together with the correspondent doctrines of the Gospel, as altogether out of place in a scheme which denies the freedom of human actions and reduces all independent agency to that of the Deity alone; while the Calvinist subjects the human race to an inevitable necessity of sinning, denies to them individually, even the semblance of a probationary course—makes them accountable, yet withholds the powers necessary to a moral agent, and then most unrighteously dooms to perdition all but the elect! In rejecting such a theory of religion, we reject not the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; we only vindicate them from objections, which, if unanswerable, are fatal; and we hold to the Gospel with a firmer conviction and a livelier faith, when we behold its accordance with the righteousness of the Divine administration and with the moral constitution of man.

On a subject, which has been so long and so laboriously investigated, and to the illustration of which the most vigorous and profound of human intellects have directed their energies, it would be vain to expect any novelty of argument. On either side, it may be presumed, the question has been exhausted, or, that the human mind has done all that its powers can accomplish, however unsatisfactory or inconclusive, in some respects, the result.

It appears to the writer of these pages, on a calm and summary review of the arguments by which the doctrines of *freedom* and *necessity* have been respectively supported, that those reasonings which are purely *philosophical* or *metaphysical* decidedly preponderate on the side of NECESSITY. The prescience of the Deity cannot, *on any known principle*, be reconciled with the contingency which attaches to the actions or determinations of man, on the hypothesis of freedom². And, moreover, if every event requires a cause, and every volition is guided by motives, what are called the spontaneous acts of the mind must be the necessary result of motives which direct and command its elections. "To say that in our choice we reject the stronger motive, and that we choose a thing merely because we choose it, is sheer nonsense and absurdity. And whoever, with a sound understanding, will fix his mind upon the state of the question, will perceive its impossibility."

But, all correct *moral* reasoning ranges on the side of FREEDOM. In opposition to the subtle or forcible reasonings of the metaphysician, every individual can plead his inward consciousness of voluntary agency. He feels, he knows, that he is free. The exercise of the moral sense, the judgment which the mind pronounces on its own good or evil movements, the conviction of having done or neglected a duty, the calm satisfaction of the virtuous mind, and the fierce or sullen remorse of the criminal, are associated with the insuppressible persuasion of liberty. Destroy this persuasion, and virtue is despoiled of its loveliness, vice of its deformity.

But it cannot be destroyed. It is the voice of nature. The Creator has so formed us, that we cannot throw off from ourselves the sense of responsibility, nor regard our fellow creatures as unfit for praise or blame, for love or hatred. Men treat each other as free agents in all the transactions of human life, and God administers the government of the world, on the principle that mankind are capable of self-control, regulating their conduct by the hope of reward or fear of punishment. If the consciousness of freedom be a delusion, it follows that moral obligation, duty, reward, guilt, punishment, are delusions, and that religion, however salutary in its effects, is nothing better than a magnificent imposture.

Calvinism is an attempt to found the religion of Christ on the doctrine of necessity, and to accommodate its truths, which suppose and require free agency in man, to a dark and appalling fatalism. But in a case like the present, in which metaphysical reasonings, however profound or conclusive, so far as they go, are at variance with practical truth, with consciousness, with the actual state of things, and with the unquestionable procedures of the Divine government, as confirmed by the scriptures, wisdom would seem to dictate our adhesion to that side of the question, which is supported by MORAL arguments.

In taking this part, it does not follow that we are to repudiate, as totally without foundation, the philosophy and the metaphysics of the necessarian—*æquo pretio æstimentur*. We may admit, that the force of his argument, in the present imperfect state of human knowledge, renders the question perplexed and difficult; that it accounts for the divided opinions of the erudite and the devout, and that it precludes the hope of a speedy termination of the controversy. But in assigning to moral reasoning the superior authority, we are governed by a just regard to the nature of the question at issue, which, being related to the destinies of moral agents, and the principles on which the Deity conducts his moral government, must be determined, not by metaphysical, but by moral arguments. When brought to this test, Calvinism appears utterly indefensible, as being a system at variance with the attributes of the Deity, and irreconcilable with the moral constitution of human beings, and with the obligations laid upon them by their Creator. It is falsified by facts.

That the predestinarian theology, which denies the freedom of the will, is supported by names of great consideration, is cheerfully granted. No man, for example, was ever endowed with a genius more commanding, with logical powers more acute, with a faculty more surprising of writing on recondite subjects with force, perspicuity, and nervous eloquence, than President Edwards. Nevertheless, the correctness of his views is not implicitly to be inferred from his transcendent intellect and fervent piety.

All the great errors, which have been propagated in the Christian Church, have found advocates in men of the first character for intellectual power and moral dignity, or they would have passed away with their authors into immediate oblivion.

In estimating the authority of Edwards as a theologian, it is requisite that we should know the temperament and habits of that very remarkable person. It is not, perhaps, generally considered, that great as were the energy and acuteness of his reasoning powers, he was less under the dominion of these than of his imagination and feelings. In early life this is not unfrequently the case with persons of imaginative character; but, commonly, the ardent enthusiasm of youth gives way afterwards to the ascendancy of the higher faculties. Edwards was, constitutionally, too much the creature of dreams and impulses ever to escape from their control. His gigantic mind was held in perpetual bondage. His natural temperament was fostered throughout the whole period which moulds and fixes the character, by his holding little converse with human beings beyond the sphere of a particular religious community in an obscure American town, and by an almost uninterrupted contemplation of nature in her gloomy and awful forms, amid the silence of uncultivated plains, and the solitude of interminable forests. The profound feeling, the intense excitement, which accompanied his early devotional exercises, were such as to insure a permanent attachment to every principle and every impression of that susceptible age. The visions of a warm, and often morbid, imagination continued to be cherished with religious confidence and love for ever afterwards. Every doubt, of what he once had received for truth, was anxiously suppressed in the manhood of his mind as an infernal suggestion; and the acuteness of his reasoning powers, by supplying him at all times with an argument, for what he conceived it *his duty* to believe, served, not to emancipate him from false apprehensions of truth, but to rivet upon him more firmly the chains of ignorance or error. When argument was doubtful, a dogged fanaticism supplied its place. This may be illustrated by a particular instance, and bearing directly on the subject of our present discussion.

It cannot be doubted, by any person qualified to appreciate his writings, that his views of the Divine sovereignty are resolvable into a system of absolute fatalism, so far as the actions and destinies of men are concerned. Reason and conscience revolt from the consequences involved in such a system; all our moral instincts condemn it. But it was instilled into his mind by Calvinistic instructors in the days of his boyhood; his imagination was perpetually haunted by it; and having identified it with the truth of divine revelation, which he held in religious veneration and awe, he finally vanquished every doubt respecting it, not by the deliberate exercise of his judgment, on a calm investigation of evidence, but by the force of his religious feelings, and of

his ascendant imagination. Let him tell his own story.

"From my childhood up," he says, "my mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom He would to eternal life, and rejecting whom He pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and to be everlastingly tormented in hell. It used to appear like a horrible doctrine to me. But I remember the time very well, when I seemed to be convinced and fully satisfied as to this sovereignty of God, and his justice in thus eternally disposing of men, according to his sovereign pleasure. *But never could give any account, how, or by what means I was thus convinced*, not in the least imagining at the time, nor a long time after, that there was any extraordinary influence of God's Spirit in it; but only that now I saw further, and my reason apprehended the justice and reasonableness of it." In this extraordinary passage, the most instructive he ever penned, he confesses, undesignedly but clearly, that his faith in the Calvinistic theology did not rest on those arguments by which he has confirmed so many others in that tremendous creed, but was the result of supposed supernatural illumination. The true solution would be, "Sit pro ratione voluntas!"

Much as we find to admire and revere in this eminent man, the history of his mind forbids us to rely on him with implicit confidence as an expositor of divine truth. His religion was exalted, his genius wonderful, but the subordination of his judgment to his imagination was an immense evil, producing an almost superstitious dread of the operations of his own mighty mind, suppressing its energies, its growth, and its expansion. He presents an example, not less of the weakness than of the majesty of human nature. We cease to wonder, when he describes the happiness of the spirits of the redeemed in heaven, as being derived, in part, from their listening to the groans and lamentations of lost souls in hell. Nor can we doubt, that if he had been born and educated a member of the Church of Rome, he would have lived and died, like Fenelon or Pascal, a splendid ornament of that impure communion, a conscientious advocate of that servile faith.

Calvinism has never had another advocate equally qualified with Edwards to vindicate its awful dogmata; and if, by his own confession, his most potent arguments would have failed to produce conviction in his own mind, without God's special influence, we see reason to suspect the validity of these arguments, until we have proof that he did indeed receive from heaven miraculous illumination. Such *special influence* we may with propriety question, since a claim to inspiration can be supported only by the exercise of miraculous powers. Deny, therefore, the inspiration of this profound writer, of which there is no proof, and we have his own authority against the conclusiveness of his own arguments; since he confesses that by their cogency alone they are insufficient to produce conviction in opposition to our just and natural conceptions of the righteous character of God.

Let us not, therefore, crouch with timid servility to great names. The opinions of men of erudition, and genius, and holy zeal for religion, are to be examined with modest deference, but not to be received with implicit credulity. In the most enlightened and holy men, who, since the decease of the apostles, have served God and his Christ; in the fathers of the ancient Church; in those who headed the Protestant Reformation, and lived as saints, or died as martyrs; in Luther, Calvin, Cranmer, Knox, we discover humiliating proofs of imperfection and fallibility. And, while the fundamental truths of Christianity have been preserved in the Catholic Church, those truths have been mingled or associated with errors so injurious and degrading, that no blind faith is to be rested on any *human authority*. Let us uphold the majesty of divine revelation, and vindicate our right and our duty to interpret the sacred page—not by the traditions of fallible men, not by the metaphysics of the schools, not by the "special influences" which an enthusiastic mind may construe into divine teaching, and which may be pleaded, with equal truth or falsehood, for every form of error; but by a sober reference to those moral perfections of the Deity, and to those essential attributes of human nature, the knowledge of which lies at the foundation of all sound religious belief. These are to be learned from the Scriptures, and are the key to their right interpretation.

Edwards, incomparably the most able advocate of Calvinism, since the days of the reformer himself, is not a solitary example of the way in which a zealous pleader may, unwarily, betray and weaken his own cause.

Mr. Scott, in his "FORCE OF TRUTH," gives an account of his own conversion to Calvinism not very dissimilar to that of Edwards, and not in any degree more honourable to the cause he proposes to defend. The argument of that work may be summed up in few words. Mr. Scott entertained a great dislike of Calvinistic doctrines. He rejected the evidence by which they were supported, as being insufficient to establish a creed which appeared to him most objectionable. Yet, strong as were his prejudices against it, they ultimately gave way, and, *therefore*, Calvinism must be the truth. But, in both instances, the impression designed to be made on the mind of the reader is the same, that is, that the Spirit of God accomplished what the force of argument had failed to do. Mr. Scott, therefore, adds his testimony to that of President Edwards, confessing that Calvinism is not supported by proofs sufficient in themselves to carry conviction to the human mind, without special illumination from above; an illumination, which, assuredly, the *religious opposers* may as righteously claim, as

the religious defenders of Calvinism. For what Christian man does not pray for the guidance of God's good Spirit? The dispassionate reader of "*The Force of Truth*," will naturally say, that the arguments for the Calvinistic creed were either sound or unsound. If the former, then Mr. Scott was either very obtuse or very obstinate to resist so long their power. If the latter, he acted with great weakness in yielding at length to insufficient evidence, on the score of an undefinable impulse. In either case, his name is divested of commanding authority in the view of reasonable men. Yet it can hardly be doubted, that this claim to *special teaching* from the fountain of wisdom and of truth, has done more, incalculably more, to awe the minds of men into submission, and thus to obtain currency for their opinions, than the *joint confession* of these popular writers, to the insufficiency of their own arguments, has availed to render suspected the force of their reasoning. The impression made on the generality of minds would be, that men so good, and so candid in confessing their own obstinacy, could not be mistaken, in believing themselves, at a subsequent period, to be inspired and infallible³.

The advocates of Calvinism differ remarkably from each other in the tone and spirit of their writings, as their habits of thought and feeling are modified by circumstances. The American divines of the school of Edwards have carried out his principles with unflinching consistency, not hesitating to impute to the Deity, in unqualified terms, the eternal decrees which fix the weal or woe of the human race for ever. The cold and heartless manner in which these men treat the subject, and the stoical apathy with which they contemplate the result of their hard metaphysics, are extremely remote from our usual conceptions of piety and humanity. Well might that superlative woman, Mrs. Susanna Wesley, say, "The doctrine of *predestination*, as maintained by rigid Calvinists, is very shocking, and ought utterly to be abhorred." The dark spirit of inflexible wrath which the American Calvinists have imputed to the Deity, together with their coarse caricatures of the Gospel, may account for, but cannot justify, the terms in which Dr. Channing has thought fit to assail *the orthodox faith*, confounding on all occasions scriptural Christianity, as held by the Catholic Church, with the dogmas of an extravagant creed. To understand his eloquent and indignant declamations, we must read the transatlantic expounders of the Calvinistic theology.

In general, the English writers of any name, are more guarded and less unfeeling. They do not at once and directly charge God with being the author of sin. The late Dr. Williams of Rotherham composed a voluminous work on the subject, entitled "*EQUITY and SOVEREIGNTY*," in which he gives, what he considers, a new theory of the origin of moral evil. To redeem the divine character from the imputation of harshness in the decree of reprobation, he supposes mankind under a *necessary tendency to moral defection*, as dependent and created beings; and that it was in mere *equity*, that the wicked were *left*, not decreed, to perdition. The hypothesis of Dr. Williams is already exploded. It was examined and refuted by the Rev. William Parry, of Wymondly, in a piece entitled "Strictures on the Origin of Moral Evil." For reasoning, acute, profound, and perspicuous, both metaphysical and moral, this work has seldom been surpassed. And the devout and courteous spirit in which it is written, presents an example, beautiful and instructive, of dispassionate controversy.

"Upon a review of the argument," Mr. Parry writes, "there appear to be strong reasons for considering the whole of Dr. Williams' hypothesis, to account for the origin of evil, as highly objectionable, and worthy of rejection; because it is founded on a false principle, which identifies physical and moral tendency; is incompatible with the nature and phenomena of mind; involves the existence of an antecedent fate or absolute necessity, which controlled the divine operations; is inconsistent with the natural and moral perfections of God, and the scriptural account of the state in which man was created; is expressed in obscure and inapplicable language; and is so far from agreeing with *equity*, that, when taken together, it represents the Divine Being as having at first, created intelligent and accountable creatures with such powers as would enable them to sin, but with none which would enable them to avoid it."

The theory of Dr. Williams found favour with many Calvinists, because it assumed somewhat of a philosophical aspect, and was put forth as a clear "*demonstration*." But some of its ablest defenders have since abandoned it to that oblivion, from which no efforts can save an elaborate speculation, ungrounded in reason or revelation, and repugnant to common sense.

In England the public mind has been so powerfully and happily influenced by the anti-calvinistic genius of the liturgy, offices, and discipline of the Anglican Church, that the grossness and extravagancy of the American divines have been tolerated chiefly by those who have not fallen under her instructions, or who have not had the advantage of a liberal education and extensive reading. In general, whether within or without the pale of the Church, its more intelligent advocates have, until lately, exhibited it in a modified form, and thrown over it a veil of mystery which has hidden its most appalling deformities from the sight, while by the less skilful or sagacious only, it has been adapted more to the fears or affections of women, than to the understandings of men. Unhappily, the grosser representations of this doctrine are now coming into repute in

quarters where, formerly, they would not have been endured, and thus afford another warning example of the "*facilis descensus Averni.*"

But under all possible modifications, it is essentially erroneous; and this small treatise has originated in no love of discord, or taste for polemic excitement, but in a solemn sense of duty,—the duty of aiding, in some humble measure, the more learned and important labours of others who are "set for the defence of the truth." The writer aims only at a *common sense* view of the subject, showing that Calvinism is a dangerous speculation, useless for every holy and salutary purpose, inapplicable to the hopes and the duties of a religious life, at variance with our knowledge of God, our obligations as Christians, and all our finer sentiments and more generous sympathies as men. So far as its influence is exerted, it contracts the understanding and hardens the heart.

Bishop Tomline's "Refutation of Calvinism," is too well known and justly appreciated to need recommendation from the writer of these papers. Faber "on the Primitive Doctrine of Election," is an important work, composed with logical precision, and founded on a laborious analysis of the Scriptures. The intelligent reader will be instructed and deeply interested by "An Inquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination," by Dr. Copleston, the Bishop of Llandaff.

From the latter work is extracted the following summary of the peculiar and distinctive doctrines of the Calvinistic creed, in which it is exhibited, not in a moderated and qualified form, as it sometimes appears in the writings of individuals, but in its true and undisguised character, as maintained by a grave assembly of predestinarian divines.

CONCLUSIONS OF THE SYNOD OF DOST, AS EXHIBITED BY TILENUS.

ART. 1. OF DIVINE PREDESTINATION.

That God, by an absolute decree, hath elected to salvation a very small number of men, without any regard to their faith or obedience whatsoever; and secluded from saving grace all the rest of mankind, and appointed them by the same decree to eternal damnation, without any regard to their infidelity or impenitency.

ART. 2. OF THE MERIT AND EFFECT OF CHRIST'S DEATH.

That Jesus Christ hath not suffered death for any other, but for those elect only; having neither had any intent nor commandment of his Father to make satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

ART. 3. OF MAN'S WILL IN THE STATE OF NATURE.

That by Adam's fall, his posterity lost their free-will, being put to an unavoidable necessity to do or not to do, whatsoever they do or do not, whether it be good or evil, being thereunto predestinated by the eternal and effectual secret decree of God.

ART. 4. OF THE MANNER OF CONVERSION.

That God, to save his elect from the corrupt mass, doth beget faith in them, by a power equal to that whereby He created the world and raised up the dead; insomuch, that such unto whom He gives that grace, cannot reject it, and the rest, being reprobate, cannot accept it.

ART. 5. OF THE CERTAINTY OF PERSEVERANCE.

That such as have once received that grace by faith, can never fall from it finally or totally, notwithstanding the most enormous sins they can commit.

PART II.

PARTICULAR OBJECTIONS.

THE existence of moral evil is a *fact*, not to be denied by any man who reverences his own understanding; and that it seemed fit to the Divine Wisdom to *permit* its introduction into the world, is equally beyond contradiction, unless we limit the divine power, and suppose that, by a necessity antecedent to the divine will, and controlling the divine conduct, the Deity himself acts, not spontaneously but from coercion. That sin, with its awful consequences, should even exist by *permission*, under the administration of infinite benevolence, has been regarded by theologians as one of the most perplexing mysteries of "the deep things of God."

But Calvinism leads to the direct and inevitable conclusion, not only that God has permitted the fall of angels and of men, but that He is himself the original *author* of their defection, and of the guilt and suffering which have been incurred by disobedience. No subtlety of argument, no special refinements or metaphysical distinctions, no ingenious evasions can rescue from this fatal conclusion the Calvinistic exposition of the divine decrees. If the Creator in the construction of the human mind rendered it naturally, morally, absolutely impossible, that man should maintain his obedience to the divine law under the circumstances in which he was placed—the act of transgression, be it what it may, must be traced to the will and intention of the Deity—the *effect*, SIN, guilt, condemnation, undefinable misery, diffused over the face of the creation, and coextensive with the numberless generations of the family of man—the *cause*, God; that Being who is perfect reason, perfect goodness, light without darkness, love without malevolence; who cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man; with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning! Contrasted with this monstrous compound of impiety and absurdity, which makes infinite goodness the eternal source of infinite misery, there is wisdom in the Manichæan doctrine of two conflicting principles, holding a divided dominion over the universe, and contending, one for the production of the universal degradation and wretchedness, the other, for the purity and bliss of all intellectual and moral beings!

The advocates of scriptural truth have not failed to expose, with holy indignation and eloquent remonstrance, the inconsistency of these views of the divine government with the entire scope and spirit of the evangelic economy of grace. While the love of God to a fallen world is the great theme of the apostolic ministry, and, in language too explicit to be misunderstood, the propitiation of Christ is said to be for the sins "of the *whole* world,"—while, in exact agreement with the consolatory declaration that God "delighteth not in the death of a sinner," the apostles of Christ are commissioned to "preach the gospel to *every creature*,"—we are taught by Calvinism, that the God of truth is only mocking the great mass of his miserable creatures with a semblance of mercy, from whose tenderness they are excluded, and with promises and invitations which He never designed should be accepted by them. A dark and unrelenting fate has already sealed their destiny, and their perdition is rendered inevitable before they have committed those offences for which, as if in derision, they are commanded to repent, in order that they may escape the wrath of the Almighty. Thus, in total disregard of all that is holy and majestic in the character of the Deity, He is described as a Being invested with the most detestable of Satanic attributes, assuming the gentle affections of a father, only to exercise more effectually the wanton power of a tyrant, and treacherously inviting our confidence and our love, when, with such falsehood and cruelty, as the most debased of his creatures would not be able to perpetrate, He is only preparing victims for his inexorable malice.

Let it not be said, in opposition to this, that we are imperfect judges, in any particular case, of the rectitude of the divine procedures; that our ignorance renders our decision in such a case daring and presumptuous. We are *not* ignorant of what is meant either by JUSTICE or MERCY. These moral qualities are essentially the same in nature, whether in created beings or in their Creator. The only difference is in degree. In the Deity they are *infinite*; and, if infinite justice and mercy are compatible with conduct which, on a smaller scale, would expose a human being to eternal infamy, then are we disqualified for all just conceptions of the character of God. If wanton cruelty be consistent with Divine compassion, then may deception be reconciled with inviolable faith, and they, who deem themselves to be happy in the electing love of God, may awake at last to the fearful discovery, that, having indulged in the dream of special grace, they are only reserved for a destiny still more terrible than others, whom they had abandoned as reprobate to the sovereign wrath of God! By what infatuation are men induced to rely on any supposed distinctions in favour of themselves, when they have removed the only grounds of confidence in the righteous administration of the Deity?

It is an impressive feature in the works of rigid predestinarians, that their own minds seem to partake of the fearful gloom with which they depict the divine attributes. They appear awed and terror-stricken with the stern aspect of the great Being whose moral character they have distorted, until they tremble at the creations of their own imagination. They write as men whose minds are rendered morbid with mysterious fears, rather than brightened into holy gladness, by a filial love of God. They seem to be vindicating with servile dread a character, whose wrath they would deprecate, and whose doubtful favour they would propitiate on their own

behalf. Even when they express their persuasion of their own interest in "special grace," it is more in the spirit of men who are conscious of being the favoured objects of capricious tyranny, than of that serene and hopeful and cheering confidence which inspires the devout heart, when it contemplates through a happier medium the beneficent and universal Father. Nor is this unnatural. The moral character of the Deity, as misrepresented by Calvinism, both unsettles all our ideas of rectitude, and renders insecure our hold upon Infinite Goodness.

That the mental disease of Cowper was intensely aggravated by depressing views of the divine character, which he received from Newton and others, and that the consolations which might have soothed his mind, from a scriptural view of the grace of the gospel, were neutralised or destroyed by his supposing himself the victim of an *irreversible decree*, is clear to every impartial reader of his most interesting and most melancholy life. Yet of his piety we have this touching proof, that, amidst the wildest aberrations of his intellect, and while oppressed with the conviction that he was numbered with the reprobate, his persuasion of the rectitude of the divine government never wavered; he acquiesced in the doom which he believed to await him; and declared that if it were the will of God that he should perish, he would not lift a finger to reverse his fate! Who would not lament, that a mind thus tempered to pious confidence, should be taught by a pernicious creed to distrust its own interest in the love of God—a delusion which passed away only in death!

II.—CALVINISM IS NOT TO BE RECONCILED WITH THE MORAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MAN.

Whatever extent we assign to the corruption of human nature, by which its moral powers have been impaired, or the soul disqualified for the due and proper use of those powers, it is plain that men are still capable of acting, and of being treated as the subjects of moral government. Calvinistic writers do themselves admit the turpitude of sin and the loveliness of virtue—that vice entails suffering, and that happiness is the consequence of a religious conformity to the will of God. That is, setting aside all special refinements by which they attempt to disprove that the present state of man is probationary, they confess that *practically* mankind are treated as ACCOUNTABLE BEINGS whose guilt is punished and their goodness rewarded. This broad and unquestionable fact defies controversy. Although we may not be able to give a definition of *freedom* which may satisfy the philosopher, and although we may concede to the opposers of the freedom of the will, that virtue and vice—moral good and moral evil—are to be predicated, not of the cause, whether it be freedom or fate, from whence our volitions spring, but of the good or evil nature of the volitions themselves—in whatever way these questions are decided, or, if we leave them undecided, as being beyond the present grasp of the human intellect, men are unquestionably subjected by the Deity to the laws of a moral economy. They are, sooner or later, rendered happy in exact proportion to their conformity to the commands of God, and miserable if they remain rebellious.

And all we contend for is, that such a state of things can never be explained on the supposition of absolute predestination or inevitable necessity, founded on the irreversible decrees of Heaven. The reason appears on a moment's consideration. The good or evil nature of the volition belongs, on this hypothesis, not to the created being, who is a passive instrument, without actual power—but to the Creator, who is the only real agent, as well as the efficient cause. The instrument by which He accomplishes his purposes may be good or evil, the volitions of that instrument may be characterised by whatever qualities you please, still, a mere instrument is not an object of moral approbation or blame; no responsibility attaches to it, and the condition on which it acts is perfectly incongruous with all the ideas we have of reward or punishment. These are inapplicable to a state of fatalism. The volitions, and the actions they produce, are in reality those of the Deity. To Him they belong, and to Him alone. On this critical and decisive point all the great Calvinistic writers break down. While they award to human beings the treatment due to moral agents, they deny to them the attributes without which they cannot be responsible for their actions.

To beings under moral government, personal agency is essential; but Calvinistic fatalism reduces all agency to that of the Deity alone. The human soul is moved mechanically by impulse from without, and passively yields to an irresistible power.

It supposes the exercise of faculties by which we are made sensible of our relation to the Deity, and our obligation to obey his laws. Hence results the consciousness of rectitude or guilt, and all the noble motives by which we are led to self-government and self-renunciation—from a sense of duty, and with a view to future happiness in the enjoyment of the divine approbation. But Calvinistic necessity destroys the majesty of the human mind, as "an arbiter enthroned in its own dominion, endowed with an initiating power, and forming its determinations for good or for evil by an inherent and indefeasible prerogative." It tells us that we have neither power to act nor freedom to fall—that our sense of liberty is delusive, that we are predestined to sin or

to holiness by a decree of the infinite mind, and that our fate has been sealed from eternity! If we really believe it and act upon it, our moral energies are for ever suppressed, and the consciousness of virtue and of guilt must give way to the humiliating persuasion that we can do nothing, and that we have nothing to do, but to yield to our lot and await our doom, whether to be lost or saved!

The absurdity of such a theory of religion is a light consideration compared with the perilous consequences it must produce, if it were possible that the mass of ignorant and unreflecting creatures, of which society is composed, should really believe it true and act in accordance with their belief. Instructed to regard their present conduct and future allotment, as being already determined, the notion of a state of *trial*, in which they were accountable to God, would be cast off, with all its salutary restraints upon the passions, and all its noble incentives to a virtuous life. Nor would it be possible to enforce the laws of morality by mere temporal sanctions, the fear of exile, the dungeon, or the gibbet, when conscience no longer enforced the dictates of religious faith. The great auxiliary and support of all human authority is to be found in that most noble attribute of human nature—*the sense of duty*, which ceases to operate the moment we lose the consciousness of freedom, believing that our thoughts, our actions, *ourselves*, are but necessary links in an eternal chain of causes and effects.

Such a theory of religion renders it absurd to admonish mankind of their *duty*, whether to obey the law of God, or to believe the Gospel of Christ.

To this reasoning the Calvinist replies: "I acknowledge that men are morally, spiritually dead. But at the command of God I would preach to the dead: at his word the dead shall hear and live." But this reply is irrelevant to the great points of the argument. It remains to be proved, that God would be just in punishing as a crime that spiritual death, of which, on the Calvinistic theory, He is the author;—that it is possible for infinite goodness to subject created beings to an inevitable *necessity* of breaking his laws, and then hand them over to perdition. This is the point which cannot be evaded; and it is fatal to the predestinarian theology. Doubtless God can raise the dead, literally or spiritually; but that does not touch the question.

III.—CALVINISM IS OPPOSED TO THE CONSTITUTION AND THE PURPOSES OF A VISIBLE CHURCH.

By the visible Church is meant the great body of persons who are baptized into the faith of Christ, and openly profess his religion; and the term is used in contradistinction to the invisible Church, which consists of real, sincere, and spiritual disciples of our Lord. These may be said to be invisible, since to search the heart and penetrate its secrets, is the prerogative of God alone. The truly faithful, as distinguished from the mere professors of Christianity, will not be *seen* in their distinct character until the hour when the final judgment shall separate the righteous from the wicked. "*Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.*"

The visible Church, with her apostolic ministry, her worship, her sacraments, and her various provisions for the edification of the body of Christ, is instituted and constructed on the manifest principle that the present is a probationary state, and that those who by her ministrations are brought under the obligations of the Christian covenant, are not thereby absolutely but conditionally sealed to eternal life, which is suspended on their faithful adhesion to Christ, and final perseverance in his holy ways.

In exact accordance with this statement, our Lord describes the kingdom of heaven, or the Christian Church, as a field in which the *wheat* and the *tares* grow up together until the harvest; and as a net cast into the sea and gathering of *all kinds* of fishes, bad and good, which are afterwards to be separated.

Not a syllable occurs in the New Testament, not a single fact transpires in the history of the apostolical Churches, to justify the persuasion, that such only as were decreed to eventual salvation, were received as members of the Christian community. Such an order of fellowship, had it really existed, would have amounted to a pre-judgment of characters, anticipating and superseding the judicial sentence of the last day. In that case, to obtain an entrance into the communion of the Church was virtually to be proclaimed a member, not only of the visible, but also of the invisible society of the redeemed, rendering needless all exhortations to perseverance, and impossible all danger of apostasy. But such an exclusive and select and judicial order of fellowship never did and never can exist under the present dispensation, which is essentially a mixed state, and one of probation, supplying the means of *working out our own salvation*, and of *making our calling and election sure*, but not requiring evidence of our effectual calling and of our certain election to life previous to our introduction to the worship and sacraments of the Church.

From the earliest records we have of the administration of ecclesiastical affairs, as well as from all later history, we may learn that the Catholic Church never aimed at the senseless project of a pure communion, which, by excluding all but the finally elect, should rival in sanctity the fellowship of the saints above.

The *worship* of the Christian Church has always been open, unrestricted, unconfined by classical distinctions, such as those of the elect and the reprobate. The gates of the temple are closed against none who would join in the celebration of its holy rites. God is the Father of all; Christ the Saviour of all; the manifestation of the Spirit was given for the profit of all; the Gospel is to be preached to all. "And the Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that heareth say, Come, and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

The same free and charitable principle has directed the administration of the *sacraments*, a circumstance the more remarkable, since, in the judgment of the most eminent Fathers of the Church, these are the channels by which spiritual grace is actually communicated to all who are rightfully baptized, and religiously partake of the Lord's supper. The formularies of our own branch of Christ's Catholic Church are so clear and definite on this point, that every effort of ingenious casuistry to give them another meaning, or to reconcile their use with the Calvinistic theology, has ended in discomfiture. The *sacraments* are "outward and visible signs of an inward and SPIRITUAL GRACE, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a *means* whereby we receive the same, and a *pledge* to assure us thereof." This *grace* is imparted, not as to the elect and to them exclusively, but as to beings who are free and responsible, who have to account for their use of this sacred and inestimable gift, and who may forfeit its blessings by subsequent guilt and final impenitence. The present state of our knowledge, or rather ignorance of the philosophy of the human mind, may not supply us with a satisfactory answer for those, who, in a cavilling or sceptical spirit, ask, "How can these things be?" But it is the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Church, and it is perplexed with fewer difficulties than will be found to press upon every other hypothesis.

Supposing the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to be founded in truth, the very existence of the visible Church in its present form is a mystery which requires to be solved. No part of its constitution or order harmonises with a scheme based on fatalism, and limiting the grace of Heaven to a narrow section of the human family.

The Sabbath bell, joyously or solemnly, invites all who hear to come to the house of God; and in the name of the "great congregation" the minister of Christ addresses the Deity, saying, "*Our Father which art in heaven!*"

But Calvinism pronounces that God is *not* "the lovely Father of all mankind;" and, that while He has instituted the rites of religious worship, and invites all to mingle in its sacred duties, He regards the greater number as "*cursed children,*" marked out for perdition, "*before the morning stars sang together, or ever the sons of God shouted for joy.*"

The ministers of the Church administer to all adult converts from paganism, Judaism, or Mahometanism, who make a credible profession, and to all infants, whose sureties engage for their Christian education, the rite of baptism, signifying the remission of past sin, original or actual, and pledging the communication of whatever grace is needful to remedy or assist the weakness of nature in the moral warfare with temptation.

But Calvinism not only abjures this indiscriminate bestowment of grace; but denies that even the elect are regenerated in baptism, leaving it to the arbitrary determination of God's decree, at what given period, and under what circumstances, they shall be, instantaneously, and without regard to any foregoing state of mind or habits of life, transformed into the beloved, and loving, and lovely children of God⁴!

In a word, Calvinism supposes and requires an order of administration totally distinct from that which actually exists in the visible Church of God. And, accordingly, various Calvinistic communions, which have separated from the Church since the Reformation, have attempted a literal "*fellowship of saints,*" presuming to discriminate from the mass of nominal Christians those who have experienced the conclusive and saving change of Calvinistic conversion, and admitting such only to the full enjoyment of Church privileges and to the Lord's table. It seems not a little surprising, that not only sagacious individuals but extensive communities should persevere in an attempt which, in the nature of things, can lead only to disappointment; for, the sincerity of that species of conversion which is supposed to be final, of that grace which is said to be irrevocable, can never be decided until the Judge of all has pronounced his verdict. In the meantime, the terms of communion *must* agree in some measure with the actual state of man; and when the matter is quietly examined, it appears that even in Calvinistic communions the terms of membership are reduced to a profession of the received "*faith and order,*" and an assurance, on the part of the initiated, that he believes himself to be a converted person by God's special grace. This is all that is required besides evidence of good moral character; more than this is impracticable. The spirit of Calvinism can never be fully embodied in a system of Ecclesiastical polity corresponding exactly with its own nature, and marked by its own exclusiveness; for who shall discern the elect?

This discovery appears to have been made by an eminent Calvinistic clergyman of the present day, who,

instead of coming to the legitimate conclusion that Calvinism is therefore untenable, as being an impracticable system, has recourse to a delusive theory of ecclesiastical fellowship, which confounds the visible with the invisible Church, or reduces the former to a mere nullity. According to *his* view of the subject, the Church of Christ consists, not of the collective body of persons who may happen to be in fellowship with any particular Christian communities, nor of the aggregate of persons who throughout the world make an outward profession of our holy faith, but of those, and those only, who “maintain the doctrines of grace, and uphold the authority of Christ in the world,” with whatever denomination of Christians they are in external fellowship. These, being the truly regenerate, are to tolerate each other’s differences on minor questions, to love each other as being one in Christ, and to co-operate in every way for the diffusion of their common principles throughout the world. Mr. Noel’s theory confirms the statement made in this section, that Calvinism, which it is presumed he means by “the doctrines of grace,” denies the claim of any *mixed body* of professing Christians, such as the Anglican, or the Lutheran, or the Scottish, or any other church, in its aggregate character, to be a *church*, or a distinct branch of the Catholic Church. That is, Calvinism is opposed to the constitution and the purposes of a visible church. Mr. Noel’s theory is fatal to its existence. For, when it is said of those exclusively, who, in whatever denomination, “maintain the doctrines of grace,”—“*and this one body is THE CHURCH,*”—it is clearly proveable, that these persons have no intelligible grounds on which to rest that high and exclusive pretension; *they are not THE VISIBLE CHURCH.*

These persons may, or may not, be members of the spiritual or *invisible* Church; *that* is known only to the Searcher of the heart. They may or may not be the most holy and sincere individuals in the several churches or denominations with which they hold external communion; *that* also remains to be confirmed or refuted by “the final sentence and unalterable doom.” But they do not constitute what is commonly understood by the visible Church of God. They have no ministry, no worship, no administration of the sacraments, visibly distinct from the mass of persons who are of the same external fellowship with themselves; and the error of assigning to them the distinction of being alone the true Church arises from the ambiguity of the word *Church*, on which changes are rung, producing a confusion of ideas—a double confusion of ideas, “confusion worse confounded.” What is the mental process by which Mr. Noel arrives at this point? *First*, the invisible Church is tacitly put and mistaken for the visible, the truly spiritual for the nominal, it being assumed that we can know the hearts of others. Then, *secondly*, this invisible Church is supposed to become visible, and to be *alone* visible, in the persons of those who maintain the doctrines of grace; while the really external Church, consisting of the entire body of professing Christians throughout the world, vanishes out of sight, and is declared to have no ecclesiastical existence! The truth is, that Calvinism and a visible Church are incongruous ideas, and that no man, of whatever talent he may be possessed, can make them harmonize. The Calvinist believes, and is consistent in his belief, that the elect only are “the Church,” but since it is impossible to discriminate them from others, it is impossible to unite them in an exclusive visible fellowship. And, if it were possible, they would form such a Church as never before existed. Calvinism is irreconcilable with the order which has descended from the apostolic age, by the consent of the Catholic Church, and with any visible constitution.

If Mr. Noel has succeeded in making converts to *his* theory of a visible Church, from the difficulty they find in detecting its fallacies, it only proves, that

“Sheer no-meaning puzzles more than wit.”

The dissenter who, on objecting to a Church rate, said, that “If all Churchmen were like Mr. Noel, neither he nor his brethren would object to join them,” does not seem to have been aware that they were already members of Mr. Noel’s Church. Or, what is more probable, it was designed significantly to hint to that reverend gentleman, that he was no more attached than themselves to the Church of which he is a pastor, and whose ordination vows are upon him,—and that with Churchmen who are prepared so to betray or deny their Church, under an erroneous sense of duty, dissenters may without difficulty form an alliance⁵.

IV.—CALVINISM IS PRODUCTIVE OF POSITIVELY INJURIOUS EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER, AND ON SOCIAL HAPPINESS.

WHEN Lord Chatham taunted the Church with having “a Calvinistic creed, a popish liturgy, and an Arminian clergy,” that illustrious person was the author of a libel on this holy and apostolical institution. Her creed is not Calvinistic, for it says nothing about absolute predestination; her liturgy it not popish, for there is no worship of saints or of the Virgin; her clergy are not Arminian, for their moderation has preserved them, as a body, from all extremes in doctrine, and *that*, as well as their unrivalled erudition and intellectual power, has

been the admiration of the most eminent protestant divines and men of letters in Europe. And to her truly scriptural character, especially her rejection of the Calvinistic theology, with its gloomy, turbulent, and intolerant spirit, may be traced the high tone of moral feeling and practical reverence of religion which have honourably distinguished the people of England. Happily, Calvinism in its palmy days was confined to the Puritanical party, which made comparatively small progress within the pale of the Church; while the most influential of her clergy, and the great majority of her well educated laity, embraced the doctrines of a more generous and scriptural theology. Without falling into Pelagianism, a charge made by Calvinists on all who reject the system improperly called "the doctrines of grace," they held the great evangelic truth that Christ "*died for all,*" and its correspondent views of the benevolence of God, and the moral dignity of human nature, impaired, but not destroyed, by the fall.

The principles of the remonstrants, without being servilely embraced, influenced and modified the religious opinions of the people of England, who were never generally favourable, either to the dogmas or the discipline of the Genevan reformer, and to this circumstance are we largely indebted for the manly and the moral character of our country.

This statement, founded on the history of the Reformation and the times which followed, is not intended as an indiscriminate attack on the moral character of Calvinists. Many of them are to be classed with the holiest of men; not because they are Calvinists, but because their erroneous notions are rendered innoxious, by the prevalence of a sincere piety, and by a secret and practical disbelief of the principles which, in speculation or imagination, they seem to hold.

It would be both unjust and uncharitable to judge any class of persons simply by the creed they subscribe, or to impute to them the consequences which might be supposed to follow from a rigid adherence to its doctrines. There are antagonist principles at work; there is the law written on the heart; there is grace to counteract the tendency of false impressions; there is the love of God and of man to render those who are truly good men superior to any bad principles they have unhappily imbibed. Their Christianity is dominant, and their Calvinism is made harmless.

But evil speculation has a tendency in all minds to lessen or destroy the power of those dictates of conscience which are honourable to us as moral agents; and it will counteract, so far as it goes, the salutary influence of those scriptural truths which still retain their hold upon the judgment or the feelings. In but few instances, comparatively, can Calvinism be altogether harmless; in the ordinary course of things, it is productive of results positively injurious.

In persons of serious religion, it will produce opposite effects, as they may be gentle and timid, or bold and presumptuous. In the former, anxiety, fearful apprehension, deep distress, approaching to despondency, lest the tremendous decree of reprobation should have been recorded against them in the indelible page. In the latter, who can bring a sanguine temperament of mind to the contemplation of the subject, the effect may be, and often is, unbounded confidence, leading to self-complacency and spiritual pride; the very natural result of believing that they are special objects of the love of God, and that their persuasion is a divine impulse, God speaking to the heart. Spiritual pride may assume the aspect of profound humility, and thus impose on its victim by the notion that he is only magnifying the sovereign grace of Heaven in his election to eternal life. But such is the weakness of human nature, that the consciousness of this high distinction needs to be chastened by very lofty views of the moral virtue required by Christianity, and by very humbling conceptions of our own, to prevent a false and dangerous elation of the heart.

And, in how many instances this consciousness is mere delusion, it would seem almost needless to suggest. It is often professed under suspicious circumstances by doubtful characters. Nothing can be more groundless than the persuasion so commonly entertained by persons of this creed, that to be fully convinced of the truth of the doctrine is a sufficient ground of confidence that *they* are therefore of the number of the chosen people. The strongest conviction may be deceptive. The firmest assurance may be the result of ignorant or fanatical presumption. And whatever may be the readiness of this class of persons to say, "My mountain standeth firm—I shall never be moved," it cannot but be feared respecting many of them, that they have yet to learn the very "first principles of the oracles of God." The remarkable absence of humility and charity in these "children of special grace" is alone enough to render their Christianity questionable, exposes the dangerous nature of their delusion, and proves the practical inutility of their scheme; since, after all, without the evidence of a truly evangelical temper and life, no inward assurance would satisfy a reflecting mind; and in the possession of such evidence, no other assurance is needed.

The self-righteousness of the Pharisee is scarcely more to be dreaded than the spiritual pride of the Calvinist, when it has passed from under the control of holy wisdom. It assumes the character of selfishness, bigotry, and the lust of intolerant dominion.

The same spirit of exclusiveness and domination, which pervades in general their ecclesiastical polity,

affects their allegiance to the state. Under cover of abolishing episcopacy, the doctrinal Puritans were the principal authors of that revolution which introduced the Commonwealth after the fall of the monarchy; and their aim was the exclusive *dominion of the saints*, that by political power they might establish their own forms of Church government. Religion was really their object, and they were not hypocritical in professing it; but to accomplish their spiritual projects, they considered themselves entitled to secular dominion; and their tyranny in Church and State was so overbearing, that the nation, after the death of Cromwell, eagerly threw itself into the arms of the Stuarts, almost without a compact, rather than endure the sanctimonious intolerance of Calvinistic patriots and republican saints⁶.

The same leaven is still at work. The doctrinal Puritans of the present day have the same lordly consciousness of a right to dominion. They have declared their resolution to “stagger senates, and smash cabinets” until their points are carried. They have given to the nation a significant announcement of their claims to power, by their politico-religious synod of Manchester. The imperial parliament of these realms is, in future, it seems, to make its fiscal arrangements, and legislate on points of purely political economy, under the dictation of the Calvinistic divines of the nineteenth century⁷. Doubtless, our future Chancellors of the Exchequer will be selected from this body of sacred financiers.

While it produces effects so remote from those of true Christianity in the *religious* professors of Calvinism, on the mass of ignorant, sordid, unreflecting, and worldly-minded persons, who are taught these doctrines, its worst influences are seen to operate; and, as the country was notoriously demoralized at the close of the Cromwellian dictatorship, when Calvinistic divines had enjoyed a long and signal triumph, so is the present age marked by a degeneracy in the public morals, which has kept pace with the progress of opinions of similar character and tendency. The rude multitude is taught that there is no grace but *special* grace, and this produces recklessness and indifference, since no efforts will avail if they are not to be partakers of these, to them, forbidden streams of the river of the water of life. Or, perhaps, this gloomy doctrine produces a sullen suspicion, vague and undefined, of the rectitude of God, and thus alienates still more those hearts which are already adverse to the Divine government.

Of all the mischievous extravagances of opinion, none has produced more fatal consequences, than the notion, that God takes particular delight in selecting the vilest of men for the object of his electing love; and that the gross sinner is better prepared for the grace of Christ, than they who have walked in the paths of virtue.

It is a melancholy but instructive fact, that in Calvinistic families, the puritanical order and discipline which are often highly commendable, have proved insufficient to counteract the malignant effects of the doctrines inculcated on the minds of the young. Instead of being taught that grace is given to all, and that all are responsible for its use, they are instructed that this blessing may perhaps be withholden. And no families have sent forth into the world more affecting examples of worthless and unprincipled young men, who have brought down the grey hairs of their excellent but mistaken parents with sorrow to the grave!

If the unguarded preaching of “the doctrines of grace,” and the scanty instruction given on the great duties of practical religion, have contributed to the demoralized state of the people, let it not be supposed that other causes have been wanting to swell the tide of corruption. From the Revolution, toleration has been gradually enlarged, until all salutary restraints have been swept away, and the glorious liberties of our country have degenerated, by a fatal abuse, into unbridled licentiousness. The press is daily infusing poison into the public mind. What once would have been punished as *profaneness* and *blasphemy*, is no longer noticed by the gentle guardians of the law, and *treason* has almost ceased to be a crime. Liberalism has trampled over law, and the reigning evils have been unhappily aggravated by those whose position in the state ought to have dictated other conduct than that of making anarchical principles the road to dominion.

V.—CALVINISM IS NOT THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE OR OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH.

The general tenor of the Holy Scriptures is so clearly against it, that it is impossible to account for the facts or the doctrines of the Bible on supposition of the truth of the Calvinistic theology: Nor would it be needful to discuss the subject, however briefly, on scriptural grounds, but for a few particular texts which are cited against the current testimony of the word of God. It is said that *one* text, if plain and direct, is evidence enough for the establishment of any doctrine. This may be a sound canon of interpretation, where the one text admits but one meaning, and that meaning is not opposed by conflicting evidence, but not otherwise. In the present instance, there exists, in addition to the opposing stream of Scripture testimony, the following strong presumption against the Calvinistic view of particular texts. Supposing the doctrine of Calvinistic fatalism to be correct, no explanation can be given of the general tenor of Divine revelation, none which *can* be made to

harmonize with that doctrine. The entire history of PROVIDENCE and REDEMPTION, as given in the Bible, proceeds on the principle, not of fate, but of freedom; and if we are not free, we are reduced to the suspicious and unworthy conclusion, that the secret and the revealed will of God are at variance with each other; that we are deceived by a scheme of things designedly arranged to convey false impressions of truth, and that while God treats us now as though we were accountable beings, He fixes our final destinies without any regard whatsoever to our imaginary freedom and pretended responsibility.

On the other hand, taking the general tenor of the sacred volume to be the true representation of the moral economy under which we are placed by the infinite wisdom of God, all the passages which are cited by Calvinists, as being favourable to their cause, may be so explained, and that without violence, as to accord with the current testimony of the Scriptures to the freedom and moral agency of man. A stronger presumptive argument cannot be conceived against the claim of Calvinism to scriptural authority.

Let it be also distinctly observed, that the cause of Calvinism is not served by those passages of Scripture which relate to the election of individuals, or of nations, to certain privileges which do not extend to the absolute enjoyment of eternal life. Of this description is the ninth of the Romans. The subject of that celebrated chapter is not the election of individuals to final salvation, but the election of the Jews to the honor of being the visible Church, and their subsequent rejection through open unbelief. Nor does the allusion contained in it to the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea, yield an argument in favour of Calvinistic reprobation. The fact that the infatuated monarch was hardened in heart by *the leniency* which spared him under so many provocations and insults offered by him to the Almighty God, does not prove, nor was it designed to prove, that he was the fated victim of an eternal decree, whether in regard to his secular or spiritual condition.

Nor can Calvinism plead for itself those texts which are supposed to refer to the election of individuals to final salvation, but which at the same time leave unsettled the important question at issue; whether that election was absolute and irrespective of character, or whether it was founded on the foreknowledge of their faith and obedience. Such for example is the language of St. Paul, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. All such passages leave the controversy undetermined, proving only that the doctrine of election is scriptural, but not fixing the sense in which it is to be taken, whether absolute or conditional.

The terms *election* and *predestination*, with their correlates, are of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, and with various significations, which are to be explained by the particular subjects to which they refer. But the *only* texts which really bear on the Calvinistic controversy, are those which may seem to represent election as sovereign, arbitrary, and totally irrespective of the faith and obedience of the elect; such are few indeed. Let us review *that* which is deemed by the advocates of Calvinism among their most conclusive evidences. "That election," says Edwards, "is not from a foresight of works, as depending on the condition of man's will, is evident by 2 Tim. i. 9. 'Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, *not according to our works*, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.' " Edwards was not more remarkable for acuteness and subtlety as a reasoner, than for his lax and indiscriminate citations of Scripture. He appeals to this text with such confidence, that he deems no analysis to be necessary. The bare citation is enough.

But a brief examination of the passage will make it clear that it yields no support to Calvinism. The Calvinist affirms "that God, by an absolute decree, hath elected to salvation a very small number of men without any regard to their faith and obedience whatsoever." That is, the decree which insures the safety of the elect is not founded on God's foreknowledge of their holiness and of their perseverance in the faith. To show that this doctrine is supported by the passage under our consideration, it must be proved, that when the Apostle says, "not according to *our works*," he means our *Christian* good works, our faith, our repentance, our charity, our evangelic obedience to Christ; of this, there is not the shadow of evidence. On the contrary, the *works* alluded to are those, whether good or bad, which were done in a state of heathen or Jewish depravity, at any rate done before believers exercised faith and repentance, and were called to the privileges of the Christian Church. No other interpretation will hold.

St. Paul states that God "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling." He then proceeds to trace this happy condition to its sources. He begins with a negation. The antecedent cause of our salvation and calling was *not our works*; we were not treated *according to our works*; not after the measure, the proportion, the merit or demerit of our works: these might have brought punishment, but could never have procured for us blessings so great and undeserved. The real cause was *the purpose of God* and *his grace* given in Christ before the world began.

Here, *our works* are put in distinct opposition to the purpose and grace of God.

They could not, therefore, be our Christian works, done in a state of salvation and subsequent to our obeying the holy calling. *These* are the practical results, the *moral effects*, of our holy calling according to the

gracious purpose of God. These could never have been done but for that holy calling. They could not therefore in any sense be the *antecedent cause* of that holy calling. In the order both of nature and of time, both the gracious purpose and the holy calling must have preceded these works. To tell any man of common sense, that they were not the procuring cause of the grace from whence they were themselves derived, was needless.

To one so intelligent as Timothy, such instruction was worse than superfluous. Works could not hold the twofold relation of cause and effect to God's grace. Nor can it be supposed that St. Paul was the author of a solecism so obvious, as that of formally setting in opposition to the *purpose* and the *grace* of God those evangelic works, which were the moral effects of the influence of that grace and of the execution of that purpose. The works alluded to were those which might be done before men were partakers of the Christian salvation, or independently of the dispensation of grace, and according to *such* works no man could be entitled to the blessings of eternal redemption.

This important text lends no support to the Calvinist. It cannot be cited in proof, that the election of God is arbitrary and uninfluenced by his foreknowledge of the faith and obedience of his chosen people, for the works here intended are *not Christian good works* done in faith. Edwards did wisely in not analyzing this text.

The same principle of interpretation is applicable to Titus iii. 5. "*Not by works of righteousness* which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." These *works* are not those of the truly regenerate, which being the *effects* of the grace of Christ, cannot be mistaken for the meritorious cause of the communication of that grace. It is rather to be taken as a broad assertion, that the blessings of the Christian covenant, are not the result or the reward of human deserts; that apart from the redemption of Christ, there are *no* works of righteousness by which we can be saved; and that while Christians are made really holy and good, their sanctification is to be traced to the grace of God in Christ Jesus. In neither passage is there any statement on which to rest an argument for the arbitrary and unconditional decree of the Calvinist, nor for depreciating the intrinsic value of those really good works which the Christian performs in faith. Calvinism has no foundation in the word of God. It is in direct collision with that sacred authority. St. Paul rests the divine election on the FOREKNOWLEDGE of the Deity, and let his decision be final. "Whom he did *foreknow*, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son."

The seventeenth Article of the Church accords with the Scriptures, and its doctrinal statements are made almost entirely in the language of the sacred writers, and of those eminent divines of the Reformation who abjured Calvinism and adhered to the Bible. It is drawn up with great moderation, says nothing of absolute decrees and unconditional election, and it treats the subject practically. The concluding paragraph relating to "curious and carnal persons" shows that the venerable compilers of the Article rejected extreme views of this doctrine, since these only could lead to "a most dangerous downfall." But if the article itself be at all equivocal, it must be interpreted by the formularies of the Church and by the Scriptures, since no dogma is to be imputed to this holy branch of Christ's Catholic Church, that is at variance with the attributes of God, the moral constitution of man, the testimony of the Bible, and the obligations of practical religion.

If Calvinism be the doctrine of our Church, then are the *Catechism*, and the Order for the Ministration of *Baptism*, the most absurd and delusive compositions by which the minds of men were ever led astray.

VI.—CALVINISM HAS LED TO THE CORRUPTION OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, THAT THE SCRIPTURES MAY BE ACCOMMODATED TO EXTREME VIEWS OF THE DIVINE DECREES.

It was not in the nature of things, that Calvinistic predestination should be received as truth, without producing such a modification of the entire system of divine revelation, as would impress on it a new and completely different character. Christianity, in its unadulterated simplicity, is distinguished by the consolatory views it imparts of the benignity and grace of God, and by the direct and cogent motives it suggests for holiness and righteousness of life. But the first article of the Calvinistic creed throws a veil of awful and suspicious mystery over the divine goodness, and represents it "as the sun shorn of his beams." Having determined that God is not the universal Father, nor "the Saviour of all men," but the projector of a scheme which predetermines the ruin of the great mass of his creatures, Calvinism models to its own purpose all those doctrines of Christianity which are in beautiful accordance with the truth that "GOD IS LOVE." It denies that the atonement of Christ was intended to make satisfaction for "the sins of the *whole* world." It announces that the non-elect are laid under an irresistible necessity of sinning to destruction, and that no spiritual grace is imparted to rescue them from the dominion of native, incurable, uncontrolled depravity.

The gracious invitations and promises of the Gospel are reduced to unmeaning terms, so far as the many

are concerned. And while Calvinism is denominated by its admirers "the doctrines of grace," it obliterates from the Scriptures every trace of sincere mercy, and robs the diadem of heaven of its purest and brightest gem. *Calvinism* and *grace* are heterogeneous terms, representing discordant ideas.

The motives to a holy life, governed by piety and adorned with virtue, must be impaired by the views here given of the Deity. No human mind can be habituated to the contemplation of the divine conduct, as it is seen distorted by the predestinarian theology, and retain its just sentiments of what is right, what is just, what is honourable, what is lovely in goodness. The man who imitates the God of the Calvinist, that phantasm of a morbid or dreaming imagination, cannot fail to have his moral sentiments corrupted, and to become deceptive, shuffling, treacherous, and eventually insensible to the misery of others.

The Calvinistic doctrines of *regeneration* and *perseverance* are not calculated to rectify these evils. These are made to harmonize with the fatalism which bears all men along with irresistible energy, the reprobate to perdition, the redeemed to blessedness. The new birth is described as a sudden transformation of our spiritual nature, effected by sovereign grace, unconnected with the preceding states of the mind, whether good or evil, and attended with the communication of spiritual life which can never afterwards be forfeited or lost. No sins, however enormous, can endanger the elect, although they may for a time cloud their evidences. The effects produced by this doctrine on the mind of that individual who believes himself to be thus specially distinguished, must be of a very dangerous kind, unless counteracted as it frequently is by other principles, or restrained by the genuine spirit of Christianity operating with antagonist energy.

It is this *necessary* corruption of the great truths of the Gospel that renders Calvinism an object of distrust and alarm. If it was a mere speculation, which was intended, in the calm spirit of Christian philosophy, to solve a problem in theology or morals, leaving untouched the essential character of revealed religion, it might pass without rebuke. But it weakens the moral sense, and it leads to the subversion of all that is consolatory in our prospects of the final destinies of the human race, leaving us no security for the salvation even of the supposed elect; for what hope can repose with confidence on the supreme Arbiter of events, when He is believed to be the author of a religion which represents Him as acting without any intelligible moral motive, destroying the majority of the human race for offences not their own, and saving the remnant without regard to their Christian virtues!

It is remarkable that, while in modern times many disavow their belief in those views of the *divine decrees* which form the basis of the Calvinistic creed, and which have occasioned this corruption of Christian truth, they still hold to these corruptions, and write and preach on the implied principle that the grace of God is limited by decree to those whom they specially designate his children. They have been driven from the foundation, and still they cleave to the superstructure. They assume the designation of *moderate* Calvinists, not perceiving that the doctrines of particular redemption, and special grace, and exclusive assumption of a filial relation to God, are untenable when absolute predestination is exploded. Calvinism, after all, is their creed, since the system to which they adhere cannot rest on any other foundation.

It is to be inferred, therefore, that for persons of a certain temperament this doctrine has charms so powerful as to negative the calm dictates of the judgment, and practically to render the mind insensible to the force of truth.

And what are its recommendations to those who embrace it?

1. Calvinism is both exciting and sedative, exciting to the imagination, and sedative to the conscience. Thus it is accommodated to two of the leading principles of human nature, the love of the awful, the terrific, the deeply tragic, and the natural anxiety which all men feel, to be rid of the consciousness of guilt and of personal danger. Nothing can exceed the tremendous scenes opened to the imagination by that system of theology, which dooms to perdition the great mass of human beings, who are permitted by their Creator to sport or suffer upon earth through a few rapid revolutions of time, and are then swept away for ever into an abyss of ruin; while, with confounding and dreadful mystery, the Author of their being is represented as the great agent in this work of appalling desolation. To redeem his character for mercy, He rescues an elect few, but leaves the devoted multitude without pity and without hope, to everlasting torment. Whether we contemplate this fearful character of the Deity, or endeavour to realize the scenes which await the departure of lost souls, or attempt in imagination to identify ourselves with the happy spirits of the redeemed, who have escaped, *they know not why*, the general destruction of all that is dear to man, we must be sensible that all the ordinary conceptions of the human mind are comparatively powerless for pity, or terror, or intense expectation of what is to come.

At the same time its tendency, excepting in the case of a few sensitive and tender spirits, is to deaden the consciousness of guilt, to still the remonstrances of the self-convicted mind, and to enable men of no religion and of no morals to hear these doctrines proclaimed from the pulpit without any salutary disquietude of heart. They do not really believe them, or they find in them an apology for their corruption. It has sometimes been

said, by way of severe reflection, of a moral sermon, that it could not be the Gospel, for that a Socinian might have heard it without offence. The objection is very absurd; but what then ought to be the inference drawn by the same persons, respecting the character of doctrines which, although in speculation they are fearful and appalling to the utmost, tend in reality to stupify the moral sense, and can be listened to by the profane and the profligate with complacency or apathy? While it explains their popularity, it is a presumption against their truth.

2. This doctrine has the recommendation of freeing those who hold it from anxiety about the practical part of religion, by substituting a system of belief *purely speculative*. When examined in all its bearings, it may be seen to consist of faith and assurance: faith in the divine decrees; assurance of being numbered with the elect. Get clear views of the divine sovereignty, believe that Christ died for *you* in particular, construe the persuasion of your safety into an especial witness of the Holy Spirit; doubt nothing, fear nothing; look entirely out of yourselves; and remember that there is a finished salvation for the elect; and all is well! This is Calvinism. And this is speculation. If repentance, self-government, virtue, and the duties of Christian piety and obedience are inculcated, these must be enforced on grounds not supplied by the predestinarian theology, and irreconcilable with that scheme of doctrine. Doubtless, the best writers of this school insist on holiness of temper, and sanctity of life, and enforce these by motives derived from the moral perfections of God, the turpitude of sin, and the necessity of a renewed heart as being essential to religion here and happiness hereafter. But all these considerations are totally independent of the speculations of the fatalist, and are rendered powerless as incentives to action exactly in proportion to the practical influence of these speculations on the mind and the heart.

Let the professor of Christianity give up his thoughts to eternal decrees, and special grace, and the soothing dream of irrevocable promises sealed to the heart by the clear witness of the Spirit, and the moral conflict with sin and temptation will languish with the salutary fear of danger. This is suited to the depraved indolence of man. All false systems of religion have in view the indulgence of this perilous but seductive peace. Any thing is acceptable to corrupt human nature that supplies a substitute for the duties of moral righteousness and a sublime virtue, lulling the conscience into a state of artificial repose. And to produce this effect, no scheme of religious belief, that ever emanated from the perverse ingenuity of the human mind, was ever so perfectly contrived as the Calvinistic notion of predestinating grace.

3. Of the multitudes of truly religious persons, who embrace this doctrine or give their passive assent to it, but few are competent to detect its fallacies, or to trace its evil consequences.

They are to be found chiefly among the lower ranks of life, or the uneducated portions of the middle and the higher classes. If there are any whose minds have been disciplined by sound instruction, and expanded by liberal acquirements, they are, for the most part, the children of Calvinistic families, who, having been taught to reverence these opinions in their childhood, have not had energy of mind to rise above their early impressions. That multitudes of persons piously disposed, but without the requisite knowledge, or intellectual culture, should be influenced by the arguments of men skilful in dialectics, and zealous to make proselytes, cannot be deemed matter of wonderment. Especially let it be noticed, that these teachers and preachers know well how to appeal to ignorant timidity and to sincere but unguarded piety.

They are told, that to reject these doctrines shows "a heart secretly disaffected to the government of God," and daring to oppose presumption and ignorance to the wisdom of the Eternal. As if it were not the fact, that Calvinism has been viewed with abhorrence by men of the humblest and the purest piety, by men of seraphic minds and of the sublimest intellect.

They are also instructed to believe, that the grace of the Redeemer is magnified by degrading human nature to the utmost, and making the redeemed passive recipients of predestinated and exclusive grace. But they do not perceive that Calvinism destroys all ideas of *grace*, by making God the author of the misery which He affects to pity, and by tracing the divine conduct to mere motiveless caprice, to blind and arbitrary choice or rejection.

These distinctions are lost upon the superficial minds of the multitude. And when they are told that Calvinism honours the sovereignty of God, and exalts the grace of Christ, their religious and holy feelings are enlisted in a cause which little deserves these high and evangelic eulogies. While the love of God in Christ, to themselves in particular, is made the prevailing topic, the gloomy and suspicious parts of the system are kept in the back ground, or positively denied.

If there be truth in the preceding remarks, the degree of popularity which attaches to this view of religion, far from yielding a presumptive argument in its favour, is, at least, a reason for regarding it with suspicion. It has not the recommendation of being the faith of the most numerous portion of the wise, of the holy, of the virtuous. It appeals to the weaknesses rather than to the nobler principles of human nature. It can never be

the sincere and cherished belief of an enlightened, community.

The advocates of this creed appear to be aware of this, and therefore supply their want of conclusive argument by fulminations intended to effect by fear, what more honourable means could not accomplish.

They not only contend for the truth of their doctrine, they make the belief of it essential to salvation. None are elect who do not receive their views of election. All others are reprobate. "Shall I tell you," says one of their most eminent men, "some of the ends that may be answered by preaching this doctrine? One important end is, to detect hearts which are unwilling that God should reign; to lay open those smooth, selfish spirits, which, while they cry Hosannah, are hostile to the dominion of Jehovah. The more fully God and the system of his government are brought out to view, the more clearly are the secrets of all hearts revealed." Men, who fancy themselves impelled by a "special influence" to receive this creed, may consistently pronounce judgment on those who reject it. The absurdity in one case, is not greater than in the other. But their attempts at intimidation will have no other effect with persons of dispassionate reflection, than to render more repulsive those errors which foster insolent conceit in vulgar minds, and encourage those who appear to have but a superficial knowledge of themselves to pass sentence of condemnation on the hearts of others.

Formally to disclaim a charge so gross and misapplied as that of "hostility to the dominion of Jehovah," would be to treat it with more respect than it deserves. But it may not be improper to remark, that the charge proceeds with the worst possible grace from the vindicators of a creed which obliterates from the divine government every trace of wisdom, of rectitude, of goodness, and so represents the Ruler of the world, as to make Him an object of detestation and terror to his creatures. Other sentiments must inspire the heart before we can reverence the divine administration, and unite in "the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty: *just* and *true* are thy ways, Thou king of saints."

APPENDIX.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS ON MR. NOEL'S TRACT ON "THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH."

THE writer of these pages has no personal knowledge of the author of the tract, of whom he has only heard by report, that he is a zealous minister and popular preacher. His writings indicate natural suavity of temper. Having therefore no feeling of personal disrespect, he deems no apology to be necessary for the freedom of his strictures on a work which challenges attention and defies contradiction.

Mr. Noel has openly and dogmatically set forth a theory of the visible Church and her fellowship, not only hostile to the Church of England and fraught with absurdity, but propounded under the alluring guise of Christian charity; a charity which has won for him the applause of the professors of modern *liberalism*, because, on a cursory glance, it appears to embrace all sects and denominations of Christians. It is proper, therefore, to set the matter in a true light, by showing that this liberality of sentiment is more specious than real; that Mr. Noel is throwing out false colours, and that while, in no measured terms, he condemns the supposed want of brotherly-kindness in the members of the Church of England, his own apparent liberality is resolvable into nothing else than *Calvinistic exclusiveness and intolerance*.

Liberality is the order, the fashion, the idol of the day. In many it takes the form of infidel indifference, regarding as equally true, or equally false, every creed that is called Christian.

The charity of our holy and Apostolical Church is not thus lax and indiscriminate. It rests not upon scepticism, but upon sound and definable principles. It does not proceed on the assumption that all creeds are equally good, but that men of all creeds have a political right to follow the dictates of conscience, whether enlightened or erroneous, in matters purely spiritual, and that they are responsible only to God for their religious faith and worship; indulging, at the same time, a charitable persuasion of the sincerity and Christian goodness of multitudes who are believed to be labouring under mistaken views of truth. This is true *Christian* charity, which tolerates error, hopes well of misinformed but sincere piety, breathes no malignant feelings, indulges in no haughtiness of conscious superiority; but, after all, holds firmly to its own persuasion of what is true and right, without the smallest approach to a

compromise of principles even with honest and well-meaning error. This is the charity of the sound English churchman, and this charity lies at the foundation of the religious liberties of the British empire.

As churchmen we contemplate with reverence, our protestant, episcopal, and apostolical communion. We believe that it rests on "the foundation of Apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself the chief corner-stone." And we contend for the right of the Church to demand from her own ministers faith in her doctrines, and to model her own worship, and adjust her own ceremonies according to her own holy discretion. But we compel no man to come in. We love and cherish the chartered and constitutional liberties of our country; and while we sympathize not with the errors which are tolerated, we rejoice in the freedom, the just and evangelic freedom, which leaves every man, without control or interference, to settle all points of *religious* duty with his conscience and his God. We do not feel bound to attempt what would be impracticable, to construct a church which should suit the caprices of all, and whose flexible creed, like the vane which surmounts the steeple, should shift with "*every wind of doctrine*;" but we allow the discontented to depart without molestation, and we honour their conscientious scruples, while we regret and condemn their errors.

With charity so large yet discriminating, founded on principles which approve themselves to the judgment and the heart, we solemnly protest against every charge of intolerance and bigotry that is brought, by friend or foe, against our National Church.

But this does not satisfy Mr. Noel, who proposes, what appears at first sight, a charity still more generous and comprehensive. The Anti-pædobaptist and the Presbyterian, with all their germane varieties, are not only to be treated with forbearance and regarded with charity, but are all to form one fellowship, united and co-operating in the great cause of their common Christianity. Take the following passage. "*And these*" *Baptism* and *Church government*, "are two of the most important points which separate Christians. Should they separate them? As well might the brothers of a family be separated by the most trifling difference on some question of taste or literature. Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Pædobaptists, with all others, who differ on obscure and undecided points, ought, if they have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, and one hope, under the influence of one Spirit, who sanctifies them all, to be one in profession, in action, and in heart." This passage, which is in the spirit of the entire tract, is open to grave animadversion.

1. The points mentioned as being "most trifling differences," are regarded by all theologians of any reputation as questions of great moment, although not equally so with those which immediately touch our salvation. Mr. Noel is altogether original in regarding either the construction that is to be put on the sacrament of baptism, or the degree of importance to be attached to the episcopal office, as matters "most trifling."

2. The Baptists and Presbyterians, who look on these points with other feelings than those of Mr. Noel, have considered them of sufficient moment to justify their separation from the communion of our Church. That separation is *their own* "act and deed." And to charge the Church, on this account, with bigotry, intolerance, and want of charity, proves either consummate ignorance of ecclesiastical history, or deliberate injustice to serve a party. Nevertheless, the entire argument of the tract, proceeds on the assumption that the Church is the guilty and impenitent party.

3. Under these circumstances, it is impossible that there should be but "one profession," unless one of the differing parties can deny its own faith, and profess what it does not believe. The Catholic Church of England cannot, and will not, be guilty of that turpitude. The members of *Mr. Noel's Church* have declared, by their voluntary separation, their determination to profess their own principles.

4. That which is most reprehensible in this charitable project of hailing all sects as brethren is, that it is, after all, deceptive and hollow. Mr. Noel does not intend a promiscuous fellowship with various denominations. His charity is extended to those, and to those exclusively, who, within these several communions, hold "the doctrines of grace." All others he denounces as not being children of God. That is, his union includes all those who think with himself; Calvinists of every persuasion, and not a soul besides! These are his "one body," and this one body is "THE CHURCH." How beautiful, how noble, how godlike is the charity of the Church of England, which exists in unison with the love of truth, but embraces with Christian affection even those who have quitted her fellowship, contrasted with the drivelling and sectarian partialities of the Calvinist who pronounces every man who differs from himself to be no child of God! The charity of Mr. Noel resolves itself into Calvinistic exclusiveness and intolerance.

If in these remarks there is any apparent severity, they are not to be applied to the author, but to the principles of his work. Calvinism obscures the finest intellect, and gives a false direction to the most humane and generous feelings which can impart graceful dignity to the Christian character.

THE END.

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Footnotes

¹ Dr. Griffin in his "Lectures on Important Doctrines," broadly charges the rejectors of Calvinism with embracing *another Gospel*, and with being on the high road to infidelity. "And when they have gone this length," he says, "in frittering away man's dependence on grace, they are just prepared to place him completely on his own works, to deny justification by faith, and of course, the proper influence of the atonement; short of this these systems never stop: and when they have gone thus far, there is but one step to a denial of the divinity of Christ and the infinite demerit of sin. The next step is *universalism*, and the next *infidelity*." Every intelligent reader will know how to appreciate this senseless dogmatism. The infidel might with equal propriety charge the professors of Scriptural Christianity with being on the high road to Calvinism, and prepared, by their faith in the corruption of human nature, and the atonement of Christ, for the most extreme views of the Divine decrees. Yet these bold and baseless assertions have their weight with those for whom they are intended, and many weak but good persons are held in passive bondage to these teachers and their creed, through the holy fear of moving a step towards infidelity. On the other hand, we might retort the charge. Calvinism has made more infidels than any other corruption of Christianity, excepting Popery. But we suggest this only in the way of *fair retaliation*.

The rejectors of Calvinism do not reject "the doctrines of grace," but the corruptions by which they have been dishonoured. They maintain, that on the absolute predestinarian scheme, there is no room for grace, such as the Gospel exhibits to the sinful and the lost; and that their own views are not only more accordant with the justice, but with the unmerited and infinite mercy of God. They ascribe all true holiness to the Divine Spirit.

² Dr. Coplestone, now the Bishop of Llandaff, denies that the foreknowledge of an event proves the *event to be necessary*. "We may be unable to conceive how a thing not necessary in its nature can be foreknown; for *our* foreknowledge is in general limited by that circumstance, and is more or less perfect in proportion to the fixed or necessary nature of the things we contemplate, with which nature we become acquainted by experience, and are thus able to anticipate a great variety of events: but to subject the knowledge of God to any such limitation is surely absurd and unphilosophical, as well as impious; and, therefore, to mix up the idea of God's foreknowledge with any quality in the nature of the things foreknown, is even less excusable than to be guilty of that confusion when speaking of ourselves."

But, with due deference to his lordship, this does not contradict the statement in the text, that we are ignorant of any principle on which *such prescience* can be explained. Assuming, indeed, that any events are contingent, that human actions proceed from freedom, and not from necessity, we cannot deny that they come within the range of infinite knowledge.

But the philosophical necessarian does not grant this postulate. He assumes the existence of an infinite mind, to whose knowledge all events are open, and thence infers the *necessity* of these events. He pleads that omniscience and contingency are incongruous ideas, and, on the ground of pure metaphysics, it would be difficult to refute him. But we demolish his theory by an appeal to facts. We oppose the moral constitution and history of man, to the plausible speculations of philosophy. In other words, the mere metaphysician is a fatalist; and his position, in the present state of our intellectual philosophy, can be successfully attacked only by an appeal to facts and consciousness, and by moral argument. That sound metaphysics and just moral reasoning cannot really be at variance is certain, since there cannot exist contradictory truths. Our metaphysics therefore are wrong, or there must be an unknown *third principle*, by which they are to be reconciled with our moral reasonings. But until we can detect the fallacies of the metaphysician, or supply the *connecting link* which is now wanting, we must rest in the unsatisfactory conclusion that abstract philosophy is with the necessarian, and that liberty and its ennobling consequences, moral agency, and moral responsibility, rest on the solitary basis of moral argument.

3 On the “special *teaching*” claimed, in connexion with “special grace,” by the most popular writers of the Calvinistic school, the reader may find some just and forcible remarks in Essays by W. and T. Ludlam. Their fearless exposure of the erroneous statements given by Milner, Robinson, Newton, Harvey, and others, more particularly on the subject of divine influence, awakened the indignation of a party whose pretensions, when tested by reason and revelation, were proved to be groundless. Without attempting an indiscriminate defence of their opinions or their arguments, we may recommend these essays as being eminently worthy of attention in the present day, when two distinct but zealous parties are aiming to establish exclusive doctrines, by discountenancing the legitimate use of human reason in religious inquiries—one resting on tradition, the other on individual inspiration; neither of them seeming to remember, that tradition may be pleaded for and against the same dogmata, and that the private persuasions of one good man may be opposite to those of another, who has, with equal earnestness and humility, prayed to be directed into the knowledge of saving truth. The man of independent mind will find in these essays, much to admire in their elucidation of truth and detection of error, but more in their dauntless defiance of those who represent the Bible as a “sealed book” to all who are not visited with a special faculty for discerning its mystic characters and hidden sense. In that case, the Scriptures are a revelation *only to the elect*, who, to satisfy themselves and the world, that *their interpretation* is the only sound one, ought to produce miracles as proof of their own inspiration, not less unequivocal than those which vindicated the authority and infallibility of the Apostles. Such opinions, although held by religious men, are dishonourable to the Scriptures, and needlessly degrading to the human mind.

4 “There can be no approaches towards regeneration in the antecedent temper of the heart. The moment before the change, the sinner is as far from sanctification, as darkness is from light, as death is from life, as sin is from holiness.”

“Regeneration is an instantaneous change, from exclusive attachment to the creature, from supreme selfishness, from enmity against God, to universal love, which fixes the heart supremely on Him; and there is no previous abatement of the enmity, or approximation towards a right temper; the heart being at one moment in full possession of its native selfishness and opposition, at the next moment in possession of a principle of supreme love to God; acquiring thus, in an instant, a temper which it never possessed before.”—*Lectures on Important Doctrines by Dr. Griffin.*

How extravagant in theory, how false in fact! The doctrine of the Anglican Church on this; and all similar points, never appears so wise, and sound, and scriptural, as when contrasted with the speculative systems of men, who, to give harmony and consistency to their notions, close their eyes to the real world of man, and create for themselves an ideal universe, peopled by another order of beings, and governed by a power unknown but to the dreamers themselves.

5 The Presbyterian Church of Scotland is both Calvinistic and National. But this fact does not militate against the argument of this section; that Calvinism is opposed to the constitution and purposes of a visible Church. Her creed and her discipline are at variance. Her ministers are required to believe in the Westminster Confession. And the great body of her people are said to be attached to that system of doctrine. But her more educated classes reject it, and the Scottish Church is a divided house.

6 The prominent part taken by the doctrinal Puritans, in the revolutionary movements which brought Charles I. to the block, is proved by the concurrent testimony of the writers of those times. It is amply illustrated and confirmed by Mr. Nichols in his “Calvinism and Arminianism Compared.”

The "Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson," by his widow Lucy, is not only a work of great general interest, beautifully composed, and combining with the life of an eminent person vivid sketches of the times; but it illustrates the subject discussed in the text. Colonel Hutchinson was a doctrinal Puritan, and one of the regicides. In himself we behold all the elements of a great and noble character, devout, humane, scrupulously conscientious, and of heroic courage; every quality that might adorn the gentleman, the patriot, the Christian. But his extreme principles induced a mistaken sense of duty, which embittered his own days, and added to the calamities of his country; after having been spared at the restoration, his gloomy reserve and supposed readiness to act again the part of a rebel, if opportunity should occur, led to his imprisonment in Sandown Castle, where he died more ignobly than if he had been brought to the block. It would have been more to the honour of the king, if he had at first doomed him to a public execution, the proper death of a regicide, or had left him afterwards unmolested; but the second Charles was not less mean and malignant than his sire was unfortunate. Of the character of the humbler class of the doctrinal Puritans, the following hints are incidentally given in this work.

The name of Roundhead "was very ill applied to Mr, Hutchinson, who, having naturally a very fine thick sett head of hair, kept it clean and handsome, so that it was a greate ornament to him, although *the godly of those dayes*, when he embrac'd their party, *would not allow him to be religious*, because his hayre was not in their cutte, nor his words in their phraze, nor such little formalities altogether fitted to their humour; who were, many of them, so weake as to esteeme rather for such insignificant circumstances, then for solid wisdom, piety, and courage, which brought reall ayd and honor to their party; but as Mr. Hutchinson chose, not them, but the God they serv'd, and the truth and righteousness they defended, so did not their weaknesses, censures, ingratitude, and discouraging behaviour, with which he was abundantly exercised all his life, make him forsake them in any thing wherein they adher'd to just and honourable principles and practizes; but when they apostatized from these, none cast them off with greater indignation, how shining soever the profession were that gilt, not a temple of living grace, but a tomb which only held the carkase of religion." In other words, like other partisans, whose principles have degenerated into the spirit of faction, he overlooked the baseness of ingratitude, and worse immoralities, in his associates, so long as they maintained the just and honourable character of traitors and rebels.

⁷ The Manchester Synod, at which were present 620 ministers of various denominations, was held in the year 1841, for the purpose of discussing the *corn laws*, with a view to their abolition. The professed object was the relief of the poor by procuring cheap bread; the real object was the depression of the landed aristocracy, and, through them, of the Clergy of the National Church, whose tithes are regulated by the average value of corn. Had those gentlemen been sincere in their lamentations for the manufacturing poor, they would have long ago agitated the country for the abolition of the Factory System, and the rescue of its miserable victims from oppression and famine. That system must be strengthened by the abolition of the corn laws, which would only aggrandize the *great manufacturers*, and plunge the working people into deeper misery, by throwing the agricultural poor out of employment, and driving them to the towns and cities for occupation, thus glutting the market with superfluous labour. Looking at some of those individuals who took a leading part in the Synod, men of reputed truth and probity in their customary habits, their disingenuousness on this occasion supplies a striking proof of the power of faction to impair the moral sense, especially when originating in hatred of the Church. The great body of this Synod were ministers of Calvinistic Churches. The "dissenting interest" has degraded itself by assuming the character of a political faction.

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