

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

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

* *Essays*, fifth edition, p. 146.

whatever doctrine upon this subject seems to rest upon satisfactory evidence,—however humbling it may be to the pride and self-sufficiency of man, and however unable we may be to perceive its consistency with other doctrines which we also believe.

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

* Rom. xi. 33-36. See this subject | the *Theology of the Reformation*,
referred to in "The Reformers and | pp. 468, etc. (Edrs.)

Sec. XIV.—Perseverance of Saints.

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

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

Arminius never wholly renounced the doctrine of the certain

perseverance of all believers, even after he had abandoned all the other principles of Calvinism, but spoke of this as a point on which he had not fully made up his mind, and which, he thought, required further investigation,—thus virtually bearing testimony to the difficulty of disposing of the scriptural evidence on which the doctrine rests. His immediate followers, likewise, professed for a time some hesitation upon this point; but their contemporary opponents* do not seem to have given them much credit for sincerity in the doubts which they professed to entertain regarding it, because, while they did not, for a time, directly and explicitly support a negative conclusion, the whole current of their statements and arguments seemed plainly enough to indicate, that they had already renounced the generally received doctrine of the Reformed churches upon this subject. They very soon, even before the Synod of Dort, openly renounced the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, along with the other doctrines of Calvinism; and I am not aware that any instance has since occurred, in which any Calvinist has hesitated to maintain this doctrine, or any Arminian has hesitated to deny it.

This doctrine is thus stated in our Confession of Faith:† “They whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.” Little needs to be said in explanation of the meaning of these statements. The subject of the proposition is a certain class of persons who are marked out by two qualities,—namely, that God has accepted them in His Beloved, and that He has effectually called and sanctified them by His Spirit. This implies that they are persons on whose *state* and *character* an important change has taken place. As to their state, they have passed from that condition of guilt and condemnation, in which all men lie by nature, into a condition of favour and acceptance with God, so that their sins are pardoned, and they are admitted into God's family and friendship, upon the ground of what Christ has done and suffered for them. As to their character, they have been renewed in the spirit of their minds by the operation of the Holy Ghost; their natural enmity to God, and

* Amesii Coronis, p. 285. Anti-synodalia, p. 292.

† C. xvii., s. i.

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

The statement, that they can neither totally nor finally fall away, has reference to a notion which has been broached, especially by some Lutheran writers, who taught that believers or saints might fall away totally, though not finally. The notion which these persons seem to have entertained was something of this sort,—that men who had once believed might sin so much as to forfeit and lose altogether the privileges of the condition, both as to state and character, into which they had been brought by believing,—so as to become, in so far as concerned the favour and acceptance with which God regarded them, and the moral principles by which, for the time, they were animated, as bad as they were before they believed; but that all such persons would be again brought, *de novo*, into a state of grace, and that thus they might fall away or apostatize, totally, but not finally. This notion of a total, but not final, falling away, is evidently derived much more from observation of what sometimes takes place in the church, than from the study of God's word. Cases do sometimes occur, in which believers fall into heinous sins; and the persons to whose views we are now referring seem to think that such cases cannot be explained, except upon the supposition that these sins imply, or produce, a total falling away from a state of grace, while they so far defer to the general strain of Scripture as to admit, that all in whom faith and regeneration have been once produced will certainly be recovered from their apostasy, and will be eter-

nally saved. It was in opposition to this notion that our Confession asserted, that believers cannot fall away *totally* any more than *finally*,—meaning thereby, that when a state of grace, as including both acceptance with God and the existence and operation of holy moral principles in a nature renewed, has been once produced, it is never again totally lost, so as that these persons are regarded and treated by God as aliens and enemies, like those who are still living in their natural condition of guilt, or ever become again as thoroughly depraved, in point of principle and motive,—as destitute of all holiness of nature and character,—as they once were, however heinous the particular sins into which they may have fallen.

This doctrine, of the perseverance of saints or believers, is evidently a necessary and indispensable part of the Calvinistic system of theology,—being clearly involved in, or deducible from, the other fundamental doctrines of the system, which we have already considered. If it be true that God has, from eternity, absolutely and unconditionally chosen some men, certain persons, to eternal life, these men assuredly will all infallibly be saved. If it be also true, that He has arranged that no man shall be saved, unless upon earth he be brought into a state of grace, unless he repent and believe, and persevere in faith and holiness, He will assuredly give to all whom He has chosen to life faith and holiness, and will infallibly secure that they shall persevere therein unto the end. And as it is further taught by Calvinists, that God produces in some men faith and conversion in the execution of His decree of election, just because He has decreed to save *these* men,—and does so for the purpose of saving them,—the *whole* of what they teach under the head of perseverance is thus effectually provided for, and thoroughly established,—faith and regeneration being never produced in any except those whose ultimate salvation has been secured, and whose perseverance, therefore, in faith and holiness must be certain and infallible. All this is too plain to require any illustration; and Calvinists must, of course, in consistency, take the responsibility of maintaining the certain perseverance of all believers or saints,—of all in whom faith and holiness have been once produced. It is not quite so clear and certain, that Arminians are bound, in consistency, to deny this doctrine,—though the general spirit and tendency of their system are adverse to it. They might, perhaps, without inconsistency, hold that it is possible, that all who have been enabled to repent and believe will, in point of fact, persevere

and be saved; but as they teach that men, in the exercise of their own free-will, can resist and frustrate the grace of God's Spirit, exerted in strength sufficient to produce faith and conversion, they could scarcely avoid maintaining *the possibility, at least*, of their throwing it off after it had taken possession of them, and thus finally falling away.

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

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

Their objection, of course, is, that, if those who have been once brought into a state of grace cannot finally fall away and perish, then they may, and probably will,—this being the natural tendency of such a doctrine,—live in careless indifference and security, and be little concerned to avoid sin, since it cannot affect injuriously their everlasting condition. Now, this objection is just a specimen of a general mode of misrepresentation, to which Arminians very commonly resort in this whole controversy,—that, namely, of taking a part of our doctrine, disjoining it from the rest, and then founding an objection upon this particular and defective view of it. The great general principle which we hold and teach, that the means are fore-ordained as well as the end, affords a complete answer to the objection. But we may now advert more particularly to the way in which this general principle bears upon the special aspect of the objection, as brought out in connection with the doctrine of perseverance. The perseverance which we contend for,—and which, we say, is effectually provided for and secured,—is just a perseverance in faith and holiness,—a continuing steadfast in believing, and in bringing

forth all the fruits of righteousness. Perseverance is not merely a continuing for some time upon earth after faith and regeneration have been produced, and then being admitted, as a matter of course, to heaven, without any regard to the moral history of the intervening period; it is a perseverance in the course on which men have entered,—a perseverance unto the end in the exercise of faith and in the practice of holiness. This, we say, has been provided for, and will be certainly effected. The case of a man who appeared to have been brought to faith and repentance, but who afterwards fell into habitual carelessness and sin, and died in this condition, is not a case which exhibits and illustrates the tendency and effects of our doctrine of perseverance, rightly understood, and viewed in all its extent; on the contrary, it contradicts it; and, if it were clearly established to have become a real case of faith and conversion, it would, we admit, *disprove it*. In regard to all such cases, it is incumbent upon us, not merely from the necessity of defending our doctrine against objections, *but from the intrinsic nature of the doctrine itself*, to assert and maintain, that true faith and regeneration never existed, and therefore could not be persevered in. We simply look away from the partial and defective view of our doctrine given by our opponents,—we just take in the *whole* doctrine as we are accustomed to explain it; and we see at once, that the supposed case, and the objection founded upon it, are wholly irrelevant,—that our real doctrine has nothing to do with it. If our doctrine be true, then no such case could possibly occur, where true faith had once been produced, because that very doctrine implies that perseverance *in this faith and in the holiness which springs from it*, has been provided for and secured; and if a case of their falling away could be established with regard to a believer, then the fair inference would be, not that our doctrine produced, or tended to produce, such a result, but that the doctrine was unfounded.

As the objection derived from the alleged tendency of our doctrine thus originates in a partial or defective view of what the doctrine is, so, in like manner, any such abuse or perversion of the doctrine by those who profess to believe and to act upon it, must originate in the same source. They can abuse it, to encourage themselves in carelessness and sin, only when they look at a part of the doctrine, and shut out the whole,—when they forget that the means have been fore-ordained as well as the end,—

that the thing which God has promised and provided for is just perseverance in the exercise of faith and in the practice of holiness; and that He has provided for securing this just *because* He has established an invariable connection between perseverance unto the end in faith and holiness, as a means, and eternal salvation, as the end. The true way to judge of the practical tendency and result of a doctrine, is to conceive of it as fully and correctly understood in its real character, in its right relations, and in its whole extent,—to conceive of it as firmly and cordially believed, and as judiciously and intelligently applied; and then to consider what effect it is fitted to produce upon the views, motives, and conduct of those who *so* understand, believe, and apply it. When the doctrine of the perseverance of believers is tested in this way, it can be easily shown, not only to have no tendency to encourage men in carelessness and indifference about the regulation of their conduct, but to have a tendency directly the reverse. In virtue of the principle of the means being fore-ordained as well as the end, and of an invariable connection being thus established between perseverance in faith and holiness on the one hand, and salvation on the other, it leaves all the ordinary obligations and motives to steadfastness and diligence—to unshaken and increasing holiness of heart and life, and to the use of all the means which conduce to the promotion of this result,—to say the very least, wholly unimpaired, to operate with all the force which properly belongs to them. The position of a man who has been enabled by God's grace to repent and believe,—who is persuaded that this change has been effected upon him,—and who, in consequence, entertains the conviction that he will persevere and be saved, viewed in connection with other principles plainly revealed, and quite consistent with all the doctrines of Calvinism, is surely fitted to call into operation the strongest and most powerful motives derived from every consideration relating to God and to himself,—his past history, his present situation, and prospects, all combining to constrain him to run in the way of God's commandments with enlarged heart. And then, it is further to be remembered, that the doctrine which he believes necessarily involves in it, as a part of itself,—or, at least, as an immediate consequence,—that he can have no good ground for believing that he is in a condition of safety, and warranted to entertain the assurance of eternal happiness, unless he is holding fast the profession

of his faith without wavering,—unless he is continuing steadfast in the paths of new obedience, dying more and more unto sin, and living more and more unto righteousness.

The objection, about the tendency of this doctrine of the certain perseverance of believers to encourage them to live in carelessness and sin, on the ground that their eternal welfare has been secured, further assumes that believers,—men who have been brought, by God's almighty power, from darkness to light,—whose eyes have been opened to behold the glory of God in the face of His Son,—who have been led to see and feel that they are not their own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of God's own Son,—are still wholly incapable of being influenced by any motives but those derived from a selfish and exclusive regard to their own safety and happiness. And even if we were to concede all this, and to descend, for the sake of argument, to the low moral level on which our opponents are accustomed to take their stand in discussing such questions, we could still present to believers sufficiently strong motives,—*addressed exclusively to their selfishness*,—to abstain from all sin, even without needing to urge that, by sinning, they would forfeit their eternal happiness; for our Confession teaches, in full accordance with the word of God, that though believers cannot totally and finally fall away, but shall certainly persevere and be saved, yet that “nevertheless they may, through the temptations of Satan and the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit; come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves,”*—a statement which is true, *in some measure*, of all the sins which believers commit, and not merely of the “grievous sins” into which they sometimes fall.

But we shall not dwell longer upon this topic, and proceed to notice the other points to which we referred,—namely, the scriptural evidence bearing directly and immediately upon this particular doctrine. Calvinists contend that this doctrine, besides

* C. xvii., s. iii.

being necessarily involved in, or clearly deducible from, the great truths which we have already considered and established, has its own proper, direct Scripture evidence, amply sufficient to establish it as a distinct and independent truth. They undertake to prove, by direct and appropriate Scripture evidence, the position that those who have been brought by faith and conversion into a state of grace, cannot finally fall away from it, but shall certainly persevere to the end, and be eternally saved; and if this can be proved as a distinct and independent truth, it manifestly tends very directly and very powerfully to confirm the whole of the leading principles of the Calvinistic theology,—to swell the mass of evidence by which Calvinism is proved to be indeed the doctrine of the word of God. Arminians, however, as we have intimated, profess to produce from Scripture direct proof of the falsehood of our doctrine of perseverance, which, as we formerly explained, they scarcely profess to do in regard to the doctrine of election; and, indeed, they rest very much upon the proof they adduce of the falsehood of our doctrine of perseverance as the leading *direct* scriptural evidence they have to bring forward against the whole Calvinistic system. We are quite willing to concede to them, that if they can really prove from Scripture that any men who have once believed and been born again have fallen away and finally perished, or that they may fall away and perish,—no certain and effectual provision having been made by God to prevent this,—the doctrine that God, out of His own good pleasure, elected some men to everlasting life, must be abandoned; for we will not undertake to defend Augustine's position, that some men who believed and were converted might fall, though none who were elected could do so.

The Scripture evidence which Arminians produce in opposition to our doctrine, and in support of their own, upon this subject of perseverance, is much stronger than what they have been able to bring forward on any other topic involved in this whole controversy; and it must, in fairness, be allowed to possess considerable plausibility. There are passages in Scripture, which, taken in their most obvious sense, do seem to imply that men who once believed and were converted did, or might, fall away and finally perish; and if these statements stood alone, they might, perhaps, be held sufficient to warrant the reception of this doctrine. We have, however, in Scripture, a large body of conclusive evidence in support of the doctrine of the certain perseverance of all be-

lievers,—evidence both direct and inferential,—evidence which cannot be answered and explained away,—evidence greatly superior in strength, extent, and explicitness, to any that can be adduced upon the other side. The proper question, of course, is, What is the doctrine which Scripture really teaches upon this subject, when we take into account the whole of the materials which it furnishes, and embody the united substance of them all, making due allowance for every position which it really sanctions? Now, Calvinists undertake to establish the following propositions upon this subject: first, that Scripture contains clear and conclusive evidence of the certain, final perseverance of all who have ever been united to Christ through faith, and have been born again of His word,—conclusive evidence that they shall never perish, but shall have eternal life; secondly, that there is no sufficient scriptural evidence to warrant a denial of this doctrine, or to establish the opposite one; and that there is no great difficulty—no great force or straining being required for the purpose—in showing that the passages on which the Arminians found, may be so explained as to be consistent with our doctrine, while it is impossible—without the most unwarrantable and unnatural force and straining—to reconcile with their doctrine the scriptural statements which we adduce in support of ours.

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

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

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

* Loc. xv., Qu. xvi., s. iv., De Perseverantia Fidei.

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

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

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

Sec. XV.—Socinianism—Arminianism—Calvinism.

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

* 1 John ii. 19.
 † C. xvii., sec. ii. For the practical application of the doctrines of Calvin-ism, see "The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation," p. 525. (Edrs.)

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

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

The first is, that, in the scheme of Christian theology, there is a class of doctrines which may be said to occupy a higher platform than what are commonly called the peculiarities of Calvinism. The doctrines here referred to are, of course, those taught by orthodox Lutherans and by evangelical Arminians, as well as by Calvinists, concerning the depravity of man by nature,—the person and work of Christ,—and the agency of the Holy Spirit in the work of regeneration and sanctification. The Bible was given

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

Now, there can be no reasonable doubt that there have been, and that there are, men who have entertained views upon all these subjects, which we must admit to be scriptural and correct,—because, in the main, the same as we ourselves believe,—who yet have rejected the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism. The substance of what we assert is this,—that men who agree with us in holding scriptural views upon these points, while they reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, do agree with us on subjects that are more important and fundamental, and that ought to occupy a more prominent place in the ordinary course of public instruction than those in which they differ from us. They hold the truth upon those points which it was the great leading object of revelation to teach us,—which bear most directly and immediately upon the exposition of the way of a sinner's salvation,—which ought to occupy the most frequent and the most prominent place in the preaching of the gospel,—and which God most commonly blesses

for the conversion of sinners. Their *consistency*, in holding scriptural doctrines upon these points, while they reject the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, is not at present the question; that will be adverted to afterwards; the fact that they do hold them is undoubted, and it ought to be fully admitted and fairly estimated. It is not, indeed, strictly correct to say, that they hold purely scriptural views upon all these most important topics. We have had occasion, in regard to every one of them, to point out something erroneous, or at least defective, in their sentiments or impressions; and we have *often* asserted that everything, however apparently insignificant, which either transgresses or comes short of what Scripture teaches upon these points, is sinful and dangerous. Such, indeed, is the harmony subsisting among all the branches of scriptural doctrine, that truth or error in regard to any one of them almost unavoidably produces truth or error, in a greater or less degree, in regard to the rest,—that, in short, none but Calvinists hold views which are, *in all respects*, scriptural, in regard to any of the leading doctrines of Christianity. Still, the views of the men to whom we refer are, in regard to these fundamental points, accordant, in their main substance, with the teaching of Scripture; and their defects and errors come out chiefly when we enter into some of the more minute and detailed explanations as to the bearings and consequences of the particular doctrine, and the more distant and less obvious conclusions that may be deduced from it,—so that, in regard to almost any statement which we would make, in explaining our sentiments upon these points, for the purpose of practical instruction, they would fully agree with us. Arminius held some erroneous views upon the subject of justification, which his followers afterwards expanded into a subversion of the gospel method of salvation, and the establishment of justification by deeds of law. But he declared—and I have no doubt honestly—that he could subscribe to every statement in the chapter upon this subject in Calvin's Institutes. This, of course, affords no reason why anything that was really defective or erroneous in the sentiments of Arminius upon this point—however unimportant comparatively—should not be exposed and condemned; and still less does it afford any reason why we should not point out, in connection with this subject, the dangerous tendency of the admission of any error, however insignificant it may appear; but it surely affords good ground for the assertion, that

Arminius himself agreed with Calvin in regard to the main substance and essential principles of his doctrine of justification.

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

Secondly: The second observation which I wish to make is this,—that Arminianism, in its more Pelagian form, is practically little better than Socinianism, and would be more consistent if it renounced a profession of those doctrines concerning the person and work of Christ, and the agency of the Spirit, by which it appears to be distinguished from Socinianism. The Pelagian Arminians profess to believe in the divinity and atonement of Christ, and in the agency of the Spirit; but they practically *omit* these doctrines, or leave them wholly in the background, in the

representations they usually give of the general substance and spirit of revealed truth, and of the way in which it bears upon the condition and character of men. Their ordinary views and sentiments upon the subject of the true nature and design of Christianity, and the representations they commonly give of it for the instruction and guidance of others, are scarcely affected, to any material extent, by their professed belief in the divinity and atonement of Christ, and in the agency of the Spirit. These doctrines with them are mere words, which have no real value or significance, and might, to all practical purposes, be just as well discarded. The cause of this is to be found mainly in the extent to which they have denied and corrupted the scriptural doctrine concerning the guilt and depravity of man, and his consequent inability to save himself, or to do anything that is really fitted to effect his own salvation. Their radically erroneous views upon this subject lead them practically to regard the atoning work of Christ and the regenerating work of the Spirit as unnecessary,—there being really no adequate object to be accomplished by such peculiar and extraordinary provisions. The merits of Christ and the assistance of the Spirit, are, with such persons, little or nothing more than mere words, introduced merely as if to round off a sentence, and to keep up some show of admitting the great features of the Christian revelation; while, practically and substantially, the general strain of their representations of Christianity seems plainly to imply,—either, that man does not need anything that can be called salvation,—or, that whatever he may need in this matter he is able to effect or provide for himself. This is just practically Socinianism; and it is the form in which Socinianism—or a rejection of all that is peculiar and fundamental in Christianity—commonly appears among the mass of irreligious and careless men, living in a community where an open and formal denial of the divinity and atonement of Christ might subject them to some inconvenience or disapprobation.

The work of Christ *for* men, and the work of the Spirit *in* men,—rendered necessary by their natural condition of guilt, and depravity, and helplessness, if they are to be saved, and indispensable to their salvation,—constitute the essential features of the Christian system, as revealed in the Bible. The Socinians openly and formally deny these fundamental principles; and the Pelagian Arminians, while admitting them in words, deprive them

of all real significance and value, by leaving them out in all their practical views and impressions, in regard to the way and manner in which sinners are saved. This was the sort of theology that prevailed very extensively in the Established Churches of this country during a large part of last century; and it is sure always to prevail wherever true personal religion has been in a great measure extinguished,—where the ministry is taken up as a mere trade,—and where men press into the priest's office for a bit of bread. Among such persons, the question, whether they shall retain or abandon a profession, in words, of the divinity and atonement of Christ, and of the personality and agency of the Holy Spirit, is determined more by their circumstances than by their convictions,—more by their courage than by their conscience. And it signifies little, comparatively, how this question is decided; for, whether they retain or abandon a profession, in words, of these great doctrines, they fundamentally corrupt the gospel of the grace of God, and wholly misrepresent the way of salvation.

This Pelagian form of Arminianism is usually found in connection with everything that is cold, meagre, and lifeless in practical religion,—in personal character,—or effort for the spiritual good of others. This, however, has not been *always* and universally the case; and we have had in our day, and among ourselves, a grossly Pelagian Arminianism, which manifested for a time a considerable measure of active and ardent zeal. These persons—popularly known by the name of Morrisonians—professed to have found out a great specific for the more rapid and extensive conversion of sinners; and they employed it with considerable zeal and activity, and with loud boastings of its extraordinary success. But their plan is as old at least as the time of Pelagius; for in itself it really differs in no material respect from that which he propounded, and which Augustine overthrew from the word of God. Pelagius did not deny either the atonement of Christ or the agency of the Spirit; but he practically left them out, or explained them very much away. And so it is with these modern heretics. The atonement, with them, is reduced to being little or nothing else practically,—however they may sometimes exalt it in words,—than a mere exhibition and proof of God's love to men, fitted and intended to impress upon us the conviction that He is ready and willing to forgive; and it is supposed to operate mainly by impressing this conviction, and thereby persuading us to turn to

him; while the view they give of man's natural power to believe the gospel,—to repent and turn to God, or—what is virtually the same thing, in a somewhat more scriptural dress—a so-called gracious assistance of the Spirit, imparted equally, or at least sufficiently, to all men,—contradicts the plain doctrine of Scripture concerning the depravity of human nature, and practically supersedes the necessity of the special efficacious agency of the Holy Spirit in the production of faith and conversion. The system, in short, is manifestly Arminianism in its most Pelagian form; and though accompanied in this case with much zeal and activity,—while Pelagianism has been more usually accompanied with coldness or apathy,—this does not affect the true character and tendency of the scheme of doctrine taught; while the character of that doctrine, judged of both by the testimony of Scripture and the history of the church, warrants us in regarding with great distrust the conversions which they profess to be making, and to cherish the suspicion that many are likely to prove like the stony-ground hearers, who had no root, who endured for a time, and then withered away.

Before leaving this general consideration, I would like to point out the lesson which it is fitted to teach as to the important influence which men's views about the guilt and depravity of human nature exert upon their whole conceptions of the scheme of divine truth, and the consequent necessity of rightly understanding that great doctrine, and being familiar with the scriptural grounds on which it rests. If doctrines so important and so peculiar in their character as the atonement of Christ and the special agency of the Spirit are admitted as true,—and we have not charged the Pelagian Arminians with conscious hypocrisy in professing to believe them,—it might be expected that they would exert a most extensive and pervading influence upon men's whole views of the scheme of divine truth, and the way of a sinner's salvation; and yet we see it abundantly established in the history of the church, that ignorance of the great doctrine of the universal guilt and entire depravity of men neutralizes practically all their influence, and leads those who admit their truth to conceive and represent the Christian system very much in the same way in which it is exhibited by those who believe Christ to be a mere man, and the Holy Ghost to have no existence. There are various gradations among Arminians,—as I have had occasion to point out,—from

those who, in these important doctrines, substantially agree with Calvinists, down to those who differ little from the Socinians; but of all these various gradations, the distinguishing characteristic,—the testing measure,—may be said to be the degree in which the views of the different parties deviate from the doctrine of Scripture in regard to the universal guilt and entire depravity of man by nature,—the real feature in his actual condition which rendered necessary, if he was to be saved, a special interposition of God's mercy,—the vicarious sufferings and death of His only-begotten Son,—and the effusion of His Holy Spirit.

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

proclamation of these great scriptural doctrines, both at home and abroad, God has been pleased to honour them with a large measure of success in the conversion of sinners.

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

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

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

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