

ment of outward privileges, or means of grace, and not to faith and salvation. Some Arminians prefer the one, and some the other, of these methods of answering the Calvinistic argument, and evading the testimony of Scripture; while others, again, think it best to employ both methods, according to the exigencies of the occasion. There is not, indeed, in substance, any very material difference between them; and it is a common practice of Arminians to employ the one or the other mode of evasion, according as the one or the other may seem to them to afford the more plausible materials, for turning aside the argument in favour of Calvinism, derived from the particular passage which they happen to be examining at the time. The ground taken by Dr Whately is, that the election ascribed to God in Scripture, which he admits to relate, in most instances, to an arbitrary, irrespective, unconditional decree, is not an election to faith and salvation; but only to external privileges or means of grace, which men may improve or not as they choose. Dr Sumner, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his work on Apostolical Preaching, takes the other ground, and maintains that it is an election, not of individuals, but of nations.*

These questions, of course, can be decided only by a careful examination of the particular passages where the subject is spoken of, by an investigation of the exact meaning of the words, and of the context and scope of the passage. It is to be observed, in regard to this subject in general, that Calvinists do not need to maintain,—and do not, in fact, maintain,—that wherever an election of God is spoken of in Scripture, it is an election of individuals, and an election of individuals to faith and salvation,—or, that there is nothing said in Scripture of God's choosing nations, or of His choosing men to outward privileges, and to nothing more. God undoubtedly does choose nations, to bestow upon them some higher privileges, both in regard to temporal and spiritual matters, than He bestows upon others. The condition, both of nations and of individuals, with respect to outward privileges and the means of grace, is to be ascribed to God's sovereignty, to the counsel of His own will; and Calvinists do not dispute that this doctrine is taught in Scripture,—nay, they admit that it is the chief thing intended,

* Whately has pointed out this difference between his views and Dr Sumner's, in the Introduction to the fifth edition of his "Essays," pp. xxiii., xxiv.

in some of the passages, where God's election is spoken of. But they maintain these two positions, which, if made out, are quite sufficient to establish all that they contend for,—namely, first, that in some cases, where an election of nations, or an election to outward privileges, is spoken of, or at least is included, there is more implied than is expressly asserted; or that the argument, either in its own nature, or from the way in which it is conducted, affords sufficient grounds for the conclusion, that the inspired writer believed or assumed an election of individuals to faith and salvation;—and, secondly, and more particularly, that there are passages in which the election spoken of is not an election of nations, or an election to outward privileges, at all; but only, and exclusively, an election of individuals, and an election of individuals to sanctification and eternal life, or to grace and glory.

The principal passage to which the first of these positions has been applied by some Calvinists, though not by all, is the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. In this passage it is conceded by some, that one thing comprehended in the apostle's statements and arguments is an election of nations to outward privileges; while they also think it plain, from the whole scope of his statements, that he did not confine himself to this point,—that this was not the only thing he had in view,—and that, in his exposition of the subject of the rejection of the Jews as the peculiar people of God, and the admission of the Gentiles to all the privileges of the church, he makes statements, and lays down principles, which clearly involve the doctrine, that God chooses men to eternal life according to the counsel of His own will. The principle of the divine sovereignty is manifested equally in both cases. There is an invariable connection established, in God's government of the world, between the enjoyment of outward privileges, or the means of grace, on the one hand, and faith and salvation on the other; in this sense, and to this extent, that the negation of the first implies the negation of the second. We are warranted, by the whole tenor of Scripture, in maintaining, that where God, in His sovereignty, withholds from men the enjoyment of the means of grace,—an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the only way of salvation,—He, at the same time, and by the same means, or ordination, withholds from them the opportunity and the power of believing and being saved. These two things are based upon the same general principle; and thus far are

directed to the same end. It is not, therefore, in the least to be wondered at, that the apostle, in discussing the one, should also introduce the other. The truth is, that no exposition could be given of God's procedure, in bestowing or withholding outward privileges, without also taking into account His procedure in enabling men to improve them; and the apostle, accordingly, in the discussion of this subject, has introduced a variety of statements, which cannot, without the greatest force and straining, be regarded as implying less than this, that, as God gives the means of grace to whom He will,—not from anything in them, as distinguishing them from others, but of His own good pleasure,—so He gives to whom He will, according to an election which He has made,—not on the ground of any worth of theirs, but of His own good pleasure,—the power or capacity of improving aright the means of grace, and of thereby attaining to salvation. The truth is, that, in the course of the discussion contained in this chapter, the apostle makes statements which far too plainly and explicitly assert the Calvinistic doctrine of the election of individuals to eternal life, to admit of their being evaded or turned aside by any vague or indefinite considerations derived from the general object for which the discussion is supposed to be introduced,—even though there was clearer evidence than there is, that his direct object in introducing it, was merely to explain the principles connected with the rejection of the Jews from outward privileges, and the admission of the Gentiles to the enjoyment of them. All this has been fully proved, by an examination of this important portion of Holy Writ; and nothing has yet been devised,—though much ingenuity has been wasted in attempting it,—that is likely to have much influence, in disproving it, upon men who are simply desirous to know the true meaning of God's statements, and are ready to submit their understandings and their hearts to whatever He has revealed.

The apostle, in this passage, not only makes it manifest, that he intended to assert the doctrine which is held by Calvinists, upon the subject of election; but, further, that he expected that his readers would understand his statements, just as Calvinists have always understood them, by the objections which he puts into their mouths,—assuming that, as a matter of course, they would at once allege, in opposition to what he had taught, that it represented God as unrighteous, and interfered with men's being

responsible, and justly blameable for their actions. These are just the objections which, at first view, spring up in men's minds, in opposition to the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination,—the very objections which, to this day, are constantly urged against it,—but which have not even a *prima facie* plausibility, as directed against the Arminian doctrine, of God's merely choosing men to outward privileges, and then leaving everything else connected with their ultimate destiny to depend upon the improvement which they choose to make of them. A doctrine which does not afford obvious and plausible grounds for these objections, cannot be that which the apostle taught; and this—were there nothing else—is sufficient to disprove the interpretation put upon the passage by our opponents. Arminians, indeed, profess to find an inscrutable mystery—such as might have suggested these objections—in the different degrees in which outward privileges are communicated by God to different nations and to different individuals. But, although they assert this, when pressed with the consideration, that the objections which the apostle intimates might be adduced against his doctrine implied that there was some inscrutable mystery attaching to it,—they really do not leave any mystery in the matter which there is any great difficulty in solving. There is no great mystery in the unequal distribution of outward privileges, unless there be an invariable connection between the possession of outward privileges and the actual attainment of salvation, at least in the sense formerly explained,—namely, that the negation of the first implies the negation of the second. If Arminians were to concede to us this connection, this would no doubt imply such a mystery as might naturally enough be supposed to suggest such objections as are mentioned by the apostle. But their general principles will not allow them to concede this; for they must maintain that, whatever differences there may be in men's outward privileges, all have means and opportunities sufficient to lead, when duly improved, to their salvation.

Accordingly, Limborch—after attempting to find, in the inequality of men's outward privileges, something that might naturally suggest these objections to men's minds, and warrant what the apostle himself says about the inscrutable mystery involved in the doctrine which he had been teaching—is obliged, in consistency, to introduce a limitation of this inequality and of its necessary results,—a limitation which really removes all appearance of

unrighteousness in God, and supersedes the necessity of appealing to the incomprehensibility of His judgments, by asserting of every man, that "*licet careat gratia salvifica*,"—by which he just means the knowledge of the gospel revelation,—"*non tamen illa gratiæ mensurâ destitutus est, quin si eâ recte utatur sensim in meliorem statum transferri possit, in quo ope gratiæ salutaris ad salutem pervenire queat.*"* Arminians are unable to escape from inconsistency in treating of this subject. When they are dealing with the argument, that the condition of men who are left, in providence, without the knowledge of the gospel, and without the means of grace, virtually involves the principle of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, they labour to establish a distinction between the cases, and thus to evade the argument by denying a connection between the knowledge of the gospel and salvation, and try to explain the inequality by something in the conduct of men themselves, instead of resolving it into God's sovereignty; and have thus cut away the only plausible ground for maintaining that this inequality in the distribution of the means of grace is the inscrutable mystery of which the apostle speaks, as involved in his doctrine of election. Having laid the foundations of their whole scheme in grounds which exclude mystery, and make everything in the divine procedure perfectly comprehensible, they are unable to get up a mystery, even when they are compelled to make the attempt, in order to escape from the inferences which the apostle's statements so plainly sanction.

In short, Arminians must either adopt the Calvinistic principle of the invariable connection, negatively, between the enjoyment of the means of grace and the actual attainment of salvation, or else admit that there is no appearance of ground for adducing against their doctrine the objections which the apostle plainly intimates that *his* doctrine was sure to call forth; and in either case, their attempt to exclude the Calvinistic doctrine of the absolute election of individuals to faith and salvation, from the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, can be conclusively proved to be wholly unsuccessful.

Thus it appears that, even if we concede, as some Calvinists have done, that the more direct object of the apostle, in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, is to unfold the principles

* Theol. Christ., Lib. iv., c. i., sec. xvi.

that regulate the rejection of the Jews from outward privileges, and the admission of the Gentiles to the enjoyment of them,—this is altogether insufficient to show that he has not here also plainly and fully asserted, as virtually identical in principle, the sovereignty of God in choosing some men, according to His mere good pleasure, to everlasting life, and in leaving the rest, not worse or more unworthy in themselves, to perish in their natural condition of guilt and depravity.

I shall now only again advert to the second position formerly mentioned, as maintained by Calvinists,—namely, that while there are passages in Scripture which refer to God's electing nations, and choosing men to the enjoyment of external privileges or means of grace, there are also many passages which there is no plausible pretence for evading in this way,—passages which plainly teach that God—uninfluenced by anything in men themselves, or by anything, so far as we know or can know, but the counsel of His own will—elects some men to faith and holiness, to perseverance in them and everlasting life, to be conformed to the image of His Son, and to share at length in His glory. These passages are to be found not only—as is sometimes alleged—in the writings of Paul, but in the discourses of our Saviour Himself, and in the writings of the Apostles Peter and John. It is our duty to be acquainted with them, and to be able to state and defend the grounds on which it can be shown, that, when carefully examined and correctly understood, they give the clear sanction of God's word to the doctrines which we profess to believe. The Calvinistic doctrine of election is stated in Scripture expressly and by plain implication,—formally and incidentally,—dogmatically and historically,—as a general truth, unfolding the principle that regulates God's dealings with men, and also as affording the true explanation of particular events which are recorded to have taken place; and thus there is the fullest confirmation given to all that is suggested upon this subject by the general views presented to us concerning the perfections and supremacy of God,—the end or object of Christ in coming into the world to seek and to save lost sinners,—and the agency of the Holy Ghost, in applying to men individually the blessings which Christ purchased for them, by working faith in them, and thereby uniting them to Christ in their effectual calling, and in preserving them in safety unto His everlasting kingdom.

Sec. XIII.—Objections against Predestination.

We now proceed to make some observations upon the objections which have been commonly adduced against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, and the way in which these objections have been, and should be, met. There is no call to make such a division of the objections against Calvinism as we have made of the arguments in support of it,—namely, into, first, those which are derived from general principles, or from other connected doctrines, taught in Scripture; and, secondly, those derived from particular scriptural statements bearing directly and immediately upon the point in dispute: for it is an important general consideration, with reference to the whole subject of the objections against the Calvinistic doctrine, that the Arminians scarcely profess to have anything to adduce against it, derived from particular or specific statements of Scripture, as distinguished from general principles, or connected doctrines, alleged to be taught there. We have shown that, in favour of Calvinistic predestination, we can adduce from Scripture not only general principles which plainly involve it, and other doctrines which necessarily imply it, or from which it can be clearly and certainly deduced, but also specific statements, in which the doctrine itself is plainly, directly, and immediately taught. Arminians, of course, attempt to answer both these classes of arguments, and to produce proofs on the other side. But they do not allege that they can produce passages from Scripture which contain, directly and immediately, a negation of the Calvinistic, or an assertion of the Arminian, view, upon the precise point of predestination. Their objections against our views, and their arguments in favour of their own opinions, are wholly deduced, in the way of inference, from principles and doctrines alleged to be taught there; and not from statements which even appear to tell us, plainly and directly, that the Calvinistic doctrine upon this subject is false, or that the Arminian doctrine is true. We profess to prove not only that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is necessarily involved in, or clearly deducible from, the representations given us in Scripture concerning the divine perfections and the divine sovereignty, as manifested in the government of the world, and especially in the production of faith and regeneration in all in whom they are produced, but also that there are statements which, rightly interpreted, plainly and directly

tell us that God made an election or choice among men, not founded upon anything in the men elected, but on the counsel of His own will; and that this was an election of some men individually to faith, holiness, and eternal life, and was intended and fitted to secure these results in all who are comprehended under it. Arminians, of course, allege that the passages in which we find this doctrine do not really contain it; and they allege, further, that there are passages which convey representations of the perfections and providence of God,—of the powers and capacities of men,—and of the principles that determine their destiny,—which are inconsistent with this doctrine, and from which, therefore, its falsehood may be deduced in the way of inference; but they do not allege that there are any passages which treat directly of the subject of election, and which expressly, or by plain consequence *from these particular statements themselves*, tell us that there is no such election by God as Calvinists ascribe to Him,—or that there is such an election, falsely so called, as the Arminians ascribe to Him. In short, their objections against Calvinistic predestination, and their arguments in support of their own opinions, are chiefly derived from the general representations given us in Scripture concerning the perfections and moral government of God, and the powers and capacities of men, and not directly, from what it tells us, upon the subject of predestination itself.

Arminians, indeed, are accustomed to quote largely from Scripture in opposition to our doctrine and in support of their own, but these quotations only establish directly certain views in regard to the perfections and moral government of God, and the capacities and responsibilities of men; and from these views, thus established, they draw the inference, that Calvinistic predestination cannot be true, because it is inconsistent with them. We admit that they are perfectly successful in establishing from Scripture, that God is infinitely holy, just, and good,—that He is not the author of sin, and that He is not a respecter of persons,—and that men are responsible for all their actions,—that they are guilty of sin, and justly punishable in all their transgressions of God's law, in all their shortcomings of what He requires of them,—that they are guilty of peculiarly aggravated sin, in every instance in which they refuse to comply with the invitations and commands addressed to them to come to Christ, to repent and turn to God, to believe in the name of His Son,—and are thus justly responsible for their own

final perdition. They prove all this abundantly from Scripture, *but they prove nothing more*; and the only proof they have to adduce that God did not from eternity choose some men to everlasting life of His own good pleasure, and that He does not execute this decree in time by giving to *these* men faith, holiness, and perseverance, is just that the Calvinistic doctrine thus denied can be shown, in the way of inference and deduction, to be inconsistent with the representations given us in Scripture of God's perfections, and of men's capacities and responsibilities.

There is a class of texts appealed to by Arminians, that may seem to contradict this observation, though, indeed, the contradiction is only in appearance. I refer to those passages, often adduced by them, which seem to represent God as willing or desiring the salvation of all men, and Christ as dying with an intention of saving all men. It will be recollected that I have already explained, that the establishment of the position, that God did not will or purpose to save all men, and that Christ did not die with an intention of saving all men,—that is, *omnes et singulos*, or all men collectively, or any man individually (for, of course, we do not deny that, *in some sense*, God will have all men to be saved, and that Christ died for all),—proves *directly*, and not merely in the way of deduction or inference, the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination. And it might seem to follow, upon the ground of the same general principle,—though by a converse application of it,—that the proof, that God desired and purposed the salvation of all men, and that Christ died with an intention of saving all men, *directly, and not merely by inference*, disproves the Calvinistic, and establishes the Arminian, view of predestination. We admit, that there is a sense in which these positions might be taken, the establishment of which would directly effect this. But then the difference between the two cases lies here, that the Arminians scarcely allege that they can make out such a sense of these positions, as would establish directly their main conclusion, without needing to bring in, in order to establish it, those general representations of the perfections and moral government of God, and of the capacities and responsibilities of men, which we have described as the only real support of their cause. So far as concerns the mere statements, that God will have all men to be saved, and that Christ died for all, they could scarcely deny that there would be some ground—did we know

nothing more of the matter—for judging, to some extent, of their import and bearing *from the event or result*; and upon the ground that all men are not saved, in point of fact, while God and Christ are possessed of infinite knowledge, wisdom, and power, inferring that these statements were to be understood with some limitation, either as to the purpose or the act,—that is, as to the will or intention of God and Christ,—or as to the objects of the act, that is, *the all*. Now, in order to escape the force of this very obvious consideration, and to enable them to establish *that* sense of their positions, which alone would make them available, as *directly* disproving Calvinistic, and establishing Arminian, doctrines upon the subject of predestination, they are obliged, as the whole history of the manner in which this controversy has been conducted fully proves, to fall back upon the general representations given us in Scripture, with respect to the perfections and moral government of God, and the capacities and responsibilities of men. Thus we can still maintain the general position we have laid down,—namely, that the scriptural evidence adduced against Calvinism, and in favour of Arminianism, upon this point, does not consist of statements bearing directly and immediately upon the precise point to be proved, but of certain general representations concerning God and man, from which the falsehood of the one doctrine, and the truth of the other, are deduced in the way of inference. It is of some importance to keep this consideration in remembrance, in studying this subject, as it is well fitted to aid us in forming a right conception of the true state of the case, argumentatively, and to confirm the impression of the strength of the evidence by which the Calvinistic scheme of theology is supported, and of the uncertain and unsatisfactory character of the arguments by which it is assailed.

The evidence adduced by the Arminians from Scripture just proves, that God is infinitely holy, just, and good,—that He is not the author of sin,—that He is no respecter of persons,—and that a man is responsible for all his actions;—that he incurs guilt, and is justly punished for his disobedience to God's law, and for his refusal to repent and believe the gospel. They infer from this, that the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination is false; while we maintain—and we are not called upon to maintain more, at this stage of the argument—that this inference cannot be established; and that, in consequence, the proper evidence, direct and inferen-

tial, in favour of the Calvinistic argument, stands unassailed, and ought, in right reason, to compel our assent to its truth.

While the objections to the Calvinistic doctrine, from its alleged inconsistency with the divine perfections and moral government, and from men's capacities and responsibilities, are the only real arguments against it, the discussion of these does not constitute the only materials to be found in the works which have been written upon the subject. Calvinists have had no small labour, while conducting the defence of their cause, in exposing the irrelevancy of many of the objections which have been adduced on the other side, and the misapprehensions and misstatements of their doctrine, on which many of the common objections against it are based; and it may be proper to make some observations upon these points, before we proceed to advert to the method in which the true and real difficulties of the case ought to be met.

Under the head of pure irrelevancies, are to be classed all the attempts which have been made by Arminian writers to found an argument against Calvinism upon the mere proof of the unchangeable obligation of the moral law,—the universal acceptableness to God of holiness, and its indispensable necessity to men's happiness,—the necessity of faith and repentance, holiness and perseverance, in order to their admission into heaven. There is nothing, in these and similar doctrines, which even appears to be at variance with any of the principles of the Calvinistic system. We do not deny, or need to deny, or to modify, or to throw into the background, any one of these positions. The question is not as to the certainty and invariableness of the connection between faith and holiness on the one hand, and heaven and happiness on the other. This is admitted on both sides; it is assumed and provided for upon both systems. The question is only as to the way and manner in which the maintenance of this connection invariably has been provided for, and is developed in fact; and here it is contended, that the Calvinistic view of the matter is much more accordant with every consideration suggested by the scriptural representations of man's natural condition, and of the relation in which, both as a creature and as a sinner, he stands to God.

It is also a pure irrelevancy to talk, as is often done, as if Calvinistic doctrines implied, or produced, or assumed, any diminution of the number of those who are ultimately saved, as com-

pared with Arminianism. A dogmatic assertion as to the comparative numbers of those of the human race who are saved and of those who perish, in the ultimate result of things, forms no part of Calvinism. *The actual result* of salvation, in the case of a portion of the human race, and of destruction in the case of the rest, is the same upon both systems, though they differ in the exposition of the principles by which the result is regulated and brought about. In surveying the past history of the world, or looking around on those who now occupy the earth, with the view of forming a sort of estimate of the fate that has overtaken, or yet awaits, the generations of their fellow-men (we speak, of course, of those who have grown up to give indications of their personal character; and there is nothing to prevent a Calvinist believing that all dying in infancy are saved), Calvinists introduce no other principle, and apply no other standard, than just the will of God, plainly revealed in His word, *as to what those things are which accompany salvation*; and, consequently, if, in doing so, they should form a different estimate as to the comparative results from what Arminians would admit, this could not arise from anything peculiar to them, as holding Calvinistic doctrines, but only from their having formed and applied a higher standard of personal character—that is, *of the holiness and morality which are necessary to prepare men for admission to heaven*—than the Arminians are willing to countenance. And yet it is very common among Arminian writers to represent Calvinistic doctrines as leading, or tending to lead, those who hold them, to consign to everlasting misery a large portion of the human race whom the Arminians would admit to the enjoyment of heaven. But it is needless to dwell longer upon such manifestly irrelevant objections as these.

It is of more importance to advert to some of the misapprehensions and misstatements of Calvinistic doctrine, on which many of the common objections to it are based. These, as we have had occasion to mention, in explaining the state of the question, are chiefly connected with the subject of reprobation,—a topic on which Arminians are fond of dwelling,—though it is very evident, that the course they usually pursue in the discussion of this subject, indicates anything but a real love of truth. I have already illustrated the unfairness of the attempts they usually make, to give priority and prominence to the consideration of

reprobation, as distinguished from election; and have referred to the fact, that the Arminians, at the Synod of Dort, insisted on beginning with the discussion of the subject of reprobation, and complained of it as a great hardship, when the synod refused to concede this.* And they have continued generally to pursue a similar policy. Whitby, in his celebrated book on the *Five Points*,—which has long been a standard work among Episcopalian Arminians, though it is not characterized by any ability,—devotes the *first two* chapters to the subject of reprobation. And John Wesley, in his work entitled, “*Predestination Calmly Considered*,”† begins with proving that election necessarily implies reprobation, and thereafter confines his attention to the latter topic. Their object in this is very manifest. They know that reprobation can be more easily misrepresented, and set forth in a light that is fitted to prejudice men’s feelings against it. I have already illustrated the unfairness of this policy, and have also taken occasion to advert to the difference between election and reprobation,—the nature and import of the doctrine we really hold on the latter subject,—and the misrepresentations which Arminians commonly make of our sentiments regarding it.

We have now to notice the real and serious objections against the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination derived from its alleged inconsistency,—first, with the holiness, justice, and goodness of God; and, secondly, with men’s responsibility for all their acts of disobedience or transgression of God’s law, including their refusal to repent and believe the gospel, and being thus the true authors and causes of their own destruction,—the second of these objections being, in substance, just the same as that which is

* Davenant’s Animadversions on Hoard’s “*God’s Love to Mankind*,” p. 49. Dr Gill’s *Doctrine of Predestination* stated, in answer to Wesley, pp. 21–2.

† Works, vol. x., p. 204.

For a full discussion of the objections to the Calvinistic doctrine, see “*The Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation*,” pp. 531, etc., etc. (Edrs.) See also Amesii *Medulla Theologiæ*, Lib. i., c. xxv. Maastricht. (who copies Ames), Lib. iii., c. iv., sec. vi., p. 304. Turretin. *Loc. iv.*,

Qu. xiv., secs. i.–xvii., tom. i. Davenant’s *Animadversions*, *passim*. Davenant, *De Prædestinatione et Reprobatione*, pp. 113–14, 137, 172–3, 182–8, 196–8, 201–2. Gill’s *Cause of God and Truth*, Part iii., chaps. i. and ii. Gill’s *Doctrine of Predestination*. Pictet, *La Theologie Chrétienne*, Liv. viii., c. vii., p. 557. De Moor, *Commentarius*, c. vii., secs. xxix.–xxxvi., tom. ii., pp. 96–115. Edwards’ *Remarks on Important Theological Controversies*, c. iii., secs. xxxv.–vii.

founded upon the commands, invitations, and exhortations addressed to men in Scripture. The consideration of these objections has given rise to endless discussions on the most difficult and perplexing of all topics; but I shall limit myself to a few observations concerning it, directed merely to the object of suggesting some hints as to the chief things to be kept in view in the study of it.

First, there is one general consideration to which I have repeatedly had occasion to advert in its bearing upon other subjects, and which applies equally to this,—namely, that these allegations of the Arminians are merely objections against the truth of a doctrine, for which a large amount of evidence, that cannot be directly answered and disposed of, has been adduced, and that they ought to be kept in their proper place as objections. The practical effect of this consideration is, that, in dealing with these allegations, we should not forget that the condition of the argument is this,—that the Calvinistic doctrine having been established by a large amount of evidence, direct and inferential, which cannot be directly answered, all that we are bound to do in dealing with objections which may be advanced against it,—that is, objections to the doctrine itself, as distinguished from objections to the proof,—is merely to show that these objections have not been substantiated,—that nothing has really been proved by our opponents, which affords any sufficient ground for rejecting the body of evidence by which our doctrine has been established. The *onus probandi* lies upon them; we have merely to show that they have not succeeded in proving any position which, from its intrinsic nature, viewed in connection with the evidence on which it rests, is sufficient to compel us to abandon the doctrine against which it is adduced. This is a consideration which it is important for us to keep in view and to apply in all cases to which it is truly and fairly applicable, as being fitted to preserve the argument clear and unembarrassed, and to promote the interests of truth. It is specially incumbent upon us to attend to the true condition of the argument in this respect, when the objection is founded on, or connected with, considerations that have an immediate relation to a subject so far above our comprehension as the attributes of God, and the principles that regulate His dealings with His creatures. In dealing with objections derived from this source, we should be careful to confine ourselves within the limits which

the logical conditions of the argument point out, lest, by taking a wider compass, we should be led to follow the objectors in their presumptuous speculations about matters which are too high for us. The obligation to act upon this principle, in dealing with objections with respect to the subject under consideration, may be said to be specially imposed upon us by the example of the Apostle Paul, who had to deal with the very same objections, and whose mode of disposing of them should be a guide and model to us.

We have already had occasion to advert to the fact—as affording a very strong presumption that Paul's doctrine was Calvinistic—that he gives us to understand that the doctrine which he taught in the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans was likely, or rather certain, to be assailed with the very same objections which have constantly been directed against Calvinism,—namely, that it contradicted God's justice, and excluded man's responsibility for his sins and ultimate destiny,—objections which are not likely to have been ever adduced against Arminianism, but which naturally, obviously, and spontaneously, spring up in opposition to Calvinism in the minds of men who are not accustomed to realize the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and to follow out what these great truths involve; who, in short, are not in the habit, in the ordinary train of their thoughts and reflections, of giving to God that place in the administration of the government of His creatures to which He is entitled. But we have at present to do, not with the evidence afforded by the fact that these objections naturally suggested themselves against the apostle's doctrine, but with the lesson which his example teaches as to the way in which they should be dealt with and disposed of. In place of formally and elaborately answering them, he just resolves the whole matter into the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and men's incapacity either of frustrating His plans or of comprehending His counsels. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" etc. The conduct of the apostle in this matter is plainly fitted to teach us that we should rely mainly upon the direct and proper evidence of the doctrine itself; and, when satisfied upon that point, pay little regard to objections, however obvious or plausible they may be, since the subject is one which we cannot fully understand, and resolves ultimately into an incomprehensible mystery, which our powers are unable to fathom.

This is plainly the lesson which the conduct of the apostle is fitted to teach us; and it would have been well if both Calvinists and Arminians had been more careful to learn and to practise it. Arminians have often pressed these objections by very presumptuous speculations about the divine nature and attributes, and about what it was or was not befitting God, or consistent with His perfections, for Him to do; and Calvinists, in dealing with these objections, have often gone far beyond what the rules of strict reasoning required, or the apostle's example warranted,—and have indulged in speculations almost as presumptuous as those of their opponents. Calvinists have, I think, frequently erred, and involved themselves in difficulties, by attempting too much in explaining and defending their doctrines; and much greater caution and reserve, in entering into intricate speculations upon this subject, is not only dictated by sound policy, with reference to controversial success, but is imposed, as a matter of obligation, by just views of the sacredness and incomprehensibility of the subject, and of the deference due to the example of an inspired apostle. Instead of confining themselves to the one object of showing that Arminians *have not proved* that Calvinism necessarily implies anything inconsistent with what we know certainly concerning the perfections and moral government of God, or the capacities and responsibilities of man, they have often entered into speculations, by which they imagined that they could directly and positively vindicate their doctrines from all objections, and prove them to be encompassed with few or no difficulties. And thus the spectacle has not unfrequently been exhibited, on the one hand, of some shortsighted Arminian imagining that he has discovered a method of putting the objections against Calvinism in a much more conclusive and impressive form than they had ever received before; and, on the other hand, of some shortsighted Calvinist imagining that he had discovered a method of answering the objections much more satisfactorily than any that had been previously employed; while, all the time, the state of the case continued unchanged,—the real difficulty having merely had its position slightly shifted, or being a little more thrown into the background at one point, only to appear again at another, as formidable as ever. The truth is, that no real additional strength, in substance, can be given to the objection, beyond what it had as adduced against the apostle,

“Is there unrighteousness with God? why doth He yet find fault, for who hath resisted His will?” and that nothing more can be done in the way of answering it, than bringing out the ground which he has suggested and employed,—of resolving all into the sovereignty and supremacy of God, and the absolute dependence and utter worthlessness of man, and admitting that the subject involves an inscrutable mystery, which we are unable to fathom.

Secondly, it is important to remember that these objections—if they have any weight, and in so far as they have any—are directed equally against Calvinistic views of the divine procedure, as of the divine decrees,—of what God does, or abstains from doing, in time, in regard to those who are saved and those who perish, as well as of what He has decreed or purposed to do, or to abstain from doing, from eternity. Arminians, indeed, as I formerly explained, do not venture formally to deny that whatever God does in time, He decreed or purposed from eternity to do; but still they are accustomed to represent the matter in such a way as is fitted to convey the impression, that some special and peculiar difficulty attaches to the eternal decrees or purposes ascribed to God, *different in kind* from, or *superior in degree* to, that attaching to the procedure ascribed to Him in providence. And hence it becomes important—in order at once to enable us to form a juster estimate of the amount of evidence in favour of our doctrine, and of the uncertain and unsatisfactory character of the objections adduced against it—to have our minds familiar with the very obvious, but very important, consideration, that Calvinists do not regard anything as comprehended in the eternal decrees or purposes of God, above and beyond what they regard God as actually doing in time in the execution of these decrees. If it be inconsistent with the perfections and moral government of God, and with the capacities and responsibilities of men, that God should form certain decrees or purposes from eternity in regard to men, it must be equally, but not more, inconsistent with them, that He should execute these decrees in time. And anything which it is consistent with God’s perfections and man’s moral nature that God should do, or effect, or bring to pass, in time, it can be no more objectionable to regard Him as having from eternity decreed to do.

The substance of the actual procedure which Calvinists ascribe to God in time,—in connection with the ultimate destiny of those

who are saved and of those who perish,—is this, that in some men He produces or effects faith, regeneration, holiness, and perseverance, by an exercise of almighty power which they cannot frustrate or overcome, and which, certainly and infallibly, produces the result,—and that the rest of men He leaves in their natural state of guilt and depravity, withholding from them, or *de facto* not bestowing upon them, that almighty and efficacious grace, without which—as He, of course, well knows—they are unable to repent and believe,—the inevitable result thus being, that they perish in their sins. If this be the actual procedure of God in dealing with men in time, it manifestly introduces no new or additional difficulty into the matter to say, that He has from eternity decreed or resolved to do all this; and yet many persons seem to entertain a lurking notion,—which the common Arminian mode of stating and enforcing these objections is fitted to cherish,—that, over and above any difficulties that may attach to the doctrine which teaches that God *does* this, there is some special and additional difficulty attaching to the doctrine which represents Him as having decreed or resolved to do this from eternity. To guard against this source of misconception and confusion, it is desirable, both in estimating the force of the evidence in support of Calvinism, and the strength of the Arminian objections, to conceive of them as brought to bear upon what our doctrine represents God as doing, rather than upon what it represents Him as decreeing to do; while, of course, the Arminians are quite entitled to adduce, if they can find them, any special objections against the general position which we fully and openly avow,—namely, that all that God does in time, He decreed from eternity to do. The substance, then, of the objection, is really this,—that it is inconsistent with the divine perfections and moral government of God, and with the capacities and responsibilities of men, that God should certainly and effectually, by His almighty grace, produce faith and regeneration in some men, that He may thereby secure their eternal salvation, and abstain from bestowing upon others this almighty grace, or from effecting in them those changes, with the full knowledge that the inevitable result must be, that He will consign them to everlasting misery as a punishment for their impenitence and unbelief, as well as their other sins.

Thirdly, we observe that the direct and proper answer to the Arminian objections is this,—that nothing which Calvinists

ascribe to God, or represent Him as doing, in connection with the character, actions, and ultimate destiny, either of those who are saved or of those who perish, *can be proved* necessarily to involve anything inconsistent with the perfections of God, or the principles of His moral government, or with the just rights and claims, or the actual capacities and responsibilities, of men. With respect to the alleged inconsistency of our doctrine with the perfections and moral government of God, this can be maintained and defended only by means of assertions, for which no evidence can be produced, and which are manifestly, in their general character, uncertain and presumptuous. It is a much safer and more becoming course, to endeavour to ascertain what God has done or will do, and to rest in the conviction, that all this is quite consistent with His infinite holiness, justice, goodness, and mercy, than to reason back from our necessarily defective and inadequate conceptions of these infinite perfections, as to what He *must do*, or *cannot do*.

It cannot be proved that we ascribe to God anything inconsistent with infinite holiness, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He is involved in the responsibility of the production of the sinful actions of men. It cannot be proved that we ascribe to Him anything inconsistent with His justice, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He withholds from any man anything to which that man has a just and rightful claim. It cannot be proved that we ascribe to Him anything inconsistent with His goodness and mercy, because it cannot be shown that our doctrine necessarily implies that He does not bestow upon men all the goodness and mercy which it consists with the combined glory of His whole moral perfections to impart to them, and because it is evidently unreasonable to represent anything as inconsistent with God's goodness and mercy which actually takes place under His moral government, when He could have prevented it if He had chosen. On such grounds as these, it is easy enough to show, as it has been often shown, that the allegation that Calvinism ascribes to God anything necessarily inconsistent with His moral perfections and government, cannot be substantiated upon any clear and certain grounds. This is sufficient to prove that the objection is possessed of no real weight. In consequence, probably, of the sounder principles of philosophizing now more generally prevalent

in this country, the objection to Calvinism—on which its opponents used to rest so much, derived from its alleged inconsistency with the moral perfections of God—has been virtually abandoned by some of the most distinguished anti-Calvinistic writers of the present day,—such as Archbishop Whately and Bishop Copleston.*

It may seem, however, as if that branch of the objection had a stronger and firmer foundation to rest upon, which is based upon the alleged inconsistency of our doctrine with what is known concerning the capacities and responsibilities of men. Man is indeed better known to us than God; and there is not the same presumption in arguing from the qualities and properties of man, as in arguing from the perfections and attributes of God. It is fully admitted as a great truth, which is completely established, and which ought never to be overlooked or thrown into the background, but to be constantly and strenuously enforced and maintained,—that man is responsible for all his actions,—that he incurs guilt, and is justly punishable whenever he transgresses or comes short of anything which God requires of men, and, more especially, whenever he refuses to comply with the command addressed to him, to repent and turn to God, and to believe in the name of His Son. All this is fully conceded; but still it is denied that any conclusive proof has ever been adduced, that there is anything in all this necessarily inconsistent with what Calvinists represent God as doing, or abstaining from doing, in connection with the character, actions, and destiny of men. God has so constituted man, and has placed him in such circumstances, as to make him fully responsible for his actions. He has made full provision in man's constitution, not only for his being responsible, but for his feeling and knowing that he is responsible; and this conviction of responsibility is probably never wholly extinguished in men's breasts. We doubt very much whether there ever was a man who firmly and honestly believed that he was not responsible for his violations of God's law. There have been men who professed to deny this, and have even professed to base their denial of their own responsibility upon views that resembled those generally entertained by Calvinists. And Arminians have been

* See the Reformers and the Theology of the Reformation, p. 458 (Edrs.). Whately on Difficulties in St Paul's Writings, Essay iii., sec. iv., pp. 144-7, fifth edition, 1845.

sometimes disposed to catch at such cases, as if they afforded evidence that the maintenance of Calvinistic doctrines, and the maintenance of a sense of personal responsibility, were incompatible with each other. But the cases have not been very numerous where men even professed to have renounced a sense of their own responsibility; and even where this profession has been made, there is good ground to doubt whether it really coincided with an actual conviction, decidedly and honestly held, and was not rather a hypocritical pretence, though mixed, it may be, with some measure of self-delusion.

It is admitted generally, that it is unsuitable to the very limited powers and capacities of man to *make his perception* of the harmony, or consistency, of doctrines, the test and standard of their actual harmony and consistency with each other; and that, consequently, it is unwarrantable for us to reject a doctrine, which appears to be established by satisfactory evidence, direct and appropriate, merely because we cannot perceive *how* it can be reconciled with another doctrine, which, when taken by itself, seems also to be supported by satisfactory evidence. We may find it impossible to explain how the doctrine of God's fore-ordination and providence—of His giving or withholding efficacious grace—can be reconciled, or shown to be consistent, with that of men's responsibility; but this is no sufficient reason why we should reject either of them, since they both appear to be sufficiently established by satisfactory proof,—proof which, when examined upon the ground of its own merits, it seems impossible successfully to assail. *The proof adduced, that they are inconsistent with each other, is derived from considerations more uncertain and precarious than those which supply the proof of the truth of each of them singly and separately; and therefore, in right reason, it should not be regarded as sufficient to warrant us in rejecting either the one or the other, though we may not be able to perceive and develop their harmony or consistency. Let the apparent inconsistency, or difficulty of reconciling them, be held a good reason for scrutinizing rigidly the evidence upon which each rests; but if the evidence for both be satisfactory and conclusive, then let both be received and admitted, even though the difficulty of establishing their consistency, or our felt inability to perceive and explain it, remains unaltered.*

It is also to be remembered, that Calvinists usually maintain

that it has never been satisfactorily proved that anything more is necessary to render a rational being responsible for his actions than the full power of doing as he chooses,—of giving full effect to his own volitions,—a power the possession and exercise of which does not even seem to be inconsistent with God's fore-ordination of all events, and His providence in bringing them to pass; and also that they generally hold that men's inability or incapacity to *will* anything spiritually good is a penal infliction or punishment justly and righteously inflicted upon account of sin,—a subject which I have already discussed. On these various grounds, it has been shown that the validity of the Arminian objections cannot be established,—that their leading positions upon this subject cannot be proved,—and that, therefore, there is no sufficient reason, in anything they have adduced, why we should reject a doctrine so fully established by evidence which, on the ground of its own proper merits, cannot be successfully assailed.

Fourthly, There is one other important position maintained by Calvinists upon this subject, which completes the vindication of their cause, and most fully warrants them to put aside the Arminian objections as insufficient to effect the object for which they are adduced. It is this,—that the real difficulties connected with this mysterious subject are not peculiar to the Calvinistic system of theology, but apply almost, if not altogether, equally to every other,—that no system can get rid of the difficulties with which the subject is encompassed, or afford any real explanation of them,—and that, at bottom, the real differences among different theories merely mark the different positions in which the difficulties are placed, without materially affecting their magnitude or their solubility. It is very plain that God and men, in some way, concur or combine in forming man's character, in producing man's actions, and in determining man's fate. This is not a doctrine peculiar to any one scheme of religion professedly founded on the Christian revelation, but is common to them all,—nay, it must be admitted by all men who do not take refuge in atheism. It is very plain, likewise, that the explanation of the way and manner in which God and men thus combine or concur in producing these results, involves mysteries which never have been fully solved, and which, therefore, we are warranted in supposing, cannot be solved by men in their present condition, and with their existing capacities and means of knowledge. This difficulty

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

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

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

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

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

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