

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

\* Secs. v., vi.

† Sec. vii.

commonly called the decree of reprobation,—namely, first, *præteritio*, or passing by, which is an act of sovereignty; and, secondly, *prædamnatio*, which is a judicial act, described in the Confession as "ordaining them to dishonour and wrath for their sin."

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

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

properties of the divine decrees are these two:—First, Are they conditional or not? Secondly, Are they unchangeable or not?

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

The foundations of this great doctrine are these:—that unless God left the world, and all the creatures whom He had formed, to rule and govern themselves, altogether independently of Him, He must, from eternity, have formed plans and purposes for regulating *its* affairs,—for determining and controlling *their* actions,—that these plans and purposes could not be conditional and changeable,—that is, left to be dependent upon the volitions of creatures, and liable to be changed, according to the nature and results of these volitions,—but must have been formed in the exercise of His infinite knowledge, and all His other infinite perfections, and must therefore certainly and infallibly be in time carried into full effect. These are the topics usually discussed under the head “De Decretis Dei,” taken in its widest sense; and it is manifest, as we formerly remarked, that if the Calvinistic doctrine upon this great *general* question be established, this settles all the questions bearing upon the subjects of election and reprobation, or the purposes and actions of God with respect to the character and fate of men individually. If God has unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, and if, in point of fact, some men are saved and the rest

perish, then it must be true that He has predestinated some men to everlasting life, and has fore-ordained others to everlasting death.

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

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

Some Arminians profess to believe, that God has made, from eternity, fixed and unchangeable decrees, with respect to the eternal condition of men individually. But those of them who, in accommodation to the language of Scripture, choose to adopt this

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

The fundamental position of the Arminians, at the time of the Synod of Dort, was, that the only and *whole* decree of election consisted in this, that God had formed a general purpose or determination, that all who should repent and believe would be saved, and that all who should continue impenitent and unbelieving would be condemned, without any reference whatever to individuals, except the bare foresight or foreknowledge of what would be, in fact, the result in the case of each person. A decree or purpose, based or founded solely upon the foreknowledge or foresight of the faith and obedience of individuals, is, of course, the same thing as the entire want or non-existence of any purpose or decree in regard to them. It determines nothing concerning them,—bestows nothing upon them,—secures nothing to them. It is a mere word or name, the use of which only tends to involve the subject in obscurity and confusion; whereas, upon Calvinistic principles, God's electing decree, in choosing some men to life, is the effectual source, or determining cause, of the faith and holiness which are ultimately wrought in them, and of the eternal happiness to which they at last attain. God elects certain men to life, not because He foresees that they will repent, and believe, and persevere in faith and holiness, but for reasons no doubt fully

accordant with His wisdom and justice, though wholly unknown to us, and certainly not based upon anything foreseen in them, as distinguished from other men; and then further decrees to give to those men, in due time, everything necessary, in order to their being admitted to the enjoyment of eternal life, in accordance with the provisions of the scheme which His wisdom has devised for saving sinners.

The Arminians do not well know how to explain the source of the faith and holiness by which some men come to be distinguished, and to be prepared for heaven. They do not venture, as the Socinians do, to exclude God's agency wholly from the production of them; and they can scarcely deny, that whatever God does in the production of them, He decreed or resolved to do, and decreed and resolved to do it from eternity; and on this account, as well as for other reasons, they are much fonder of dwelling upon reprobation than election; because they think that, in regard to the former subject, they can make out a more plausible case than with respect to the latter, if not in defending their own views, at least in assailing those of the Calvinists. The Arminians at the Synod of Dort wished to begin, under the first article, with discussing the subject of reprobation, and complained of it as injustice, when the Synod refused to concede this demand.\* The demand was obviously unreasonable; it did not, and could not, spring from an honest love of truth, and it was not fitted to promote the cause of truth; and yet this has been substantially, though not in form, the course generally adopted by Arminians, in stating and discussing this subject. They usually endeavour to excite a prejudice against the doctrine of reprobation, or God's decree or purpose with relation to those who ultimately perish, often by distorting and misrepresenting the views held by Calvinists upon this subject; and then, after having produced all they can allege against this doctrine, they argue that, as there is no such thing as reprobation, so neither can there be any such thing as election.

Calvinists, on the contrary, usually produce first the evidence for the doctrine of election, and then show, that this doctrine being once established, all that they hold on the subject of reprobation follows as a matter of course. They do not, indeed, regard

\* See the Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation, pp. 538, etc. (Edrs.)

the doctrine of reprobation as wholly dependent for its evidence upon the doctrine of election; for they believe that the doctrine of reprobation has its own distinct scriptural proof; but they think that the proof of the doctrine of election is quite sufficient to establish all they hold on the subject of reprobation, and that there are much fuller materials in Scripture bearing upon the former subject than upon the latter. It is this last consideration that establishes the utter unfairness of the course usually pursued by the Arminians, in giving priority and superior prominence to the discussion of the doctrine of reprobation. As the Scriptures give us much more information as to what God does in producing faith and regeneration in those who believe and are converted, than as to His mode of procedure in regard to those who are left in impenitence and unbelief, so it tells us much more, with respect to His decrees and purposes with regard to those who are saved, than with regard to those who perish; and if so, we ought, in our investigations into the subject, to begin with the former, and not with the latter, and to endeavour to form our opinion of what is less clearly revealed in Scripture by what is more plainly declared. Calvinists do not shrink from discussing the subject of reprobation, though, from its awful character, they have no satisfaction in dwelling upon it, and feel deeply the propriety of being peculiarly careful here not to attempt to be wise above what is written. They do not hesitate to admit that it is necessarily involved in, or deducible from, the doctrine of election;\* and they think they can fully prove and defend all that they really hold regarding it. What they hold upon this subject is this,—that God decreed, or purposed, to do from eternity what He actually does in time, in regard to those who perish, as well as in regard to those who are saved; and this is, in substance, to withhold from them, or to abstain from communicating to them, those gracious and insuperable influences of His Spirit, by which alone faith and regeneration can be produced,—to leave them in their natural state of sin, and then to inflict upon them the punishment which, by their sin, they have deserved.

Some Calvinists have been disposed to go to the other extreme

\* “De Reprobatione nos non sumus admodum solliciti, nisi quatenus consequitur ex Electione. Positiva autem reprobatio ad exitium, sine considera-

tione ullius inobedientiæ, non sequitur ex Electionis doctrinâ.” Amesii Antisynodalia Scripta, p. 37.

from that which we have just exposed on the part of the Arminians. The Arminian extreme is to press reprobation, as a topic of discussion, into undue and unfair prominence; the other is, to throw it too much out of sight. Those to whom we now refer, are disposed to assert God's eternal, unconditional, and unchangeable decree or purpose, electing some men to everlasting life, and effecting and ensuring *their* salvation; but to omit all mention of His decrees or purposes in regard to those who ultimately perish. This is the course adopted in the seventeenth article of the Church of England, where the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to life is set forth so plainly, that it is strange that men could have persuaded themselves that the article fairly admits of an Arminian sense, but where nothing is said of what theologians have been accustomed to discuss under the head of reprobation. Whatever respect may be entertained for the motives in which such an omission originates, or for the general character of some of the men who are influenced by them, the omission itself is unwarranted. Every one who adopts the Calvinistic interpretation of those passages of Scripture on which the doctrine of election to life is founded, must admit that there are indications in Scripture—though certainly neither so full nor so numerous—of God's decrees or purposes with respect to those who perish, as well as with respect to those who are saved. And unless men deliberately refuse to follow out their principles to their legitimate consequences, they cannot dispute that the election of some men necessarily implies a corresponding preterition, or passing by, of the rest. And though there is certainly no subject where the obligation to keep within the limits of what is revealed is more imperative, and none that ought to be stated and discussed under a deeper feeling of reverence and holy awe, yet there is no reason why, upon this, any more than other subjects, we should not ascertain and bring out all that “is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture.”\*

In stating and discussing the question with respect to reprobation, Calvinists are careful to distinguish between the two different acts formerly referred to, decreed or resolved upon by God from eternity, and executed by Him in time,—the one negative and the other positive,—the one sovereign and the other judicial. The

\* Confession, c. i., sec. vi.

first, which they call non-election, preterition, or passing by, is simply decreeing to leave,—and, in consequence, leaving—men in their natural state of sin,—to withhold from them, or to abstain from conferring upon them, those special, supernatural, gracious influences, which are necessary to enable them to repent and believe; so that the result is, that they continue in their sin, with the guilt of their transgression upon their head. The second—the positive judicial act,—is more properly that which is called, in our Confession, “fore-ordaining to everlasting death,” and “ordaining those who have been passed by to dishonour and wrath *for their sin.*” God ordains none to wrath or punishment, except on account of their sin, and makes no decree to subject them to punishment which is not founded on, and has reference to, their sin, as a thing certain and contemplated. But the first, or negative, act of preterition, or passing by, is not founded upon their sin, and perseverance in it, as foreseen. Were sin foreseen the proper ground or cause of the act of preterition or passing by, preterition must have been the fate equally of all men, for all have sinned, and, of course, were foreseen as sinners. It is not alleged that those who are not elected, or who are passed by, have been always greater sinners than those who have been chosen and brought to eternal life. And with respect to the idea, that final impenitence or unbelief foreseen might be the ground or cause of the first act of preterition, as distinguished from fore-ordination to wrath because of sin, this Calvinists regard as plainly inconsistent with the scriptural statements, which ascribe the production of faith and regeneration, and perseverance in faith and holiness, solely to the good pleasure of God and the efficacious operation of His Spirit, and with the intimations which Scripture also gives, that *there is something about God’s decrees and purposes*, even in regard to those who perish, which can be resolved only into His own good pleasure,—into the most wise and holy counsel of His will.

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

From the account which we have given of the state of the question, in the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians, upon the subject of the divine decrees, it must be evident that there are just two theories which can be maintained upon this matter; and that all men who are able to understand the question, and

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

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

The substance of the Calvinistic doctrine is:—that God, from eternity, chose, or elected, certain men to everlasting life; and resolved, certainly and infallibly, to effect the salvation of *these* men, in accordance with the provisions of a great scheme which He had devised for this purpose,—a scheme without which no sinners could have been saved; and that, in making this selection of these individuals, who were to be certainly saved, He was not influenced or determined by the foresight or foreknowledge, that they, as distinguished from others, would repent and believe, and would persevere to the end in faith and holiness; but that,

on the contrary, their faith and conversion, their holiness and perseverance, are to be traced to His election of them, and to the effectual provision He has made for executing His electing purpose or decree, as their true and only source,—they being chosen absolutely and unconditionally to salvation; and chosen also to faith, regeneration, and perseverance, as the necessary means, and, in some sense, conditions, of salvation. Now, if this doctrine be denied, it is plain enough that the view which *must* be taken of the various points involved in the statement of it, is, in substance, this:—that God does not make from eternity any selection of some men from among the human race, whom He resolves and determines to save; that, of course, He never puts in operation any means that are fitted, and intended, to secure the salvation of those who are saved, as distinguished from others; and that, consequently, their faith and regeneration, with which salvation is inseparably connected, are not the gifts of God, effected by His agency, but are wrought by themselves, in the exercise of their own powers and capacities. On this theory, it is impossible that God could have decreed or purposed the conversion and salvation of those who are saved, any more than of those who perish. And the only way in which their salvation, individually, could have come under God's cognisance, is that merely of its being foreseen as a fact future,—which would certainly take place—though He neither decreed nor caused it,—their own acts in repenting and believing, and persevering in faith and obedience, simply foreseen as future, being the cause, or ground, or determining principle of any acts which God either did or could pass in regard to them, individually, as distinguished from the rest of their fellow-men. This brings out the true, real, and only possible alternative in the case; and it is just, in substance, this: whether God is the true author and cause of the salvation of those who are saved? or whether this result is to be ascribed, in each case, to men themselves? Calvinistic and Arminian writers have displayed a considerable variety in their mode of stating and discussing this subject; and Calvinists, as well as Arminians, have sometimes imagined that they had fallen upon ideas and modes of statement and representation, which threw some new light upon it,—which tended to establish more firmly their own doctrine, or to expose more successfully that of their opponents. But the practical result of all these ingenious speculations has always, upon a

full examination of the subject, turned out to be, that the state of the question was found to be the same as before,—the real alternative unchanged,—the substantial materials of proof and argument unaltered; and the difficulties attaching to the opposite doctrines as strong and perplexing as ever, amid all the ingenious attempts made to modify their aspect, or to shift their position.

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

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

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

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

The difference between Calvinists upon this subject is not in itself of any material importance; and almost all judicious Cal-

\* Turretin. Loc. iv., Qu. ix.

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

The fall of the human race into a state of sin and misery in Adam, is the basis and foundation of the scheme of truth revealed in the sacred Scripture,—it is the basis and foundation of the Calvinistic system of theology; and in the truths plainly revealed in Scripture as to the principles that determine and regulate the provision by which some men are saved from this their natural state of sin and misery, and the rest are left to perish in it, there are, without entering into unwarranted and presumptuous speculations, ample materials for enabling us to decide conclusively in favour of Calvinism, and against Arminianism, on all the points that are really involved in the controversy between them.†

If we are correct in this account of the state of the question concerning predestination as controverted between Calvinists and Arminians, it is evident that the real points in dispute are these:

\* Turretin. Loc. iv., Qu. ix., sec. vii. | in “The Reformers and the Theology  
† This topic is more fully illustrated | of the Reformation,” p. 358. (Edrs.)

Did God from eternity, in contemplating and arranging about the everlasting condition of mankind, choose some men out of the human race—that is, certain persons, individually and specifically—to be, certainly and infallibly, partakers of eternal life? or did He merely choose certain qualities or properties,—faith, repentance, holiness, and perseverance,—with a purpose of admitting to heaven all those men, whoever they might be, that should possess or exhibit these qualities, and to consign to punishment all those who, after being favoured with suitable opportunities, should fail to exhibit them? This question really, and in substance, exhausts the controversy; and the second of these positions must be maintained by all anti-Calvinists. But as the Arminian differs from the Socinian section of the anti-Calvinists, in admitting God’s foreknowledge of all events,—and, of course, in admitting that God foresaw from eternity, and consequently had present to His mind, though He did not fore-ordain, what would, in fact, be the ultimate fate of each individual,—the controversy, as managed with Arminian opponents, has more commonly assumed this form: Was God’s election of some men to everlasting life based or founded only on His mere free grace and love, or upon their faith, holiness, and perseverance, foreseen as future? This is the form in which the controversy is usually discussed with Arminians who admit God’s foreknowledge of all events; but the question in this form does not at all differ in substance from the preceding, in which it applies equally to all anti-Calvinists, whether they admit or deny foreknowledge. Of course, an election founded upon a foresight of the faith, holiness, and perseverance of particular persons, is not an election at all, but a mere recognition of the future existence of certain qualities found in certain men, though God has neither produced, nor decreed to produce, them. Accordingly, Arminians are accustomed to identify the election of a particular individual with his faith or believing in Christ, as if there was no antecedent act of God bearing upon him—his character and condition—until he believed; while others of them—acting upon the same general idea, but following it out more consistently by taking into account their own doctrine, that faith is not necessarily connected with salvation, since believers may fall away and finally perish—identify the time of God’s decree of election with the death of believers, as if then only their salvation became by the event certain, or certainly known, while till that



time nothing had been done to effect or secure it.\* But a more important question is, To what is it that men are chosen? is it merely to what is external and temporary, and not to what is internal and everlasting?

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

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

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

\* So the Remonstrants in their "Acta et Scripta Synodalia." Amœii Anti-synod. Script., p. 11.

*Sec. IX.—Predestination, and the Doctrine of the Fall.*

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

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

And here we are naturally led to advert, in the first place, to the connection subsisting between the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination to eternal life, and the doctrine of the fall of the human race in Adam into an estate of sin and misery. With regard to this point, Calvinists generally admit that the fall of mankind, or of the whole human race, in Adam, is an essential part of their scheme of predestination, in this restricted sense; and that, unless this doctrine were true, their views upon the subject of predestination could not well be maintained, and would be destitute of

one of the foundations on which they rest. Our doctrine of predestination necessarily implies that men are all by nature, in point of fact, in a condition of guilt and depravity, from which they are unable to rescue themselves, and that God might, without injustice, have left them all in this condition to perish. It is this state of things, as a fact realized in the actual condition of men by nature, that lays a foundation for the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, or God's choosing some out of this condition, of His mere free grace and love, and determining to save them; and it is upon this ground—as evincing that all might justly have been left to perish, and that none had any claim upon God for deliverance and salvation—that we vindicate our doctrine from many of the objections by which it is commonly assailed, as if it represented God as exhibiting respect of persons, in any sense implying injustice, with reference to those whom He decreed to save, or as exhibiting injustice in any sense with reference to those whom He decreed to pass by, and to leave to perish. I do not at present enter into any exposition or defence of the doctrine of the fall of the human race in Adam,—of the grounds on which the universal guilt and depravity of men, as a matter of fact, is established,—or of the light, partial, indeed, but still important, which Scripture casts upon this mysterious subject, by making known to us the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. It is enough to remark, that Arminians never have disproved the Calvinistic doctrine of the universal guilt and depravity of mankind, and, of course, have no right to found upon a denial of this great fact an argument against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. Could the universal guilt and depravity of mankind by nature, as a matter of fact, be conclusively disproved, this would, no doubt, occasion serious difficulty to Calvinists, in establishing and vindicating their doctrine of predestination; but then, on the other hand, the proof of this fact—which can be satisfactorily established both from Scripture and experience—not only leaves the doctrine of predestination unassailable from that quarter, but affords some positive evidence in support of it; for it is manifest that, if men are all by nature, in point of fact, involved in guilt or depravity,—if they are wholly unable to deliver themselves, and have no claim whatever upon God for deliverance,—then the deliverance and salvation of those of them who are delivered and saved must originate wholly in the good pleasure—in the free grace and love—of God, and must be

effected only by His almighty power,—principles which Arminians may profess to hold in words, but which are manifestly inconsistent with the whole substance and spirit of their theology, and which find their full and honest expression only in the doctrines of Calvinism.

*Sec. X.—Predestination, and the Omniscience of God.*

This naturally leads us to advert to the support which the Calvinistic doctrine derives from the scriptural representations of the divine perfections and sovereignty, as exercised in the government of the world. Calvinists have always contended that their doctrine of predestination is involved in, or clearly deducible from, the views which are presented, both by reason and revelation, concerning what are called the natural attributes of God,—His infinite power, knowledge, and wisdom,—and the supreme and sovereign dominion which He exercises, and must exercise, over all His creatures; and it is on this account that some of the fundamental principles bearing upon the subject of predestination are often discussed, in systems of theology, under the head “*De Deo,*” in giving an account of the divine attributes and perfections, and especially in considering the subject of God's will,—that is, His power of volition,—the principles which regulate, and the results which flow from, its exercise. The substance of the argument is this,—that the Arminian system of theology, in several ways, ascribes to God what is inconsistent with His infinite perfections, and represents Him as acting and conducting His government of the world in a manner which cannot be reconciled with the full exercise of the attributes or perfections which He undoubtedly possesses; whereas the Calvinistic doctrine not only leaves full scope for the exercise of all His perfections in the government of the world, so as to be free from all objection on that ground, but may be directly and positively deduced from what we know concerning their nature and exercise. The two principal topics around which the discussion of the points involved in the investigation of this department has been gathered, are the divine omniscience and the divine sovereignty.

God knows all things, possible and actual; and Arminians, as distinguished from Socinians, admit that God's omniscience includes all the actions which men ever perform,—that is, that He

from eternity foresaw—and this not merely probably and conjecturally, but certainly and infallibly—every event that has occurred or will occur,—every action which men have performed or will perform; so that, from eternity, He could have infallibly predicted every one of them, as He has, in fact, predicted many which have occurred just as He had foretold. Now, when we dwell upon this truth,—which Arminians concede,—and realize what is involved or implied in it, we can scarcely fail to see that it suggests considerations which disprove the Arminian, and establish the Calvinistic, doctrine of predestination. God's foreknowledge of all events, implies that they are fixed and certain; that, from some cause or other, it has already become a certain thing,—a thing determined and unalterable,—that they *shall* take place,—a proposition asserting that they shall come to pass being already, even from eternity, a true proposition. This is inconsistent with that *contingency* which the principles of the Arminians require them to ascribe to the actions of men. And it is to no purpose to allege, as they commonly do, that certainty is not a quality of the events themselves, but only of the mind contemplating them;\* for, even though this were conceded as a mere question of definition, or of exactness in the use of language, it would still hold true, that the certainty with which the divine mind contemplates them as future, affords good ground for *the inference* that they are not contingent or undetermined, so that it is just as possible that they may not take place as that they may; but that their future occurrence is already—that is, from eternity—a fixed and settled thing; and if so, nothing can have fixed or settled this, except the good pleasure of God,—the great First Cause,—freely and unchangeably fore-ordaining whatsoever comes to pass.† So much for the bearing of God's certain foreknowledge of all future events upon the character and causes of the events themselves.

But there is another question which has been broached upon this subject,—namely, How could God foresee all future events, except on the ground of His having fore-ordained them, or decreed to bring them to pass? The question may seem a pre-

\* Copleston's "Enquiry into the Doctrines of Necessity and Predestination," Preface, and Discourse iii. † Edwards on the Freedom of the

Will, P. ii., sec. xii., quoted by Copleston, Dis. i., pp. 39, 40. Edwards' Remarks on important Theological Controversies, c. iii., secs. vi., xvii.

sumptuous one: for it must be admitted, that, in order to derive an argument in favour of Calvinism from this consideration, we must assert, that it is not possible that God could have certainly foreseen all future events, unless He had fore-ordained them; and it is not commonly warrantable or safe to indulge in dogmatic assertions, as to what was, or was not, possible to God, unless we have His own explicit declaration to this effect,—as we have in Scripture in some instances,—to authorize the assertion. Still this consideration is not altogether destitute of weight, as an argument in favour of Calvinism. We are fully warranted in saying, that we are utterly unable to form any conception of the possibility of God's foreseeing certainly future events, unless He had already—that is, previously in the order of nature, though, of course, not of time—fore-ordained them. And, in saying this, we have the support of the Socinian section of our opponents, who have conceded, as I formerly noticed, that if the infallible foreknowledge of all future events be admitted, the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination cannot be refuted; and who were accustomed, when pressed with the proof that God had foretold certain particular actions of men, to take refuge in the position, *that, if so*, He must have fore-ordained these particular actions, and was *thus* enabled to predict them; while they denied that this holds true of future actions in general. We are not, indeed, entitled to make our inability to conceive *how* God could have foreseen all events without having fore-ordained them, a proof of the impossibility of His having done so; but still this inability is entitled to some weight in the absence of any conclusive evidence on the other side; and this use, at least, we are fully warranted to make of it,—namely, that we may fairly regard it as neutralizing or counterbalancing the leading objection against the Calvinistic scheme, derived from the alleged impossibility of conceiving *how* God could fore-ordain whatsoever comes to pass, and yet man be responsible for his actions. There is just as much difficulty in conceiving how God could have foreknown all events unless He fore-ordained them, as in conceiving how man can be responsible for his actions, unless God has *not* fore-ordained them; and the one difficulty may be fairly set over against the other.

Arminians, in dealing with the arguments in favour of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, derived from God's omni-