

ROBERT WALLACE

THE DOCTRINES OF
PREDESTINATION,
REPROBATION, AND
ELECTION

Robert Wallace

**The Doctrines of Predestination,
Reprobation, and Election**

«Public Domain»

Wallace R.

The Doctrines of Predestination, Reprobation, and Election /
R. Wallace — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

PREFACE	5
INTRODUCTION	6
PART I.—PREDESTINATION	14
CHAPTER I.	14
CHAPTER II.	15
CHAPTER III.	17
CHAPTER IV.	18
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	19

Robert Wallace

The Doctrines of Predestination, Reprobation, and Election

PREFACE

Were a number of shipwrecked mariners cast upon an island, one of their first inquiries would be, Is it inhabited? Having observed footmarks upon the sand, and other tokens of man's presence, another question would be, What is the character of the people? Are they anthropophagi, or are they of a friendly disposition? The importance of such questions would be realised by all. Their lives might depend upon the answer to the latter.

We look around upon the universe, and everywhere observe marks of design, or the adaption of means to ends. The conviction gathers upon us with deepening power, that there must have been a supreme intelligence arranging the forces of nature. If I throw the dice box twenty times, and the same numbers always turn up, I cannot resist the conclusion that the dice must have been loaded. The application is simple. But, as in the case of the mariners, a second question arises, viz.:—What is the character of the Being revealed in nature? Is He beneficent, or like the fabled Chronus, who devoured his children? It is substantially with this second question that the following work has to do. It is a treatise concerning the character of God.

The subjects discussed have been for many years the occasion of much controversy and difficulty. Whilst to certain minds it were more agreeable to read exposition of Christian truth, yet the followers of Christ may often have to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. Our Lord's public ministry showed how earnestly He contended for the truth. At every corner He was met by the men of "light and leading" amongst the Jews, and who did their best to oppose Him. Paul, too, when he lived at Ephesus, disputed "daily in the school of one Tyrannus, and this continued by the space of two years." The period of the Reformation was also one of earnest discussion between the adherents of the old faith and the followers of Luther. The questions discussed in those days, both in apostolic and post-apostolic times, were eminently practical; but they were not a whit more so than the questions of Predestination, Reprobation, and Election. These touch every man to the very centre of his being when he awakes from the sleep of indifference, and wishes to know the truth about the salvation of his soul. It has been our object, in the present volume, to dispel the darkness which has been thrown around those subjects, and to let every man see that the way back to the bosom of the heavenly Father is as free to him as the light of heaven.

The following treatise consists of an Introduction bearing on the history of the questions discussed; Part I. treats of Predestination; Part II. is on Reprobation, and Part III. on Election.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only beloved Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.—*Jesus*.

I reject the Calvinistic doctrine of Predestination, not because it is incomprehensible, but because I think it irreconcilable with the justice and goodness of God.—*Bishop Tomlin*.

God our Saviour will have all men to be saved.—*Paul*.

INTRODUCTION

Regarding the predestinarian controversy, it has been said, “Hardly one among the many Christian controversies has called forth a greater amount of subtlety and power, and not one so long and so persistently maintained its vitality. Within the twenty-five years which followed its first appearance upwards of thirty councils (one of them the General Council of Ephesus) were held for the purpose of this discussion. It lay at the bottom of all the intellectual activity of the conflicts in the Mediæval philosophic schools; and there is hardly a single subject which has come into discussion under so many different forms in modern controversy” (*Ch. Encyc.*)

Although the controversy between Pelagius and Augustine began in the fifth century, it is an interesting inquiry—What was the mind of the earlier Christian writers on the subject? Of course their opinion cannot settle the truth of the question in debate, but it has a very important bearing upon the subject. The late Dr. Eadie claimed the voice of antiquity for the system of the Confession of Faith. He says, “The doctrine of predestination was held in its leading element by the ancient Church, by the Roman Clement, Ignatius, Hermas, Justin Martyr, and Irenæus, before Augustine worked it into a system, and Jerome armed himself on its behalf” (*Ec. Cyc.*) This statement may be fairly questioned, and, we think, successfully challenged. Dr. Cunningham, in his *Historical Theology*, remarks, “The doctrine of Arminius can be traced back as far as the time of Alexandrinus, and seems to have been held by many of the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries.” He attributes this to the corrupting influence of Pagan philosophy (*Hist. Theo.*, Vol. II., p. 374). This is not a direct contradiction to Eadie, but it shows that truth compelled this sturdy Calvinist to admit that non-Calvinistic views were held in the earlier and best period of the Church. The question, however, is one that must be decided by historical evidence, and not by authority. And what is that evidence? Mosheim, in writing of the founders of the English Church, says, “They wished to render their church as similar as possible to that which flourished in the early centuries, and that Church, as no one can deny, was an entire stranger to the Dordracene doctrines” (*Reid’s Mos.*, p. 821). The Synod of Dort met in a.d. 1618, and condemned the Arminian doctrine, and decided in favour of Calvinism; but, according to Mosheim, this system of Calvin was unknown to the early Church. Faber maintains the same. He says, “The scheme of interpretation now familiarly, though perhaps (if a scheme ought to be designated by the name of its *original* contriver) not quite correctly, styled Calvinism, may be readily traced back in the Latin and Western Church to the time of Augustine. But here we find ourselves completely at fault. Augustine, at the beginning of the fifth century, is the first ecclesiastical writer who annexes to the Scriptural terms ‘elect’ and ‘predestinate’ the peculiar sense which is now usually styled Calvinistic. With him, in a form scarcely less round and perfect than that long and subsequently proposed by the celebrated Genevan reformer himself, commenced an entirely new system of interpretation previously unknown to the Church Catholic. What I state is a mere dry historical fact” (*Faber’s Apos. Trin.*, *Cooke’s Theo.*, p. 305).

Prosper of Aquitania was a devoted friend and admirer of Augustine, and not wishing to be charged with propagating new views, wrote to the Bishop of Hippo (Augustine) desiring to know how he could refute the charge of novelty. “For,” saith he, “having had recourse to the opinion of almost all that went before me concerning this matter, I find all of them holding one and the same opinion, in which they have received the purpose and the predestination of God according to His prescience; that for this cause God made some vessels of honour and other vessels of dishonour, because He foresaw the end of every man, and knew before how he would will and act” (*Whitby’s Pos.*, p. 449). This was a frank acknowledgment on the part of Prosper, who was a man of ability, and Secretary to Leo, and it carried much farther than was intended. The fact, however, was patent that the Christian Church for some four hundred years was a stranger to what is known as the doctrine of Calvin. The view thus stated is confirmed by Neander. When Prosper and Hilary appealed to

the Bishop of Rome, they doubtless expected that he would favour the system of Augustine, and condemn the Semi-pelagians (modern E.U.'s). If so, they were mistaken. The bishop was chary, and whilst speaking contemptuously of those presbyters who raised "curious questions," he left it undecided what the curious questions were. He had said in his letter to the Gallic bishops, "Let the spirit of innovation, if there is such a spirit, cease to attack the ancient doctrines;" but he did not say what was ancient and what was novel. Neander upon this remarks: "The Semi-pelagians, in fact, also asserted, and they could do it with even more justice than their opponents, that by them the ancient doctrine of the Church was defended against the false doctrine recently introduced concerning absolute predestination, and against the denial of free-will tenets, wholly unknown to the ancient Church" (Vol. IV., p. 306). The concluding words are almost identical with those of Mosheim, just quoted.

Bishop Tomline, who gave special attention to this phase of the subject—viz., the state of opinion in the Church previous to Augustine, says, "If Calvinists pretend that absolute decrees, the unconditional election and reprobation of individuals, particular redemption, irresistible grace, and the entire destruction of free-will in man in consequence of the fall, were the doctrines of the primitive Church, let them cite their authority, let them refer to the works in which these doctrines are actually taught. If such opinions were actually held we could not fail to meet with some of them in the various and voluminous works which are still extant. I assert that no such trace is to be found, and I challenge the Calvinist of the present day to produce an author prior to Augustine who maintained what are now called Calvinistic opinions" (Preface VII.)

The extracts which he gives from the writings of the Fathers are so many and extended that we can only give a few. Clement of Rome, a contemporary of the apostles, says: "Let us look stedfastly at the blood of Christ, and see how precious His blood is in the sight of God, which, being shed for our salvation, has obtained the grace of repentance for all the world" (p. 288). Justin Martyr, who lived about the middle of the second century, says, "But lest anyone should imagine that I am asserting things that happen according to the necessity of fate, because I have said that things are foreknown, I proceed to refute that opinion also. That punishments and chastisements and good rewards are given according to the worth of the actions of every one, having learnt it from the prophets, we declare to be true; since if it were not so, but all things happen according to fate, nothing would be in our own power; for if it were decreed by fate that one should be good and another bad, no praise would be due to the former, nor blame to the other; and, again, if mankind had not the power of free-will to avoid what is disgraceful and to choose what is good, they would not be responsible for their actions" (Tom., p. 292). Irenæus, who lived near the end of the second century, says, "The expression 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not' (Matt. xxiii. 37), manifested the ancient law of human liberty, because God made man free from the beginning, having his own power as he had also his own soul to use the sentence of God voluntarily, and not by compulsion from God. For there is no force with God, but a good intention is always with Him. And therefore He gives good counsel to all. But He has placed the power of choice in man, in that those who should obey might justly possess good, given indeed by God, but preserved by ourselves" (Tom., p. 304). Tertullian (a.d. 200), "Therefore, though we have learned from the commands of God both what He wills and what He forbids, yet we have a will and power to choose either, as it is written, 'Behold I have set before you good and evil, for you have tasted of the tree of knowledge' " (Tom., p. 320). Origen (a.d. 230) says, "We have frequently shown, in all our disputations, that the nature of rational souls is such as to be capable of good and evil" (Tom., p. 323). Ambrose (a.d. 374) says, "The Lord Jesus came to save all sinners" (Tom., p. 377). Chrysostom (a.d. 398) says, "Hear also how fate speaks, and how it lays down contrary laws, and learn how the former are declared by a Divine spirit, but the latter by a wicked demon and a savage beast. God has said, 'If ye be willing and obedient,' making us masters of virtue and wickedness, and placing them within our own power. But what does the other say? That it is impossible to avoid what is decreed by fate, whether we will or not. God says, 'If ye be

willing ye shall eat the good of the land;’ but fate says, ‘Although we be willing, unless it shall be permitted us, this will is of no use.’ God says, ‘If ye will not obey my words, a sword shall devour you;’ fate says, ‘Although we be not willing, if it shall be granted to us, we are certainly saved.’ Does not fate say this? What, then, can be clearer than this opposition? What can be more evident than this war which the diabolical teachers of wickedness have thus shamelessly declared against the Divine oracles” (Tom., p. 458).

Besides the names thus given, Tomlin appeals to and gives quotations from the following authors of antiquity as confirming his statement—viz., Tatian, Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Lactantius, Eusebius, Athenasius, Cyril, Hilary, Basil, Ambrose, Jerome, &c. The testimony of the Fathers is clearly against the Calvinistic system. We do not, of course, claim them as settling the controversy; this must be done by an appeal to reason and the Scriptures; but it is nevertheless deserving of attention, that for some 400 years the stream of opinion in the Church ran in a contrary direction to that of Geneva. The system of Calvin is, that God wishes only some men to be saved, and that everything is fixed; and it was clearly held before Augustine’s time, that God wished all men saved, and that men were free, which they could not be if all things were foreordained.

Besides this, it is a remarkable fact that the errors of the early heretics bore a close resemblance to those held by the followers of Calvin. Irenæus, writing of Saturnius, says, “He first asserted that there are two sets of men formed by the angels, the one good and the other bad. And because demons assisted the worst men, that the Saviour came to destroy bad men and demons, but to save good men” (Tom., p. 515). Gregory of Nazianzum, warning his readers against heresy, says, “For certain persons are so ill-disposed as to imagine that some are of a nature which must absolutely perish,” &c. (Tom., p. 522). Jerome, commenting on Eph. v. 8, remarks,. . . “There is not, as some heretics say, a nation which perishes and does not admit of salvation” (Tom., p. 525). Do not the heretical opinions denounced by the Fathers bear a close resemblance to the “elect” and the “reprobate” of the Confession of Faith?

The departure from the ancient creed of the Church arose out of the controversy with Pelagius. This monk, surnamed Brito (from being generally believed to be a native of Britain), is supposed to have been born about the middle of the fourth century. Nothing is now known regarding the place of his birth, or precise period when he was born. His name “is supposed to be a Greek rendering of (Pelagios, of or belonging to the sea) the Celtic appellative Morgan, or sea-born.” He never entered holy orders. If tradition is to be trusted, he was educated in a monastery at Bangor, in Wales, of which he ultimately became abbot. In the end of the fourth century he went to Rome, having acquired a reputation of sanctity and knowledge of the Scriptures. Whilst here he made the acquaintance of Coelestius, a Roman advocate, who espoused his views, and gave up his own profession, and devoted himself to extend the opinions of his master. About a.d. 405, they began to make themselves known, but attracted little attention; and after the sack of the city by the Goths, a.d. 410, they left and went to Africa. The two friends seem to have separated here. Pelagius went to Jerusalem, whilst Coelestius remained in Africa. The latter desired to enter into holy orders, and sought ordination. His opinions had become known, however, and objections were lodged against him. He appealed to Rome, but did not prosecute his case. He went to Ephesus instead. The proceedings at Carthage in this matter are noteworthy, as they were the occasion of introducing Augustine into the controversy. He was determined not to let the subject rest, and sent Orosius, a Spanish monk, to Jerusalem, and got the question brought before a synod there in a.d. 415. This assembly, however, refused to condemn Pelagius. In a.d. 418, the emperor banished the heresiarch; and after this history fails to give any reliable account of him. He had spoken what he thought, and had stirred the minds of men in three continents. When the Council of Carthage met, there were twelve charges of heresy laid against him. A summary of his opinions is given by Buck, and is as follows: —(1.) That Adam was by nature mortal, and whether he had sinned or not, would certainly have died. (2.) That the consequences of Adam’s sin were confined to his own person. (3.) That new-born infants are in the same situation with

Adam before the fall. (4.) That the law qualified men for the kingdom of heaven, and was founded on equal promises with the Gospel. (5.) That the general resurrection of the dead does not follow in virtue of the Saviour's resurrection. (6.) That the grace of God is given according to our merits. (7.) That this grace is not given for the performance of every moral act, the liberty of the will and information in points of duty being sufficient. If these were the opinions of Pelagius, then, according to our finding, he had erred from the truth. I say "if," because it is not safe to trust an opponent when professing to give the views of an antagonist. He is apt to confound deductions with principles which are denied.

Although we do not know where and when Pelagius was born, nor the place and time of his death, we have reliable information on these points regarding Augustine. He was born at Tagaste, a town in north Africa, on 13th Nov., a.d. 354. He was the child of many prayers by his devoted mother Monica. The early portion of his life was spent in idleness and dissipation, but he was at last converted in a somewhat remarkable manner. He turned over a new leaf in his moral life, and became a most devoted Christian. Although considered inferior to Jerome (his contemporary) as regards Biblical criticism, he was a man of genius, and a strong controversialist. He contended against the Donatists, the Manichæans, and the Pelagians. When the Vandals were besieging Hippo, he died on the 28th of August, a.d. 430, in the 76th year of his age. No father of the early Church has exercised a greater influence upon theological opinion than he has done.

The system now known as Calvinism should be designated "Augustinianism," Augustine being, as remarked, the real author of the system, and not the Genevan divine. Regarding the central tenets of his creed, it is said: "He held the corruption of human nature, and the consequent slavery of the human will. Both on metaphysical and religious grounds he asserted the doctrine of predestination, from which he necessarily deduced the corollary doctrines of election and reprobation; and, finally, he supported against Pelagius, not only these opinions, but also the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints," (*Ch. En.*, Aug.) Besides introducing a new theological system, Augustine put his imprimatur upon the burning of heretics. When the magistrate Dulcitius had some compunctions about executing a decree of Honorius, Augustine wrote to him and said, "It is much better that some should perish by their own fires, than that the whole body should perish in the everlasting fires of Gehenna, through the desert of the impious dissension" (*Ch. En.*, Aug.) Calvin therefore could not only claim the authority of Augustine for his dogmas, but he might have claimed him also as justifying the burning of Servetus. But this by the way.

With the voice of the Fathers against him, and, as we think, unwarranted by the light of philosophy and the true interpretation of Scripture, how came it about, it may be asked, that Augustine adopted the system which should be called by his name? The true answer to this will be found, we apprehend, in a variety of considerations. His early dissipated life, his nine years connection with Manichæism, the extreme statements of Pelagius, his own strange conversion by hearing, when weeping and moaning under a fig-tree, a young voice saying quickly, "*Tolle lege, tolle lege*" (take and read, take and read), and which he took as a Divine admonition; these, combined with the commotion of the times, would lend their influence to the position he came to occupy. His system, whilst it accords glory to God, is one-sided, by ignoring the function man has to perform in applying the remedial scheme.

Although Pelagius had got many to espouse his opinions, yet his tenets were again and again condemned by the councils of the Church. The controversy, however, very soon diverged from strictly Pelagian lines, and entered upon a new track—viz., that of Semi-pelagianism, to which is closely allied the principles advocated by the Evangelical Union of Scotland. From extremes there is generally a recoil, and this was the case as regards Augustinianism. Certain monks at Adrumetum drew conclusions from the system which, whether they are admitted or not, are its logical outcome. They said, "Of what use are all doctrines and precepts? Human efforts can avail nothing, it is God that worketh in us to will and to do. Nor is it right to reproach or to punish those who are in error, and

who cannot sin, for it is none of their fault that they act thus. Without grace they cannot do otherwise, nor can they do anything to merit grace; all we should do, then, is to pray for them” (Neander, Vol. IV., p. 373). Augustine endeavoured to neutralise these opinions by writing two books explaining his views. Regarding these answers, Neander observes, “But such persons,” as the monks, “must rather have found in this a further confirmation of their doubts.”

Whilst the monks of Adrumetum drew natural conclusions from the dogmas of Augustine, there came determined opposition to the new creed. It came from the south of France. John Cassian, who had been a deacon under Chrysostom, had established a cloister at Massila (Marseilles), and had become its abbot, entered the lists against the Bishop of Hippo. He departed from the opinions of Pelagius regarding the corruption of human nature, and he recognised “grace” as well as justification in the sense of Augustine. But he widely differed from him, as will be seen from the summary of Semi-pelagianism given by Buck. It is as follows: “(1.) That God did not dispense His grace to one man more than another in consequence of an absolute and eternal decree, but was willing to save all men if they complied with the terms of the Gospel. (2.) That Christ died for all mankind. (3.) That the grace purchased by Christ, and necessary to salvation, was offered to all men. (4.) That man before he received this grace was capable of faith and holy desires. (5.) That man was born free, and consequently capable of resisting the influence of grace, or of complying with its suggestions.” Buck remarks, “The Semi-pelagians were very numerous, and the doctrine of Cassian, though variously explained, was received in the greatest part of the monastic schools in Gaul, from whence it spread itself far and wide through the European provinces. As to the Greeks and other Eastern Churches, they had embraced the Semi-pelagian doctrine before Cassian.” Yet when, as in 1843, similar opinions were proclaimed in Scotland, they were everywhere met with the cry of “New Views,” although they had been held so extensively 1400 years before! So much for ignorance.

The name “Semi-pelagians” was not assumed by the party, lest they should be held as maintaining the dogmas of Pelagius; neither was it given until long after the early heat of the controversy. Their opponents still stigmatised them as Pelagians, although they had departed from the system advocated by the British monk.

The controversy continued to occupy the mind of the Church during the latter part of the fifth and beginning of the sixth centuries. In a.d. 475 a synod held at Arles sanctioned the views of the Semi-pelagians, and compelled the presbyter Lucidus, who was an earnest advocate of Augustinianism, to recant. Another synod, held at Lugdunum in the same year, put also its imprimatur upon them. But there was not complete agreement, and the divines who had been banished by the Vandals from northern Africa held a council in a.d. 523, and under their auspices Fulgentius of Ruspe composed a defence of Augustine’s views; (Kurtz, p. 213)

For a considerable time after this the controversy may be said to have remained quiet, but broke forth with great fury in the ninth century. Gottschalk, the son of a Saxon count, had been dedicated by his parents to the service of religion, and in due course entered the monastery of Fulda. He did not take to cloister life, and petitioned an assembly held at Metz to be released from his monastic vows. His request was granted, but Rabanus Maurus, who was the abbot, appealed to Lewis the Pious, and endeavoured to show that all *oblati* (lay brethren dedicated to the service of the Church) were bound to perpetual obligation. Lewis revoked the decision of the assembly, and Gottschalk had to go back to cloister life, which he did by entering the monastery of Orbais. Here he became an ardent student of the writings of Augustine, and sought to propagate his views. “He affirmed a *prædestinatio duplex*, by virtue of which God decreed eternal life to the elect, and the elect to eternal life; and so also everlasting punishment to the reprobate, and the reprobate to everlasting punishment, for the two were inseparably connected” (Neander, Vol. VI., p. 180).

On returning from a pilgrimage to Rome Gottschalk happened to meet Noting (Bishop of Verona), and expounded to him his views. Sometime after this meeting the bishop had a conversation with Rabanus (who was now Bishop of Mayence), and informed him regarding Gottschalk’s opinions.

Rabanus promised to send a reply, which shortly afterwards he did, in two “thundering epistles.” The controversy now waxed warm, too much so for the monk. He was condemned, imprisoned, and scourged. He threw his treatises into the fire, but intimated his willingness to go through the ordeal of stepping into cauldrons of boiling water, oil, and pitch, being thoroughly convinced that he had the truth upon his side. His offer was treated by Hincoma as the boast of a Simon Magus. He died in prison.

In the Middle Ages the schoolmen took sides in this controversy, but there was no general agitation upon the subject. The “Dark Ages” had set in, and remained until the Renaissance and the revival of learning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The European countries had been greatly agitated by the Crusades, which had collateral issues of an important character. Turbulent spirits had been weeded but, and the royal authority had become better established. Independence of thought began to assert itself in Wickliffe; and Huss and Jerome of Prague paid the penalty of martyrdom for gainsaying Rome. But a bright morning was at hand. Luther arose. His voice, like a clarion trumpet among the Alps, produced echoes all around. His doctrines spread like wild-fire. Amongst the countries which readily received them was Holland. Charles V. was determined to crush the nascent spirit of liberty in that portion of his dominions, and inaugurated a persecution by which 50,000 people lost their lives. The Dutch maintained their rights, and in due course the Protestant religion was that of the land. The opinions of Calvin were adopted generally. He had adopted the system of Augustine, as already intimated, and he had a great influence upon the Protestants generally outside Germany. James Arminius was born at Oudewater in 1560. He lost his father when quite young, and the merchants of Amsterdam undertook his education upon condition that he would not preach out of their city unless he got their permission. Having gone to Geneva, he sat at the feet of Theodore Beza, one of the most rigid of Calvin’s followers. After travelling in Italy he returned to Holland, and was duly appointed a minister of religion in Amsterdam. About this time certain clergymen of Delft had become dissatisfied with the doctrine of predestination, and Arminius was commissioned to answer them. But in prosecuting his inquiries he began to doubt, and then to change his views. He saw that he could not defend the system of Calvin, and having the courage of his convictions, he spoke out his mind. He excited intense opposition, and was visited, without stint, with the *odium theologicum*. All the pulpits began to fulminate against him. In the midst of the controversy he died, 19th October, 1609. He was admitted by his opponents to have been a good man. In 1610 his followers presented a Remonstrance to the assembled States of the province of Holland. From this circumstance they have been called Remonstrants. In this celebrated document the following propositions were stated:—“(1.) That God had indeed made an eternal decree, but only on the conditional terms that all who believe in Christ shall be saved, while all who refuse to believe must perish; so that predestination is only conditional. (2.) That Christ died for all men, but that none except believers are really saved by His death. The intention, in other words, is universal, but the efficacy may be restricted by unbelief. (3.) That no man is of himself able to exercise a saving faith, but must be born again of God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. (4.) That without the grace of God man can neither think, will, nor do anything good; yet that grace does not act in men in an irresistible way. (5.) That believers are able, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, victoriously to resist sin; but that the question of the possibility of a fall from grace must be determined by a further examination of the Scriptures on this point.” The last proposition was decided in the affirmative in the following year (1611).

A synod was convened at Dort in 1618, from which the followers of Arminius were excluded. It put its approval upon the views of Calvin. The discussion soon assumed a political aspect, which Maurice of Orange turned to his own account, put Oldenbarnveldt to death, and sent Grotius to prison.

In the Church of England divines may hold either view of this question. The saying has been ascribed to Pitt: “The Church of England hath a Popish liturgy, a Calvinistic creed, and an Arminian clergy” (Bartlett). Whilst she has had such genuine Calvinists as Scott and Toplady, she has also

produced men who held that the Saviour died for all—viz., Hales, Butler, Pierce, Barrow, Cudworth, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Patrick, and Burnet. The Wesleyan body are decidedly anti-Calvinistic.

In 1643 an assembly of divines met at Westminster, and although they could not agree about church government, they came to a finding about doctrines, and drew up the Confession of Faith and the Catechism, which are thoroughly Calvinistic. The Church of Scotland adopted these formularies, and although there have been several secessions from her, they were not upon the ground of doctrine as expressed in the creed. In 1843, however, a decided departure took place in this respect, in one of the offshoots of the Church—viz., in that of the United Secession Church. The Rev. James Morison had declared it to be his belief that Christ died for all men. He was charged with heresy and deposed. Other brethren threw in their lot with him, and in due course the Evangelical Union was formed. Its primary doctrines are that the Divine Father loves all men, that Christ died for all men, and that the Divine Spirit gives sufficient grace to all men, which, if improved, would lead to their salvation.

Such, then, is a brief outline of the main historical facts in this controversy, and it is worthy of note, as remarked, that for the first 400 years of the Christian era the Calvinistic system of theology was unknown to the Christian church. It began, as we have seen, with Augustine, and being adopted by Calvin was widely spread in those countries which received at the Reformation Protestant principles. It comprehends truths of vast value to man, but which are not peculiar to it. They are held as firmly by opponents as by the followers of Calvin; such, for instance, as the inspiration of the Bible, the doctrine of the Trinity, the inability of man to work out a glory meriting righteousness, justification by faith alone, and the necessity of the Spirit's work in regeneration. As in the Church of Rome, there have also been ranged under the banner of the Genevan divine men of the most varied accomplishments and the most saintly character. But men are often better than their professed creed, and often worse. As a system it has passed its meridian, and although ministers and elders are still required to profess their faith in its peculiarities, it has lost its hold on the popular mind. Mr. Froude, in his celebrated address to the St. Andrew's students, said, "After being accepted for two centuries in all Protestant countries as the final account of the relations between man and his Maker, Calvinism has come to be regarded by liberal thinkers as a system of belief incredible in itself, dishonouring to its object, and as intolerable as it has been itself intolerant. To represent man as sent into the world under a curse, as incurably wicked—wicked by the constitution of his flesh, and wicked by eternal decree; as doomed (unless exempted by special grace, which he cannot merit, or by an effort of his own obtain), to live in sin while he remains on earth, and to be eternally miserable when he leaves it; to represent him as born unable to keep the commandments, yet as justly liable to everlasting punishment for breaking them, is alike repugnant to reason and to conscience, and turns existence into a hideous nightmare. To deny the freedom of the will is to make morality impossible: to tell men that they cannot help themselves, is to fling them into recklessness and despair. To what purpose the effort to be virtuous, when it is an effort which is foredoomed to fail; when those that are saved are saved by no effort of their own and confess themselves the worst of sinners, even when rescued from the penalties of sin; and those that are lost are lost by an everlasting sentence decreed against them before they were born? How are we to call the Ruler who laid us under this iron code by the name of wise, and just, or merciful, when we ascribe principles of action to Him which, as a human father, we should call preposterous and monstrous?" Error, however, like disease, is not easily eradicated; but as men get better acquainted with God, those dark and heathenish conceptions regarding him entertained by Calvinists, such as the foredooming of children and men to endless misery, will give place to nobler thoughts of the Author of our being.

"I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,

And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns."

In 1879 the United Presbyterian Church adopted what is known as the "Declaratory Act," which is a clear departure from the rigid Calvinism of the Confession of Faith. In this declaration God's love is said to be world-wide, and the propitiation of Christ to be for the "sins of the whole

world.” They hold the Confession dogmas in harmony with the Declaratory Act, but it is an attempt to put the new cloth on the old garment, or the new wine into the old bottles. It is impossible that God can love the whole world, and yet foredoom millions to be lost. The two views are destructive of each other. This church, one of the most intelligent in the country, cannot stand where it now is. It is bound to go forward.

PART I.—PREDESTINATION

CHAPTER I.

THE WORD PREDESTINATION, AND THE DOCTRINE AS HELD BY CALVINISTS

THE word “predestinate” signifies, according to the *Imperial Dictionary*, “to predetermine or foreordain,” “to appoint or ordain beforehand by an unchangeable purpose.” The noun, according to the same authority, denotes the act of decreeing or foreordaining events; the act of God, by which He hath from eternity unchangeably appointed or determined whatsoever comes to pass. It is used particularly in theology to denote the preordination of men to everlasting happiness or misery. The term is used four times in the New Testament, and comes from the Greek word *proorizo*, which signifies, “to determine beforehand,” “to predetermine” (Liddell and Scott). Robinson gives as its meaning, “to set bounds before,” “to predetermine,” “spoken of the eternal decrees and counsels of God.” According to the lexicographers, the meaning—as far as the word is concerned—is plain enough. It is quite clear from the Scriptures that God predestinates or foreordains. This is admitted on all sides. But here the questions arise—What is the nature of God’s predestination? and does it embrace all events? The Confession of Faith gives the following deliverance on the subject—“God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably foreordain whatsoever comes to pass.” The Larger and Shorter Catechisms express the same idea. This was the opinion of the Westminster divines, and is the professed faith of Presbyterians in general in Scotland. One of the most eminent theologians of the school of Calvin—Dr. C. Hodge—vindicates this deliverance of the Assembly. He says, “The reason; therefore, why any event occurs, or that passes from the category of the possible into that of the actual, is that God has so decreed” (Vol. I., p. 531). He says again, “The Scriptures teach that sinful acts, as well as those which are holy, are foreordained” (Vol. I., p. 543). And, again, “The acts of the wicked in persecuting the early Church were ordained of God, as the means of the wider and more speedy proclamation of the Gospel” (Vol. I., p. 544). He says, moreover, “Whatever happens God intended should happen, that to Him nothing can be unexpected, and nothing contrary to His purposes” (Vol. II., p. 335). The same writer, in speaking of the usage of the term “predestination,” remarks, “It may be used first in the general sense of foreordination. In this sense it has equal reference to all events, for God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass.” It will thus be seen that the Confession, and the Catechisms, and Hodge, as one of the most eminent expounders of these formularies, uphold the doctrine, that everything which happens was foreordained by God to happen. The doctrine as thus stated is clearly the foundation of the whole system of Calvinism. If this is shaken, the entire structure topples to its base. Being so important, its advocates have sought to strengthen it by appealing to the Divine attributes and to passages from holy writ. Let us then examine their arguments derived from the attributes, and the texts they have adduced.

CHAPTER II.

CALVINISTIC PREDESTINATION IN REFERENCE TO DIVINE WISDOM

The wisdom of God is held as proving universal foreordination. Being infinitely wise—such is the argument—He will act upon a plan, as in creation, and as wise people do in regard to affairs in general. And this is perfectly correct. The question, however, is not whether God has a plan, but what that plan comprehends? Sin being a factor in the programme of life, the Divine wisdom or plan will be exercised in reference to it. There are two ways in which this may be done. It may be foreordained as part of the plan, as is seen in the above extracts. But another way is this: The Divine wisdom may be exercised in regard to sin, not as ordaining it, but as overruling it, and in turning it to account. That the evil deeds of men bring into view features of the Divine character which would not otherwise have been seen, is no doubt true, but this does not save the wrong-doers from the severest blame. But what is wisdom? It is the choosing of the best means to effect a good end. The ultimate end of creation is the glory of God, as He is the highest and the best of beings. There can be nothing higher than himself He desires the *confidence* and the *love* of men.

“Love is the root of creation, God’s essence.

Worlds without number

Lie in His bosom like children; He made them for this purpose only,—

Only to love and be loved again.”—Tegner.

Men are asked to give Him their trust and love. It is right that they should do so, for He is infinitely worthy of them. But what are sinful actions? Essentially they are foolish, and issue in misery. And if God foreordained them, how can we esteem Him as wise and good? And if not to our intelligence wise and good, how can we give Him our confidence and love? Trust and love are based upon the perception of the true and the good. If I find a man who is destitute of these qualities of character, to love him with approval is, as I am constituted, an impossibility. But to ordain the “acts of the wicked,” as Hodge says that God did, in order to spread Christianity, was neither just nor good. It was doing evil that good might come. Instead of being wise it was, if it were so, an exhibition of un wisdom as regards the very end of creation, as it was fitted to drive men away from, instead of bringing them to, God. And yet wisdom, Divine wisdom, was exercised in reference to those very persecutions. It was true, as Tertullian said, that the “blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church.” By means of the sufferings of the early Christians men’s minds were directed to that religion which supported its adherents in the midst of their accumulated sorrows. Their patience, their heroic bravery in facing grim death, threw a halo of moral glory around the martyrs which touched the hearts of true men who lived in the midst of general degeneration. The Christians were driven from their homes, but they carried the truth with them.

“The seeds of truth are bearded, and adhere we know not when, we know not where.” In the world of nature there are seeds with hooks, and others have wings to be wafted by the breeze to their proper habitat. And if Divine wisdom watches over the seeds of the vegetable kingdom, does it not stand to reason that it will do so in regard to truth? God overrules the evil, and makes it the occasion of good. Joseph was immured in jail, but from it he ascended to a seat next the throne. Christ was crucified, but from the blessed cross came streams of blessing. Paul was incarcerated, but from his prison came “thoughts that breathe and words that burn,” that have kept alive the flame of piety for more than a thousand years. The people of God still suffer, but, like the asbestos cloth when thrown into the fire, they, by these sufferings, become purified and made meet for the coming glory. In thus overruling evil, God, we say, shows the highest wisdom and love fitted to secure our

trust and affection; but to ordain evil would be an illustration of supreme folly, fitted to lower him in the estimation of angels and of men.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE TO ALMIGHTY POWER

The Power of God is held as supporting universal foreordination. As in the case of wisdom, God's power must be recognised as infinite. It is true, indeed, that creation does not prove this, since it is limited, and no conclusion can be more extensive than the premises. But looking at the nature and multitude of His works, we cannot resist the conviction that there is nothing (which does not imply a contradiction) that is "too hard for the Lord." He is infinite in power. But the power of God is guided by His wisdom and His love, just as is the power of a good and a wise king. In governing His creation, it stands to reason that He will govern each creature according to its nature—brute matter by physical law, animals by instinct, and man in harmony with his rational constitution. God does not reason with a stone, or plead with a brute; but He does so with man. "Come, now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isa. i. 18). It would be absurd to punish a block of granite because it was not marble, or to condemn the horse because he could not understand a problem in Euclid. To do so would be to treat the creatures by a law not germane to their nature. It is, indeed, a radical vice in Calvinistic reasoning that, because God is omnipotent, He can as easily therefore create virtue in a free being as He can waft the down of the thistle on the breeze. It is quite true that "whatsoever the Lord pleased that did He in heaven and in earth" (Ps. cxxxv. 6). But the question is—What is His pleasure in regard to the production of virtue? Is it a forced or free thing? Every good man will cheerfully ascribe to God the praise of his (the good, man's) virtue. God gave him his constitution; God's Spirit brought to bear on him the motives of a holy life. Had there been no Spirit, there would have been no holy life. Yet there is a sense in which the personal righteousness of the good man is his own righteousness. It consists in right acts, in right acts as regards God and as regards man. God told him what to do, and when he did it the acts became his acts, and were not the acts of God, nor of any other. When he does the thing that was right, he is commended—when he does not, he is blamed. Conversing one day with a Calvinistic clergyman, he intimated that a certain person had declared that the only thing stronger than God in the world was the human will. We remarked that we did not approve of such a mode of expression. And rightly so. It implies a confusion of ideas, confounding physical power which is almighty, and moral power, which is suasive and resistible. Stephen charged the Jews with resisting the Spirit. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts vii. 51). Because they resisted him, would it be right to say that they were physically stronger than God? We replied to the clergyman that we supposed that the person who used the expression meant that God did not get people to do what He wished. The reply was that we were equally wrong. We then asked, "Do you think that God wishes people to keep His law?" He refused to answer the question. But why would he not? Aye, why? He was in this dilemma: If he said that He did wish them to keep His law, he would have been met by the question, Why then does He not make them do so? Everywhere the law is broken. If he said that God did not wish them to keep His law, would not this have been to put the Holy One on a level with the great enemy of man? This brings out the idea that whilst God is possessed of infinite power, in the exercise of that power He has respect to the constitution of man in the production of virtue. He does not override the constitution, and treat it as if it were a nullity. To do so would be absurd, for forced virtue is not virtue at all. God is all-powerful, but He is also all-wise.

CHAPTER IV. PREDESTINATION CONSIDERED WITH REFERENCE TO DIVINE FOREKNOWLEDGE

The Foreknowledge of God is held as evidence that He has foreordained whatsoever comes to pass. He foreknows, so it is argued, but He does so because He has foreordained. Calvin says, “Since He (God) doth not otherwise foresee the things that shall come to pass than because He hath decreed that they should so come to pass, it is vain to move a controversy about foreknowledge, when it is certain that all things do happen rather by ordinance and commandment” (B. iii.) Toplady says “that God foreknows futurities, because by His predestination He hath rendered their futurity certain and inevitable.” Bonar says, “God foreknows everything that takes place, because he Has fixed it” (*Truth and Error*, p. 50). The same doctrine is held by the younger Hodge—that foreknowledge involves foreordination.

There have been some who have denied the infinitude of God’s knowledge, notably Dr. Adam Clarke. He held that God, although possessed of omnipotence, yet as He chooses not to do all things, so also although He possesses the power of knowing all things, yet He chooses to be ignorant of some things. In refuting this notion, Dr. Hodge remarks, “But this is to suppose that God wills not to be God, that the Infinite wills to be finite. Knowledge in God is not founded on His will, except so far as the knowledge of vision is concerned—*i.e.*, His knowledge of His own purposes, or what He has decreed shall come to pass. If not founded on His will it cannot be limited by it. Infinite knowledge must know all things actual or possible” (Vol. I., p. 546). Although the motive underlying Clarke’s argument is good, yet it is not wise to sacrifice the Divine intelligence to the Divine goodness. God is the infinitely perfect one, but to suppose that He is ignorant of what will happen tomorrow is to limit His perfections, and make Him a dependent being. But neither can we accept the Calvinistic doctrine, that God foreknows because He has foreordained. This, properly speaking, is not foreknowledge, but *after* knowledge, since it comes after the decree. It is, moreover, simply assertion. It is not a self-evident proposition, and is neither backed by reason nor Scripture. The great difficulty, however, with our Calvinistic friends is regarding certainty. If God is certain that an event will happen, then, so it is argued, it must happen. If we deny that there is an absolute necessity for the event as an event happening, then it is replied that God in that case was not certain. But this is sophistical reasoning—slipshod philosophy. God was certain that the event would happen, but He was also certain that it need not have happened. The Divine knowledge is simply a state of the Divine intelligence, and never causes any thing. It comprehends all that is past, all that now is, and all that will ever be. But it comprises more than this, and herein lies the key of the mystery. It takes in the possible, or that which is never realised in the actual. Human knowledge does this—and how much more the Divine! God knows that the thief will steal; He is certain that he will do it, but He is also certain that he need not do it. His being certain that the theft will take place does not necessitate the theft. It (the certainty) exercises no controlling agency upon the wrong-doer. Dr. W. Cooke remarks, “What is involved in necessity? It is a resistless impulse exerted for a given end. What is freedom? It involves a self-determining power to will and to act. What is prescience? It is simply knowledge of an event before it happens. Such being, we conceive, a correct representation of the terms, we have to inquire, where lies the alleged incompatibility of prescience and freedom? Between freedom and necessity there is, we admit, an absolute and irreconcilable discrepancy and opposition; for the assertion of the one is a direct negation of the other. What is free cannot be necessitated, and what is necessitated cannot be free. But *prescience*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.