

being provided for those who have believed the gospel,—hell for those who have rejected it when it was proclaimed to them,—and an intermediate state, without suffering, for those who never heard it.* This idea is thus expressed by Limborch. After declaring it to be very probable that men who make a good use of the light they have will be graciously saved through Christ, though they have never heard of Him, he adds: “*Vel, si id nolumus, antequam divina bonitas eos ad inferni cruciatus damnare credatur, sicut triplex hominum in hoc ævo est status, creditum, incredulorum, et ignorantium; ita etiam triplex post hanc vitam hominum status, concedendus videtur: vitæ æternæ, qui est creditum: cruciatum infernalium, qui est incredulorum; et præter hosce, status ignorantium.*”† This awful subject should certainly preclude the indulgence of those feelings which mere controversial discussion is apt to produce,—anything like an approach to an eager contending for victory; but it is right, from a regard to the interests of truth, to observe, that the only evidence he produces for these notions,—and which he seems to think must prove one or other of them,—is the general scriptural principle, that men shall be dealt with according to the opportunities they have enjoyed. This principle is manifestly insufficient to support such notions; so that the whole matter resolves into this,—that Arminians will rather invent theories about subjects of which they can know nothing, than believe what God has plainly told us concerning Himself, when this does not coincide with the previous conceptions they may have formed of His character and His ways.‡

They are usually glad, however, to escape from this branch of the subject, about the universal proclamation of God's grace, and of a way of salvation to all men,—feeling, apparently, that the plain facts of the case, viewed in connection with the plainly revealed, though awful and mysterious, doctrines of Scripture, cannot easily be reconciled with their system; and they hasten on to try their notions of universal vocation, and sufficient grace,

* This was denied by Arminius himself, *Orat. de Objecto Theologiæ*, quoted in *Edwards' Veritas Redux*, p. 432.

† Limborch, *Theol., Lib. iv., c. xi.*, p. 363. Ed. 1686.

‡ Others have supposed that God may extend their probation beyond this life. *Scot's Christian Life*, quoted in *Edwards' Veritas Redux*, p. 444.

in the case of all to whom the gospel is made known. In making this transition, they usually allege that they have no desire to inquire curiously into the condition and destiny of those to whom the gospel is not made known,—that we have to do chiefly with the case of those who have an opportunity of knowing God's revelation, and with the principles which regulate their fate,—and that it is quite sufficient to overthrow the Calvinistic system of theology, if it can be proved that sufficient grace is communicated to all of them. We have no satisfaction, any more than they, in dwelling upon the mysterious subject of the destiny of the innumerable multitudes of our fellow-men who have died without having had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only name given under heaven or among men whereby we can be saved;—we indulge in no speculations upon their fate, beyond what Scripture sanctions;—we leave them in the hands of the Judge of all the earth, who, we are assured, will do right. But there is nothing in all this to warrant or excuse us in refusing to believe what Scripture teaches, or to contemplate in the light of Scripture what the condition of the world sets before us; and it is the more necessary and important that we should realize and apply—so far as we have clear and certain materials—the doctrines and the facts bearing upon this subject, awful and incomprehensible as it undoubtedly is, when we find that these doctrines and facts afford proofs of the erroneousness of some of the views of the divine character and government, and of the way of salvation, which the Arminians have been accustomed to propound. As to their allegation, that it is sufficient to refute Calvinism, if they can establish their principle as applicable to all who hear the gospel, it is enough, *at present*, to remind them, that they have not only to attack Calvinism, but to defend their own system; and that the survey of the condition of the world at large, taken in connection with doctrines plainly taught in Scripture,—and this is the first subject which naturally presents itself for examination in this department of the controversy,—not only answers many of their common objections against Calvinism, but suggests objections to the Arminian scheme of theology, which its advocates are unable satisfactorily to dispose of.

Let us briefly advert to the application they make of their principles to all who live within the sound of the gospel. The

view they give of the state and condition of those persons is this,—that they are all equally called and invited to the reception and enjoyment of the blessings which Christ purchased for all men,—that, as God desires and purposes the salvation of all of them, He gives to them all such grace or gracious assistance as is sufficient to enable them all to repent and believe, if they choose, and as will certainly effect their conversion and salvation, unless they refuse to use and improve it aright. Calvinists admit that all to whom the gospel is preached, are called or invited to come to Christ and to embrace Him; but they deny that this flows from, or indicates on God's part, a design or purpose to save them all; and they deny that grace or gracious assistance, sufficient to enable them to repent and believe, is communicated to them all. They distinguish between the outward call addressed to all by the word, and the inward or effectual call addressed to some by the Spirit, whereby they are really enabled to accept of the offer,—to comply with the invitation,—and thus to believe in Christ and to turn to God. The great facts presented by the preaching of the gospel, viewed in connection with its results, are these,—that some believe it and submit to its influence, and are, in consequence, renewed in the spirit of their minds, and enabled thereafter to walk in the way of God's commandments; while others, with the same outward opportunities, with the same truths addressed to them, and the same arguments and motives urged upon them, continue to reject the truth, and remain wholly unaffected by it, in the great features of their character, and in the leading motives by which they are animated. And the question in dispute virtually resolves into this,—What is the true cause or explanation of this difference in the result in the case of different individuals? They all enjoy the same outward privileges; they all possess substantially the same natural capacities; they are all warranted and bound to believe the truth proclaimed to them; they are all invited to come to Christ, and to receive salvation through Him. The call or invitation is seriously or honestly addressed to them all. Upon this point the statement of the Synod of Dort is this,—and it is quoted with cordial approbation by Turretine,* and concurred in generally by Calvinists,—“*Quotquot per evangelium vocantur, serio vocantur. Serio enim et verissime ostendit Deus Verbo suo,*

* Turretin. Loc. xv., Qu. ii., sec. xiv.

quid sibi gratum sit, nimirum ut vocati ad se veniant. Serio etiam omnibus ad se venientibus et credentibus requiem animarum et vitam æternam promittit.” Calvinists likewise believe, that all who reject the gospel, and refuse to submit to it and to turn to God, are themselves fully responsible for doing so,—are guilty of sin, and justly expose themselves to punishment on this account; or, as the Synod of Dort says, “*Hujus culpa non est in Evangelio,—nec in Christo per Evangelium oblato,—nec in Deo per Evangelium vocante, et dona etiam varia iis conferente,—sed in ipsis vocatis.*” There is no dispute upon these points, though Arminians attempt to show that Calvinists cannot hold these doctrines consistently with some of their other principles.

Were this *all* that is revealed to us as to the cause of the difference of the results, the Arminian doctrine might be true, that all had received sufficient grace to enable them to accept of the call, and that the *only* principle that could be brought to bear upon the explanation of the difference of the results, was, that some used and improved aright the grace they had received, and others did not. This is true, but it is not the whole truth upon the subject. The Scriptures not only inform us that all who refuse to repent and believe, are responsible for this, and incur guilt by it; they likewise tell us of the way and manner in which faith and conversion are produced in those who believe and turn to God; and what they tell us upon this point, makes it manifest that the result, in *their* case, is not to be ascribed to anything that is merely common to them with others, either in their natural capacities or in the grace of God,—that is, in gracious assistance communicated by Him,—but to a special distinguishing work or influence of His Spirit bestowed upon them, and *not* bestowed on the rest. This is what Calvinists commonly call special, distinguishing, efficacious grace, as opposed to the Arminian universal sufficient grace; they regard it as a peculiar operation of God's Spirit bestowed upon some, and not upon others,—the true and real cause of faith and regeneration wherever they exist, and certainly and effectually securing the production of faith and regeneration wherever it is bestowed.

Now, the questions to be discussed upon this point are these: First, Do the Scriptures set before us such a special, distinguishing operation of the Spirit, bestowed upon some and not bestowed upon others? and, secondly, Do they represent this special grace or dis-

tinguishing gracious operation of the Spirit, as the true cause or source of faith and regeneration wherever they exist,—the real reason or explanation of the different results exhibited,—in that some men repent and believe, while others, with the same outward call or vocation, and with the same external privileges, continue in impenitence and unbelief? I do not mean to enter into an examination of the scriptural evidence, but will only make one or two observations upon the points involved in the discussion, as it has been usually conducted.

It is important to fix in our minds a clear conception of the *alternatives* in the explanation of this matter, according as the Calvinistic or the Arminian doctrine upon the subject is adopted. The thing to be accounted for is,—the positive production of faith and regeneration in some men; while others continue, under the same outward call and privileges, in their natural state of impenitence and unbelief. Now, this is just virtually the question, Who maketh those who have passed from death to life, and are now advancing towards heaven, to differ from those who are still walking in the broad way? Is it God? or is it themselves? The Calvinists hold that it is God who makes this difference; the Arminians—however they may try to conceal this, by general statements about the grace of God and the assistance of the Spirit—virtually and practically ascribe the difference to believers themselves. God has given sufficient grace—everything necessary for effecting the result—to others as well as to them. There is no difference in the call addressed to them, or in the grace vouchsafed to them. This is equal and alike. There is a difference in the result; and, from the sufficiency and consequent substantial equality of the universal grace vouchsafed, this difference, in the result, must necessarily be ascribed, as to its real adequate cause, to something in themselves,—not to God's grace, not to what He graciously bestowed upon them, but to what they themselves were able to do, and have done, in improving aright what God communicated to them. If sufficient grace is communicated to all who are outwardly called, then no more than what is sufficient is communicated to those who actually repent and believe,—for, to assert this, is virtually to deny or retract the position, that what was communicated to those who continue impenitent and unbelieving, *was sufficient or adequate*, and thus to contradict their fundamental doctrine upon this whole sub-

ject.* And when the true state of the question, and the real alternatives involved, are thus brought out, there is no difficulty in seeing and proving that the Arminian doctrine is inconsistent with the plain teaching of Scripture,—as to the great principles which regulate or determine men's spiritual character and eternal destiny,—the true source and origin of all that is spiritually good in them,—the real nature of faith and regeneration, as implying changes which men are utterly unable to produce, or even to cooperate, in the first instance, in originating; and as being not only the work of God in men,—the gift of God to men,—but also, and more particularly, as being, in every instance, the result of a special operation of the Holy Ghost,—an operation represented as altogether peculiar and distinguishing,—bestowed upon some and not upon others, according to the counsel of God's own will, and *certainly* or infallibly effecting, wherever it is bestowed, all those things that accompany salvation.

Sec. VI.—Efficacious and Irresistible Grace.

We have stated generally the nature and import of the application of the blessings which Christ purchased for men,—or the way and manner in which God imparts these blessings to men individually,—explaining the Arminian doctrines of universal vocation and sufficient grace, as applicable, first, to mankind in general, and, secondly, to all to whom the gospel is made known; and contrasting them with the doctrines generally held by Calvinists, in regard to effectual calling and efficacious grace. We have seen that, as we cannot assign any other adequate cause or reason, except the good pleasure of God, why so many of our fellow-men have always been, and still are, left in a state in which they cannot attain to a knowledge of the way of salvation, while others enjoy the glorious light of the gospel; so we are shut up also to ascribe to a special distinguishing gracious operation of God's Spirit,—bestowed upon some and not upon others,—the fact, that of those who do enjoy the same outward vocation and the same external privileges, some reject the call, refuse to believe and to turn to God, while others believe and are converted. The

* Hottingeri Fata Doctrinæ de Predestinatione et gratia Dei Salutari. Exercitatio ii., pp. 495 et seq.

provision which God has made for imparting to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased, may be ranked under two general heads,—namely, first, outward privileges or means of grace, the knowledge of the way of salvation, and the offers and invitations of the gospel; and, secondly, what is commonly called grace itself, or the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit upon men's minds, enabling or assisting them to repent and believe. We have already considered the first of these subjects, and have entered upon the explanation of the second,—stating, generally, the Arminian doctrine of sufficient grace, bestowed upon all men who hear the gospel, to enable them to believe it if they choose; and the Calvinistic doctrine of effectual calling and efficacious grace, bestowed only upon some, and constituting the true cause or reason why they believe and are converted, while others continue in their natural state of impenitence and unbelief. The establishment of the doctrine of special distinguishing grace, bestowed by God on some, and not on others,—and certainly producing in all on whom it is bestowed faith and regeneration,—may be said to terminate the controversy between Calvinists and Arminians upon this important point.

The controversy, however, has branched out into several other questions, about which—though they are all virtually included under that of special distinguishing grace—it may be proper to give a brief explanation, especially as I have not yet adverted, directly and formally, to the point on which the Arminians commonly represent the whole controversy upon this subject as turning,—namely, what they call the irresistibility of grace. Arminius himself, and the more evangelical of those who have generally been called after his name, professing to hold the total depravity of man by nature, have asserted the necessity of the special supernatural agency of the Spirit to the production of faith and regeneration; and, in general terms, have indeed ascribed these results wholly to the grace of God and the operation of the Spirit; while they professed to be anxious only to show, that, as to the mode of the Spirit's operation, it is not irresistible. The discussions, however, which have taken place upon this subject, have made it manifest that there are other deviations from sound doctrine on the subject of the work of the Spirit in producing faith and regeneration, into which Arminians are naturally, if not necessarily, led; and the subject is inseparably connected with

right views of the entire depravity of man, and of his inability, in his natural state, to will or to do anything spiritually good,—subjects on the consideration of which, for reasons formerly stated, I do not at present enter.

Arminius, in his declaration addressed to the States of Holland, in 1608, the year before his death, stated his views upon the subject in this way: "I ascribe to grace THE COMMENCEMENT, THE CONTINUANCE, AND THE CONSUMMATION OF ALL GOOD,—and to such an extent do I carry its influence, that a man, though already regenerate, can neither conceive, will, nor do any good at all, nor resist any evil temptation, *without this preventing and exciting, this following and co-operating grace.* From this statement it will clearly appear, that I am by no means injurious or unjust to grace, by attributing, as it is reported of me, too much to man's free-will: For the whole controversy reduces itself to the solution of this question, 'Is the grace of God a certain, irresistible force?' That is, the controversy does not relate to those actions or operations which may be ascribed to grace, (for I acknowledge and inculcate as many of these actions and operations as any man ever did,) but it relates solely to the mode of operation,—*whether it be irresistible or not*: With respect to which, I believe, according to the Scriptures, that many persons resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace that is offered."* In like manner, as we have seen, his followers at the Synod of Dort, in their declaration as to the third and fourth articles, spoke to the same effect; though some of the very same men who professed so much scriptural truth at that time,—and especially Episcopius,—afterwards adopted, or at least promulgated, sentiments much more Pelagian, in regard to the nature and necessity of grace. It would have been well if all who have been called Arminians had ascribed as much as Arminius did to the grace of God, in the conversion and sanctification of men. But we cannot admit that, on the ground of the statement we have quoted,—strong and plausible as it is,—he can be proved to be guiltless of attributing too much to man's free-will, or must be regarded as giving a scriptural view of the nature and mode of the Spirit's operation. Notwithstanding all that he has said,

* Nichols' Life and Writings of Ar- | p. 98. Nichols' Calvinism and Ar-
minius, vol. i., p. 600. Arminif Opera, | minianism Compared.

in ascribing to grace, and to the operation of the Spirit, the commencement, the continuance, and consummation of all good,—that is,—*for it does not necessarily mean more than this*,—that nothing spiritually good is produced in man, without, or except by, the agency of the Spirit, it is quite possible that he may have held such a co-operation or concurrence of man himself, in the exercise of his own natural powers and capacities, with the Spirit, in the whole process by which faith and regeneration are produced, as to neutralize or obscure the grace of God in the matter; and to make man a joint or concurrent cause with God even in originating those changes which are indispensable to salvation. *And this, indeed, is just what is implied in the denial, that the mode of the Spirit's operation in producing conversion is irresistible.*

Calvinists, indeed, do not admit that it is an accurate mode of stating the question, to put it in this form,—whether or not the grace or gracious operation of the Spirit be irresistible? for they do not dispute that, in some sense, men *do* resist the Spirit; and they admit that resistance to the Spirit may be predicated both of the elect and of the non-elect,—the non-elect having operations of the Spirit put forth upon them which they resist or throw off, and never yield to,—and the elect having generally resisted the operations of the Spirit for a time before they yielded to them. Accordingly, although the only thing in the Arminian declaration, as given in to the Synod of Dort, which was regarded as containing a positive error in doctrine, was the assertion that, as to the mode of the Spirit's operation in conversion, it was not irresistible, there is not, in the canons of the synod, any formal deliverance, *in terminis*, upon this precise point, though all that the Arminians meant to assert, by denying the irresistibility of grace, is clearly and fully condemned. This statement likewise holds true, in all its parts, of our own Confession of Faith. It does not contain, *in terminis*, an assertion of the irresistibility, or a denial of the resistibility, of the grace of God in conversion; but it contains a clear and full assertion of the whole truth which Arminians have generally intended to deny, by asserting the resistibility of grace, and which Calvinists have intended to assert, when—accommodating themselves to the Arminian phraseology, but not admitting its accuracy—they have maintained that grace in conversion is irresistible.

They object to the word irresistible, as applied to their doctrine, because of its ambiguity,—because, in one sense, they hold grace

in conversion to be resistible, and in another, not. It may be said to be resistible, and to be actually resisted, inasmuch as motions or operations of the Spirit upon men's minds—which, in their general nature and bearing, may be said to tend towards the production of conversion—are resisted, or not yielded to, by the non-elect, and for a time even by the elect; while it may be said to be irresistible,—or, as Calvinists usually prefer calling it, insuperable, or infrustrable, or certainly efficacious,—inasmuch as, according to their doctrine, whenever the gracious divine power that is sufficient to produce conversion, and necessary to effect it, is put forth, it certainly overcomes all the resistance that men are able to make, and infallibly produces the result.

And here I may remark by the way, that it is a point sometimes controverted among Calvinists themselves, whether the non-elect are ever the subjects of motions or operations of the Spirit, which, in their own nature, tend towards conversion, or possess, in a measure, those general properties which, when they possessed them in a higher degree, produce conversion. Upon this point, our Confession of Faith* takes the side of asserting that they “may have some common operations of the Spirit;” and this view of the matter is more accordant than the opposite one with what seems to be indicated by Scripture upon the subject, while it is not liable to any serious objection. But Calvinists, while differing upon this point,—which is not of much intrinsic importance,—all admit that the elect do for a time resist divine grace, or the gracious operations of the Spirit; while they all maintain that, whenever that special grace which is necessary to conversion, and which alone is sufficient to effect it, is put forth, men cannot resist, or overcome, or frustrate it, and do, in fact, certainly and necessarily yield to its influence. This doctrine is asserted in our Confession of Faith—not in express terms, indeed, but plainly and unequivocally—in this way: It declares that, in the work of effectual calling,—which is asserted to be wrought in “all those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only,”—He renews their wills, and, by His almighty power, determines them to that which is good, and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ, yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace; and it further declares, that, in this process of effectual calling, man is “altogether

* C. x., s. iv.

passive," "until, being quickened and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."

If the depravity of man by nature is so entire or total, as that he labours under an inability to will anything spiritually good, and therefore—for this is a necessary consequence of his want of ability to will—must have his will renewed by a power from without himself, and must be wholly passive in the commencement of the process by which this renovation of the will is effected, then it is evident that—though he may have resisted an inferior measure of the power that tended in the direction of renewing him—the power by which the renovation of the will was actually effected must have been such that he could not resist or overcome it,—that, whenever power sufficient to effect such a result was really put forth, it must certainly remove every obstacle, and infallibly accomplish the result intended. If it were a power that could be overcome or frustrated by anything in man, it would not be *sufficient* to effect the result, because there is no other source from which any assistance or co-operation in producing the result could be derived. Man himself is dead in sins and trespasses,—utterly destitute, until his will has been renewed, of any ability to will what is good; and *therefore* the power which is sufficient or adequate to renew his will, must be such as *certainly* to overcome all obstacles, and infallibly produce the necessary change. The Arminian doctrine is, that when all the means have been used, and the whole power has been put forth, that are sufficient to produce faith and regeneration, and that do, in point of fact, produce them, wherever they are produced, all men may, and many do, resist these means and this power, and in the exercise of their own free-will, continue impenitent and unbelieving, overcoming or frustrating the very same power or agency—the same, both in kind and degree—to which others yield, and are, in consequence, converted and saved. This is plainly—whatever general statements may be made about the necessity of divine grace—to ascribe to men a natural power to will what is spiritually good, and to make this natural power to will what is spiritually good the real determining cause of their conversion,—that which discriminates or distinguishes those who repent and believe from those who continue in impenitence and unbelief. Men attribute too much to man's free-will,—to adopt the language of Arminius,—when they ascribe

to it any power to will what is spiritually good, or any activity or power of co-operating with divine grace in the origin or commencement of the process of regeneration. And unless this be ascribed to it, the power by which regeneration is actually effected must be irresistible,—must be such that men cannot frustrate or overcome it.

It will be seen, then, that the doctrine of the irresistibility, or insuperability, of divine grace in conversion is a necessary consequence of scriptural views of man's entire depravity, and his inability by nature to will anything spiritually good; and that all that Calvinists intend to set forth in maintaining this doctrine, is declared when they assert that it is necessary that men's will be renewed, and that, in the commencement of the process by which this renovation is effected, they are wholly passive,—incapable of co-operating with divine grace, or with the Holy Spirit operating upon them, until He has, by His own almighty power, effected an important change upon them. This change is sometimes called regeneration, when that word is taken in its most limited sense, as distinguished from conversion; and, *in that case*, regeneration means the first implantation of spiritual life,—the process of vivification, or making alive,—while conversion describes the process by which men, now quickened and renewed,—no longer passive, but active,—do willingly turn to God, and embrace Jesus Christ as all their salvation and all their desire; and the whole is comprehended under the designation of *effectual calling*, which includes the whole work of the Spirit, in applying to men the blessings which Christ purchased, and in effecting that important change in their condition and character which is, in every instance, indispensable to salvation.

An essential part of this process is the renovation of the will, or the giving it a new capacity or tendency,—a power of willing what is spiritually good,—whereas before it could will only what was spiritually evil. And it is important to have our attention directed to this feature in the process, as it is *that* right views of which most directly oppose and exclude Arminian errors upon this subject. In the description of effectual calling, given in the Shorter Catechism, it is said to be "a work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us

in the gospel." The general principles of the Arminians upon this subject lead them to deny the renovation of the will, as a distinct step in this process. If there be such a thing as a renovation of the will, it must manifestly, from the nature of the case, be effected by a divine power; and that power, finding nothing previously existing in or about the will, that can assist or co-operate in the production of the result of its own renovation, must be exerted in such a measure, in effecting the object, as to be insuperable, or certainly and infallibly victorious. The Arminians, in denying the insuperability of the grace of God in conversion, and in maintaining that, even when a divine power sufficient to produce conversion is put forth, men may frustrate it and continue unconverted, not only ascribe to the will of man, in his natural state, a power or capacity, in regard to what is spiritually good, which is inconsistent with the necessity of its being renewed, but also assign to the truth, or the word, an influence or efficacy in the matter which Calvinists generally regard as opposed to the teaching of Scripture; and hence the importance, not only of holding the necessity of the renovation of the will, but also of regarding this as a distinct step in the Spirit's work of effectual calling, from the enlightening the mind in the knowledge of Christ.

Arminians commonly resolve regeneration, not into an almighty and insuperable agency of the Spirit, operating directly upon the will, in renovating it, by giving it a new capacity, tendency, or direction, but into what they commonly call a moral suasion,—that is, into the mere influence of motives addressed to the understanding, and, through the understanding, operating upon the will,—in other words, into the mere influence of the truth, opened up and impressed by the Spirit; while Calvinists have usually maintained that there is a direct and immediate operation of the Spirit upon the will itself, and not merely through the influence of the truth operating upon the understanding.*

The distinctions and explanations, which have been put forth in the discussions upon this subject, are too numerous and minute to admit of our attempting any exposition of them; we can merely point it out as a subject which has been much discussed,

* Turretin. *Loc. xv.*, Qu. vi.; *Mastricht, Lib. vi.*, c. iii.

and is entitled to some attention. The standards of our church, while they do not give any formal deliverance upon this subject, as it has been usually handled in theological discussions, and no deliverance at all upon some of the minuter questions which have been controverted among Calvinists regarding it, plainly enough indicate, not only that it is necessary that the will should be renewed, but also that this step in the process of effectual calling is distinct from any mere agency of the Spirit in enlightening the understanding,—in opening up and impressing the truth which God has revealed. And I have no doubt that this view corresponds most fully with all that Scripture makes known to us about men's natural condition of darkness and depravity,—about the nature of faith and regeneration, and the agency and the means by which they are produced.

The Arminians usually object to these views about the certain efficacy or insuperability of the grace of God in conversion, that they are inconsistent with the nature of the human will, and with the qualities that attach to it. They usually represent our doctrine as implying that men are forced to believe and to turn to God against their will, or whether they will or not. This is a misrepresentation. Calvinists hold no such opinion; and it cannot be shown that their doctrine requires them to hold it. Indeed, the full statement of their doctrine upon the subject excludes or contradicts it. Our Confession of Faith, after giving an account of effectual calling, which plainly implies that the grace of God in conversion is an exercise of omnipotence, and cannot be successfully resisted, adds, "Yet so as they come most freely, being made willing by His grace." That special operation of the Spirit, which cannot be overcome or frustrated, is just the renovation of the will itself, by which a power of willing what is spiritually good—a power which it has not of itself in its natural condition, and which it could not receive from any source but a divine and almighty agency—is communicated to it. In the exercise of this new power, men are able to co-operate with the Spirit of God, guiding and directing them; and they do this, and do it, not by constraint, but willingly,—being led, under the influence of the news concerning Christ, and the way of salvation which He has opened up to and impressed upon them, and the motives which these views suggest, to embrace Christ, and to choose that better part which shall never be taken away from

them. In the commencement of the process, they are not actors at all; they are wholly passive,—the subjects of a divine operation. And from the time when they begin to act in the matter, or really to *do* anything, they act freely and voluntarily, guided by rational motives, derived from the truths which their eyes have been opened to see, and which, humanly speaking, might have sooner led them to turn to God, had not the moral impotency of their wills to anything spiritually good prevented this result. There is certainly nothing in all this to warrant the representation, that, upon Calvinistic principles, men are forced to repent and believe against their wills, or whether they will or not.

Neither is there anything in this view of the subject that can be shown to be inconsistent with any truth concerning the will of man, or the properties attaching to it, established, either by an examination of man's mental constitution, or by the word of God. It is plainly inconsistent, both with reason and with revelation, to suppose that God has created anything which He cannot regulate and direct, absolutely and infallibly, and which He cannot regulate and direct without treating it inconsistently with its proper nature,—the nature and qualities He has assigned to it. We cannot suppose that God should have bestowed any powers or properties upon any creatures which would place them beyond His entire and absolute control, or would require Him, in any case, in order to effect any of His purposes, with them or by them, to exercise His omnipotence, in a manner that runs counter to the constitution He has assigned to them. He does, indeed, exercise His omnipotence in renewing men's wills, and giving them a capacity for willing what is spiritually good; but, in doing so, He is only restoring them, in so far, to the condition in which He originally created them. And in the mode of doing it, while there is an exercise of omnipotence, effecting a change upon them, there is nothing done that interferes with the constitution of man, as man, or with the nature of will, as will. Our Confession teaches,* that "God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined, to good or evil." But this does not imply that God Himself cannot, if He chooses, certainly and effectually determine it to good,

* C. ix., s. 1.

—whatever may be necessary, in existing circumstances, in order to secure this,—without taking away the natural liberty with which He has endued it. This natural liberty does indeed imply a possibility of men yielding to temptation, and falling into sin; but it does not imply that God cannot, by an exercise of His omnipotence, recover men from *any* of the consequences of the sin into which, from the abuse of their freedom of will, they may have fallen; and do this without taking from them, or obstructing, the exercise of that freedom which He originally conferred upon them.

In short, the will of man could not originally have possessed, and never could by any process acquire, any capacity or property, in virtue of which it should be placed beyond God's absolute control, or which should prevent Him from regulating and determining, at all times and in all circumstances, the character and actions of His creatures. Nothing is more clearly revealed in Scripture than this, that when God enables men to repent and believe, He puts forth upon them an exercise of almighty power, analogous to that by which He created all things out of nothing, or by which He raises the dead; but there is no ground for asserting that, even upon the Calvinistic view of the nature of this process, He does not treat man, in effecting this change, according to his proper nature as a rational and responsible being. We are very sure that no property does, or can, attach to the will of man, whether fallen or unfallen, that can take it beyond the reach of God's sovereign control, or prevent Him from directing its operations, without interfering, by a mere exercise of omnipotence, with its true nature and essential properties. Of all the capacities or properties that have ever been ascribed to the human will, the one that has most the appearance of being inconsistent with God's supremacy over it, is what is called by the Arminians its self-determining power; and yet I doubt if there are sufficiently clear and certain reasons for denying even this view of the freedom of the will, upon the mere ground that, if the will possess this self-determining power, it would be impossible for God to exercise absolute control over its operations. But if this cannot be clearly and certainly made out, still less can it be proved, on the other hand, that any agency which Calvinists ascribe to God in renewing the will, is inconsistent with a full regard to its true nature and essential properties,—to anything that can be shown to attach to it.

It is, of course, no objection to the Calvinistic doctrine of efficacious, insuperable grace in conversion,—though some of the more Pelagian Arminians have sometimes represented it in that light,—that it deprives men of everything like merit or ground of boasting in repenting and believing. If it did not do so, it would not be the doctrine of the sacred Scriptures; and one great objection to the Arminian doctrine,—that men, even when a divine power amply *sufficient* to produce in them faith and regeneration, has been put forth, may still overcome and frustrate the exercise of this power, and continue unconverted,—is just this, that this doctrine, with whatever general professions about man's depravity and moral impotency by nature, and about the necessity of the gracious operation of the Spirit in producing conversion, it may be accompanied, practically assigns to men themselves, and not to God, the regulating or determining power in the matter,—the power by which, in each case, it is *settled* that repentance and conversion shall take place,—that is, that a man shall be put in actual possession of all spiritual blessings, and finally of the kingdom of heaven.

The difficulty is much more serious that is founded upon the case of those who are not converted, though they have the gospel offers and invitations addressed to them; or, when the special distinguishing efficacious grace of God is not put forth, who continue in their sins, and finally perish. The difficulty, of course, is to reconcile their responsibility for their impenitence and unbelief,—their guilt and just liability to punishment on this account,—with the views which have been explained as to the way and manner in which the conversion of those who are converted is effected. This is, virtually, the great difficulty which is commonly urged against the whole Calvinistic scheme of theology; it is usually discussed in connection with the subject of predestination. To the examination of that subject we must now proceed; and under that head we will have to advert to the considerations by which this difficulty has been usually met and disposed of.

Sec. VII.—The Decrees of God.

Having been led to enter upon the consideration of the Arminian controversy by an examination of the extent of the atonement,—because it was most natural and convenient to finish, without turning aside to any other topic, the subject of the atonement,

which we had been examining as an important department of the Socinian controversy,—we endeavoured to improve this order in the arrangement of the topics, for the purpose of bringing out more fully the important principle, that right scriptural views of the true nature and immediate bearing and effects of the atonement are sufficient to settle the question of its extent; and of showing also that the doctrine of a limited destination of the atonement—which is commonly reckoned the weakest part of the Calvinistic system—is quite able to stand upon its own distinct and appropriate evidence, without being dependent, for the proof of its truth, *merely* upon the connection subsisting between it and the other doctrines of the system. Having, in this way, been led to advert to the connection subsisting between the impetration and the application of the blessings of redemption,—to the connection subsisting between the sufferings and death of Christ, and not merely reconciliation, pardon, and acceptance (the blessings which involve or imply a change in men's state in relation to God and His law), but also those blessings which involve or imply a change in their character, and prepare them for the enjoyment of God,—we have further thought it best, in proceeding with the examination of the Arminian controversy, to finish the subject of the application of the blessings of redemption, or the investigation of what it is that God does in bestowing upon men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them. Accordingly, we have explained the doctrine of our standards in regard to the work of the Spirit in effectual calling,—the doctrine of special, distinguishing, efficacious, insuperable grace in the production of faith, and regeneration, wherever they are produced,—as opposed to the Arminian doctrine of universal vocation, accompanied by the bestowal upon all of grace sufficient to produce faith and regeneration. The connection of the topics, as forming part of the development of a great scheme for securing the salvation of sinners, has thus been preserved; and some other collateral advantages, arising from the order we have been led to adopt, may appear in the course of the investigation of the subject of predestination, which we have hitherto reserved, but on which we must now enter.

We have now to consider the important and difficult topic of predestination, which formed the subject of the first of the five

points in the original discussions between Calvinists and Arminians, about the time of the Synod of Dort, and in connection with which are usually considered most of those general topics that bear upon all the leading doctrines in regard to which the Calvinistic and Arminian systems of theology differ from each other. The consideration of this great doctrine runs up into the most profound and inaccessible subjects that can occupy the minds of men,—the nature and attributes, the purposes and the actings, of the infinite and incomprehensible Jehovah,—viewed especially in their bearing upon the everlasting destinies of His intelligent creatures. The peculiar nature of the subject certainly demands, in right reason, that it should ever be approached and considered with the profoundest humility, caution, and reverence, as it brings us into contact, on the one side, with a subject so inaccessible to our full comprehension as the eternal purposes of the divine mind; and, on the other, with a subject so awful and overwhelming as the everlasting misery of an innumerable multitude of our fellow-men. Many men have discussed the subject in this spirit, but many also have indulged in much presumptuous and irreverent speculation regarding it. There is probably no subject that has occupied more of the attention of intelligent men in every age. It has been most fully discussed in all its bearings, philosophical, theological, and practical; and if there be any subject of speculation with respect to which we are warranted in saying that it has been exhausted, it is this.

Some, at least, of the topics comprehended under this general head have been discussed by almost every philosopher of eminence in ancient as well as in modern times; and it is to this day a standing topic of reproach against Calvinists, that they teach the same doctrines as the ancient Stoics about fate and necessity. The subject was largely discussed in the church in the fifth and sixth centuries, in connection with the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian controversies. It exercised most fully the subtilty of the schoolmen, many of whom held sounder views upon this subject than might have been expected from the general character and tendency, in other respects, of the theology that then generally prevailed,—a fact which, it appears to me, may be fairly regarded as affording a presumption that Calvinistic doctrines upon this subject are the only ones that can really stand a thorough investigation, even upon philosophical grounds, or as mere subjects of intellectual speculation.

The subject was not much discussed at the era of the Reformation, for the Reformers were of one mind concerning it; and the Romanists did not then openly and formally deny the doctrine which the Reformers taught upon this point,—though they laboured to excite a prejudice against the Reformed doctrine, as making God the author of sin. Protestants, however, soon differed upon this and cognate questions; and it has ever since formed a prominent feature in a large proportion of theological discussions. All that the highest human ability, ingenuity, and acuteness can effect, has been brought to bear upon the discussion of this subject; but the difficulties attaching to it have never been fully solved, and we are well warranted in saying that they never will, unless God give us either a fuller revelation or greatly enlarged capacities,—although, perhaps, it would be more correct to say, that, *from the very nature of the case*, a finite being never can fully comprehend it, since this would imply that he could fully comprehend the infinite mind.

It is not practicable, and it would not be at all profitable, to enter at any length into the intricacies of this subject,—into the innumerable speculations which have been put forth concerning it. Here, as in regard to most subjects, the topics which it is most important for us clearly to apprehend and to remember, are just the plainest, the most obvious and palpable, views of the question; and to these, therefore, we will confine our attention.

The subject may be said, in general, to embrace the investigation of the plan which God has formed for administering the government of the world, and especially of His rational creatures, and more particularly for regulating the actions and determining the everlasting destinies of man. The materials to be employed in the investigation are, generally, the knowledge we may possess concerning God's attributes, character, and ways,—especially any knowledge which He may have Himself directly communicated to us upon these subjects; and the survey of what He actually has done and is doing in the government of the world,—viewed in the light of His word, or in connection with any information He may have given us, as to the principle that regulates His procedure. The subject embraces the investigation of such questions as these: Has God formed a plan for governing the world,—for regulating or controlling the actions, and determining the fate, of His rational creatures? If so, when was this plan formed, what are the principles on which it was formed, and the qualities

that attach to it? What provision has He made for carrying it into execution, and what are the principles that regulate the execution of it, and determine its results? Thus wide and various, thus profound and incomprehensible, are the topics involved in the investigation of this subject; and the slightest reference to their general nature and import should impress upon us the necessity of proceeding in the investigation with the profoundest reverence and caution,—of abandoning all confidence in our own discoveries and speculations,—and of submitting our understandings implicitly to anything which God may have revealed to us concerning it.

Let us, first, advert to the meaning and ordinary application of some of the principal terms usually employed in connection with this subject, and then to the settlement of the state of the question as a topic of controversial discussion. The principal terms employed in describing and discussing this subject are these,—the decrees of God, predestination, election, and reprobation. “The decrees of God” is the widest and most comprehensive of these terms, and describes generally the purposes or resolutions which God has formed, and in accordance with which He regulates His own procedure, or orders whatever comes to pass in the government of the world. That God has, and must have, formed decrees—that is, purposes or resolutions—for the regulation of His own procedure, must be admitted by all who regard Him as possessed of intelligence and wisdom; and the disputes which have been raised upon this subject, respect not the existence of the divine decrees, but the foundation on which they rest,—the properties which attach to them,—and the objects which they embrace.

Predestination, or fore-ordination, is sometimes used in so wide a sense, as to comprehend the whole decrees or purposes of God,—the whole plan which He has formed,—including all the resolutions He has adopted for the regulation of the government of the world; and sometimes it is used in a more limited sense, as including only His decrees or purposes with respect to the ultimate destinies of men, as distinguished from the other departments of His government. It is sometimes used in a still more limited sense, as synonymous with election, or that department of God’s decrees or purposes which respects the salvation of those men who are saved, without including reprobation. Election, of course, describes God’s decree or purpose to choose some men out of the human race to be saved, and at length to save them; while repro-

bation is generally used by theologians to describe the decrees or purposes of God, whatever these may be, in regard to those of the human race who ultimately perish.

Little more can be said in the explanation of these terms, without entering into topics which belong rather to the state of the question; but, before proceeding to this, we may make a remark or two in illustration of the phraseology employed upon this subject in the standards of our church. The general title of the chapter in the Confession where this subject is stated,—the third,—is “Of God’s Eternal Decree;” and under this head is embodied a statement of the leading truths taught in Scripture concerning the whole plan and purposes formed by God from eternity, and executed in time, in governing the world, and in determining the everlasting destiny of all His creatures. God’s decree, made from eternity, is represented as comprehending everything that takes place in time, so that He has ordained whatsoever comes to pass. In proceeding to state the substance of what is taught in Scripture as to God’s decree or eternal purpose, with respect to the destiny of His intelligent creatures, the Confession represents men and angels as equally included in the decree; while it uses a different phraseology in describing the bearing of the decree upon those of them whose ultimate destiny is life or happiness, from what is employed in regard to those of them whose ultimate destiny is death or misery. The result, in both cases, takes place, with respect to angels and to men, by virtue of God’s decree; but one class,—the saved,—both angels and men, are said to be “predestinated” by the decree to life, while the other class are said to be “fore-ordained” by the decree to death. The statement is this: * “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory” (the whole sentence being under the regimen of this important clause), “some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death;” and that the substitution of the word “fore-ordained” for “predestinated” was intentional, and designed to mark a distinction in the two cases, is evident from the words which immediately follow in the fourth section, where, resuming the whole subject, without reference to the different results of life and death, but stating a point common to both, it introduces *both* words, in order to

* C. iii., sec. iii.

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