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# THOUGHTS

ON THE

*CALVINISTIC AND ARMINIAN*

CONTROVERSY;

BY

GEORGE STANLEY FABER, B. D.

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“ Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation : so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an Article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” Art. 6.

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“ Our Church is not Lutheran—it is not Calvinistic—it is not Arminian. It is scriptural.” Bp. of Lincoln’s Charge, 1803, p. 23.

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## THOUGHTS, &c.

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IN every controversy much uselefs altercation might be avoided, were all extraneous matter carefully separated from those points, concerning which the controversy is agitated. Thus, in the present dispute between the Calvinists and the Arminians, no doctrines ought to be termed *Calvinistic*, but those which belong *exclusively* to Calvinism. The orthodox tenets of *Original Sin*, *Sanctification*, *Justification by the sole merits of Christ*, and certain others which might easily be mentioned, are no more *peculiar* to that system, than the doctrine of *the Trinity*: and yet many Calvinists are wont to claim them as entirely their own; and some Arminians have shewn themselves extremely unguarded in styling all men *Calvinists*, who hold them. As for the Church of England,

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ſhe hath explicitly declared her aſſent to them; but it doth not therefore follow, as the more intemperate among the Calviniſts would perſuade us, that ſhe either requires us to ſubſcribe to every peculiarity of Calviniſm *properly ſo called*; or that all thoſe who hold, with the Church, the doctrines of *Original Sin, Sanctification, and Juſtification by the ſole merits of Chriſt*, muſt, by a neceſſary conſequence, hold likewiſe the tenets of *Particular Redemption, Reprobation and Election* according to the Calviniſtic interpretation of the word. “ Our articles,” ſays a juſtly eminent Prelate, “ affirm certain things which we hold *in common* with the Calviniſts: ſo they affirm “ certain things, which we hold *in common* “ with the Lutherans; and ſome things, “ which we hold *in common* with the “ Romaniſts. It cannot well be otherwiſe; “ for, as there are certain principles which “ are common to all Proteſtants, ſo the “ eſſential articles of faith are common to “ all Chriſtians. Perhaps, in points of mere “ doctrine, the language of our articles “ agrees more nearly with the Calviniſtic, “ than

“ than with any other protestant confession.  
 “ But I never was aware, till Dr. Priestley  
 “ informed me of it, that I am obliged, by  
 “ my subscription to the 39 articles, to  
 “ believe *every* tenet that is generally known  
 “ by the name of *Calvinistic*: and, till the  
 “ obligation is enforced upon me by some  
 “ higher authority than his, I shall, in these  
 “ matters, *stand fast in my liberty* \*.”

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Both Calvinists and Arminians appeal of course to Scripture, in justification of their respective opinions: but it is one thing to cite a text, and another to give a consistent interpretation of it. In all ages of the Church, nothing has so much injured the cause of truth, as an extravagant adherence to system and party, combined with the pride of never giving up an opinion which has once been advanced. Prejudice in favour of any particular system blinds the eyes of the understanding; a party-spirit produces at once extreme rashness, and determined pertinacity; and the stubborn pride

\* Bp. Horsley's Rem. on Priestley's 2d. Letters, p. 73.

of human nature has afterwards no inconsiderable share in perpetuating those controversies, to which a love of system originally gave birth. What a man has once asserted, he is ashamed and unwilling to retract; he fears the laugh of the world, and the reproaches of his own party; and he will often have recourse to the most disingenuous sophisms, rather than honestly confess himself to have been mistaken. These sophisms, being very easily detected, are sometimes exposed with rather too much sarcastic triumph; whence a certain irritation of mind is produced, which usually vents itself in seizing the earliest opportunity of making reprisals. The more severely each party is treated, the more it becomes bigotted to its own peculiar opinions; and, instead of endeavouring to heal the breaches in the Church, it strives to recede as far as possible from the ground occupied by its adversary.

With regard to the present controversy, a sober inquirer may possibly be disposed to think, that the fault of the violent, (be it observed, I am speaking *only* of *the violent*)

on

on each side of the question, is this: they are alike unwilling to take the Bible, as they find it; and alike anxious to deduce a chain of conclusions *of their own* from premises, which *themselves* are undoubtedly *scriptural*. These two different sets of conclusions, when worked up into two opposite systems, are respectively adopted as the creeds of the two parties; and each is resolutely defended by its favourers, as the unadulterated Gospel of Christ, and as the most infallible test of true churchmanship. The consequence is, that *the violent* of one party run away with one half of the Bible, and *the violent* of the other party with the other half; both equally either bending or breaking those texts, which do not agree with their preconceived opinions. Thus the *systematic* Calvinist will very logically prove, or at least he will seem to prove, that man is entirely passive in the work of salvation; in other words, that he is a mere machine in the hands of that God, who imparts his grace only to those whom he hath purposed to save\*: while the *systematic*

\* Calvinists have sometimes been charged with believing, that, provided a man be only one of the elect,

Arminian, if he push his principles to their utmost extent, after he has, to all appearance, no less logically demonstrated from Scripture that man is perfectly a free agent, will not easily avoid demonstrating also that he is able, by his own unassisted strength, to perform the commandments of God. Both these positions may easily be maintained, with a great shew of fairness and impartiality, by arguments drawn from *insulated* texts; and it may perhaps be a difficult matter to point out the precise link in the chain of reasoning, where the fallacy lies: nevertheless, if Scripture be attended to, *as a whole*, we shall find something true, and something false, in each of them. “Work out,” says an inspired teacher, “your own salvation with fear and

he will undoubtedly be saved, no matter what life he leads; and that, if he be one of the reprobate, the most exemplary piety cannot save him from destruction. But it is scarcely fair to put into the mouth of an adversary assertions, which he never made; and afterwards solemnly to confute, as *his*, positions, which he never held. Every Calvinist, with whom I at least have conversed, believes, that the elect will certainly in the main lead holy lives, though they may occasionally fall into sin; and that the reprobate will as certainly lead wicked lives, though they may occasionally feel some qualms of conscience.

trembling;



trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure \*," Here a part is evidently assigned to man, and a part to God. When our Lord commanded the person with a withered arm to stretch it forth, he might have refused on the plea of physical inability: but he made the effort with faith; and, in making it, received that strength, which he did not possess before †. Thus the command of God is absolute to all men: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." If we obey the command, as the cripple did the injunction of Christ, God assuredly will not be deficient, on his part, in "working in us both to will and to do;" but, if we disobey it, in the same manner as our Lord on one occasion was not able (that is, consistently with the plan laid down by divine wisdom) to work many miracles because of men's unbelief ‡; so neither can God (consistently with his scheme of moral govern-

\* Philip. ii. 12, 13.

† See a *Preservative against Socinianism*, by the Rev. William Jones, Chap. v.

‡ See Mark vi. 5, 6.

ment)

ment) reduce us to a state of mere machines. Though “ we cannot turn and prepare ourselves, by our own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God\* ;” and though God alone can restore to us the free-will and the strength, which Adam lost at the fall ; yet we may abuse that free-will *when recovered*, just as much as Adam did when possessed of it *ab origine* ; and we may neglect to use that *subsequently imparted* strength, just as much as Adam did the strength which he *received at his creation*.

As this single instance may not be deemed sufficient to point out the fallaciousness, and consequent danger, of constructing systems, and imposing them as necessary articles of doctrine : I shall proceed to shew the two chains of reasoning, by which high Calvinism, and certain positions which even the highest Calvinist would tremble to admit ; and by which high Arminianism, and certain positions which even the highest Arminian would tremble to admit ; may be respectively

\* Art. 10.

demon-

demonstrated, or, to speak more accurately, *apparently* demonstrated, from Scripture.

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THESIS 1.

“ You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins \*.”

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CONCLUSIONS.

1. Therefore “ the condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God †.”

2. Therefore man is a passive machine in the hands of God: for, by the Thesis, he is spiritually dead; and consequently possesses no more power of spiritual action, than a dead body does of physical action.

3. Therefore all those, who are quickened out of the mass of the spiritually dead, are elected or chosen out of that mass: for, had they not been thus elected or chosen, they would not have been quickened, but would

\* Ephes. ii. 1.

† Art. 10:

for

for ever have remained spiritually dead; seeing they naturally possess no more power of self-vivification, than a dead body.

4. Therefore all those, who are not thus quickened or elected, are passed over or reprobated\*.

5. Therefore God willeth the death of sinners: because, if he predestines a man to damnation before his birth; it is impossible that he should will the salvation of that very same man; for *to decree damnation*, and *to will salvation*, are direct opposites.

6. Therefore Christ died only for the elect; inasmuch as it would have been nugatory for him to have shed his blood for those, who were already condemned by an eternal and irreversible decree.

7. Therefore God can never be supposed to expostulate with sinners: because it would be absurd to expostulate with a spiritually dead man for not doing that, which by the very constitution of his nature he cannot do,

\* I say "passed over or reprobated;" for, however modern Calvinists may labour to distinguish between the two terms, Calvin himself could see no difference. Quos Deus præterit, reprobat; says he.

and

and which God himself hath decreed that he should not do.

8. It was proved, (by conclusion 4,) that the non-elect are reprobate: therefore, if a man be reprobate or predestined to continue dead in his sins, he cannot refrain from continuing dead in his sins; in other words, it is out of his power to cease committing sin.

9. But, if it be out of his power to cease committing sin *in general*, it is out of his power to refrain from committing various acts of sin *in particular*; seeing all generals are composed of particulars.

10. Therefore he can no more refrain from theft, murder, or adultery, if those be the particular acts of sin in which he lies dead, than the planets can refuse to obey the law of gravitation; seeing they are both equally compelled by the irresistible constitution of their natures.

11. Therefore a murderer is no more deserving of punishment, than the instrument of destruction which he uses; inasmuch as they are both equally machines.

12. Therefore virtue and vice are mere names;

names; and can be considered in no other light, than that of irresistible tendencies to particular objects.

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THESIS 2.

“ Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart, and a new spirit; for why will ye die, O house of Israel \*?”

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CONCLUSIONS.

1. Therefore a man is able to turn himself from all his transgressions, and to make for himself a new heart and a new spirit; otherwise he would not have been exhorted to do so.

2. Therefore he is possessed of perfect free-will; and, “ when life and death, blessing and cursing, are set before him, he is at liberty to choose life, that he and his seed may live †.”

\* Ezek. xviii. 30, 31.

† Deuter. xxx. 19.

3. But,

3. But, if a man be able to turn *himself* from all his transgressions, and to make for *himself* a new heart and a new spirit; then he hath no need of any *extrinsic* assistance: for men require assistance in matters, wherein they are deficient, not wherein they are sufficient.

4. But, if a man doth not require *any* extrinsic assistance, then neither doth he require the assistance of the Holy Spirit, either to turn him from his transgressions, or to create in him a new heart: for every man is either *unable* to turn himself by his own natural strength, or else he is *able* to do it: if he be *unable*, he doth not possess free-will; for, in that case, he would be able: if, on the other hand, he be *able*, he assuredly hath no need of any assistance from the Holy Spirit; for, with reverence be it spoken, even God himself cannot make a man more than able.

5. Therefore, since the assistance of the Holy Spirit is superfluous, we cannot reasonably expect to find in Scripture any intimations, that he *will* assist us: for the all-wise God would not offer to his creatures that

that which is superfluous to them, but that which is necessary.

6. Therefore man is a sort of insulated being in the works of the creation, and his salvation depends solely and entirely upon the unassisted exertion of his free-will: for God hath contented himself with setting before him “ life and death, blessing and cursing ;” and hath afterwards left him entirely to his own discretion, to act precisely in such a manner as is most agreeable to himself.

7. Since therefore God has thus withdrawn himself, he neither ordereth any matters for our good, nor for our injury: inasmuch as *that* would be to violate the freedom of our will, and to make our salvation depend, not upon our own choice, but upon contingent circumstances.

8. Therefore we cannot reasonably expect to find the doctrine of a *particular Providence* inculcated in Scripture: but we must rather conclude, that, when God had finished all the works of his hands, and had declared to his reasonable creatures the grand plan of his moral government; he withdrew himself from any further interference



ference till the day of judgment, when all men will be rewarded or punished, according as they have chosen good or evil.

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I have now set forth the directly opposite conclusions, which may be drawn, if we are inclined to push the argument to its utmost limits, from two several texts of Scripture; nor am I aware, that any single conclusion is not legitimately deduced from its preceding neighbour; yet *both* these chains cannot be true, even setting Scripture out of the question, because they are diametrically opposite to each other. Calvinists and Arminians will doubtless agree in saying, that I carry the matter much further than I have any right to do; much further than they are prepared to follow me: and most sincerely do I believe the truth of their assertions: nevertheless I would ask the *systematic* Calvinist, what right *he* has to stop at any *particular link* in the one chain; and the *systematic* Arminian, what right *he* has to stop at any *particular link* in the other chain? If systems *must* be constructed, the conclusions *after* these links are respectively as valid as the conclusions *before* them.

It has been asserted, that Calvinism is a machine so constructed, that, if one peg be pulled out, the whole falls to pieces. If this assertion rest upon any solid foundation, it is no less applicable to *systematic* Arminianism, or indeed to any other *system* founded upon only a *partial* survey of Scripture, than to *systematic* Calvinism. At the same time, I much doubt the safety of applying such a method of arguing to confute the errors of *any* scheme of belief. It is a dangerous weapon; and while employed, as it has been, in tearing away the tags and tassels of Calvinism, (for I fear, that Calvin himself, as well as the lordly successor of St. Peter, has contributed too largely to the embellishment of the Christian garment,) it may perchance injure the coat itself. One of the pegs of Calvinism, the peg indeed upon which all the others depend, is a text of Scripture; and the same remark may be applied to Arminianism. Now, if the destruction of one peg involves the destruction of another, it will plainly appear, by inverting the two preceding chains of argument, that the two *last* faulty pegs in each (the

reader will pardon the confusion of the metaphor) are two texts of Scripture: and the consequence will be, that one half of the Bible must be discarded, because it apparently gives countenance to the errors which necessarily flow from high Calvinism; and the other half must experience the same fate, because *it* apparently gives countenance to the errors which as necessarily flow from overstrained Arminianism. Some other method therefore of confuting falsehood must be discovered; and I am acquainted with none more safe and more simple, than that which may be built upon the following plain rule.

Admit no conclusion in any system, unless the conclusion itself, as well as the Thesis from which it is deduced, be explicitly set forth in Holy Scripture.

This rule is equivalent to two very wise declarations of our excellent Church: “that Whatsoever is not read in Scripture, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation\*” and that “We must receive God’s promises in such wise,

\* Art. 6.

as they be *generally* set forth to us in Holy Scripture \*”.

\* Art. 17. Upon this plan the Articles, Homilies, and Services, of the Church of England are constructed, to the great comfort of the peaceable and conscientious scriptural Christian. Hence (what is surely a high recommendation of our public formularies) it is nearly as hopeless a labour to extract from them a *regular* system either of Calvinism or of Arminianism, as from Scripture itself. The Articles, when viewed in connection with the Liturgy and the Homilies, do not so much set forth a precise scheme of doctrines *totum teres atque rotundum*, as they speak the very language of the Bible itself. Nor let any one maintain, that the Word of God is contradictory, merely because our limited faculties are unable to comprehend, at one view, all its different bearings. There are difficulties in the natural and in the moral world, as Bp. Butler hath admirably shewn, no less than in the world of grace; and we frequently find ourselves obliged to admit two positions as equally true, although it exceeds our utmost powers completely to reconcile them with each other. I have frequently admired the wonderful moderation of our Anglican reformers, who, in an age peculiarly addicted to the framing of systems, have resolutely steered clear of all the contending parties. It was this moderation, which led the Church to reject the vain inventions of Popery, without rejecting the ancient apostolical form of ecclesiastical government: and it was this unwillingness to step forth as the avowed champion of a system, which induced her, on the one hand, to censure the presumptuous impiety of Pelagianism; and to refuse, on the other hand, to adopt as her own, what  
are

In order that the use of this rule may the more evidently appear, let us compare the two preceding chains of conclusions, link by link, with the Bible; and I trust that the

are commonly called *the Lambeth Articles*, to the no small wrath of the party-men of that period.

There is another point, which has occasioned even yet more controversy, than the peculiarities of Calvinism; I mean the nature of our blessed Lord: and yet all the disputes upon this topic have arisen from the very fault, which it is the object of the present Treatise to expose, a *partial* survey of Scripture. Some of the early hereticks maintained, that Christ was God and not man; the modern Socinians assert, that he is man and not God; and the Arians attempt to prove, that he is neither one nor the other, but a mighty angel inferior only to the Supreme Being himself. Had our Church been infected with the plague of system-making, she might have adopted, with some appearance of scriptural authority, any one of these various opinions: but she chose rather to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Accordingly she avows, in the words ascribed to Athanasius, that "our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is *God and man*: God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and man of the substance of his mother, born in the world: *perfect God and perfect man*, of a reasonable soul and human flesh, subsisting: *equal* to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and *inferior* to the Father, as touching his manhood: who, although he be *God and man*, yet he is *not two*, but *one* Christ."

vanity of building systems, and the folly of bitterly contending for such mere creatures of fallacious reasoning, will thence be sufficiently manifest.



I. The first Thesis was; “ You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.”

1. Whence, as well as from various other passages, the Church rightly concludes, that, in consequence of the “ original or birth sin” which all inherit from Adam, “ man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil \* ;” so that “ he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and good works, to faith and calling upon God †”.

2. I allow, that it is no easy matter to avoid concluding from this *undoubtedly* scriptural declaration, that man is a mere passive machine: certain however it is, that, were such a conclusion made, it would be as *undoubtedly false*, because it is irreconcilable with the following texts. “ Why will ye

\* Art. 9.

† Art. 10.

die,

die, O house of Israel \*?"—"Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life †."—"O Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ‡." To use such language as this to complete machines would surely be absolute mockery.

3. With regard to the doctrine of *Election* or *Predestination*, it is much more easy to cite texts wherein the terms are contained, than to ascertain the precise import of those terms; yet, till that be done, no opinion, either Calvinistic or Arminian, can be reasonably and decisively established as truth. It is perhaps impossible with such limited faculties as ours, exactly to draw the line between divine prescience and divine decrees. We find it difficult to conceive, how God foresees a matter, without that matter *necessarily* coming to pass; nevertheless there are various instances, in which God can scarcely be said to have fated the actors, though he foresaw the act. The conduct of the Roman

\* Ezek. xviii. 31. † John v. 40. ‡ Matt  
xxiii. 37. See also Prov. i. 24. and Deut. xxx. 19.

soldiers, during the crucifixion, is a case in point. I doubt, whether it be safe to define *the elect or the predestinate* in any other manner, than *the really or apparently pious*. Thus St. Peter addresses the Church at large as a congregation of *elect* persons, though containing many unworthy members \* : and thus, on the other hand, St. Paul shews us the primary, and (if I may use the expression) esoterical meaning of the word *predestinate*, by confining it to the *really* pious, whether Jews or Gentiles ; because he describes the persons, whom he terms *predestinate*, as loving God, which none but the pious do †. The Church of England, not daring to be wise above what is written, hath closely copied Scripture in the use which she makes of the terms *elect* and *predestinate*. Thus *every* catechumen is taught to believe “ in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth *him*, and *all the elect* people of God ; ” and thus the officiating minister is directed to pray, that *every* child, about to be baptized, “ may remain in the number of God’s faithful and *elect* children : ” while, on the

\* 1 Peter v. 12.

† Rom. viii. 28.

other



other hand, the 17th Article describes indeed none but the truly pious, yet doth it describe them so reverently and cautiously in nearly the very words of Scripture, guarding against all abuse and misapprehension of the doctrine, and anxiously warning us to receive God's promises, and to perform God's will *only*, as expressly declared in his word, that no person, either Calvinist or Arminian, can refuse subscription to it, unless he at the same time refuse subscription to the Bible itself\*. *Why* the pious are termed *elect* or

\* Let any person compare the 17th Article with Rom. viii. 28, 29, 30. 1 Pet. i. 2. and Ephes. i. 4; and he will find the description there given of the predestinate, couched pretty nearly in the same terms, as those which the Apostles use. If a Calvinist then will confine his definition of *Election* to scriptural language, I can readily subscribe to it, though possibly he and I may not annex precisely the same meaning to that language: for, be it observed, it is *one* thing to submit myself to a declaration of Scripture, which declaration I at the same time very imperfectly understand; and quite *another* thing to subscribe implicitly to the *explanation* of such declaration, which is provided for me either by a Calvinist or an Arminian. Could it be once indisputably shewn, that Calvinism is the unadulterated doctrine of the Bible, I should hold myself obliged to embrace it,  
how-

*predestinate*, it becomes not us too curiously to inquire. I fear to admit the strict Calvinistic definition of Election, not however merely because it militates against my own notions, but because I doubt whether it accords with the promises of God, as they are *generally* set forth in Scripture. To bring my objections into something of a regular form; I find, in the first place, that St. Peter directs us to “give all diligence to *make* our calling and election sure \*;” but, upon the Calvinistic scheme, it is sure already: consequently no man can make a *Calvinistic* election in the least degree either more or less sure, than what it was long before he was born †. In the second place, what at the same time is an answer to the fourth conclusion,

however contrary it might be to my own preconceived opinions, because the Bible is the word of God; but, till that can be done, I think it more safe to admit no conclusion whatsoever, unless I have the express warrant of Scripture for so doing.

\* 2 Pet. i. 10.

† I am aware, that a Calvinist would say, that the means are predestined, as well as the end; and that St. Peter's exhortation was written only with a view to make

4. In cannot find in Scripture any definite mention of reprobation, the *necessary* correlative of *Calvinistic* election. I allow, that there are a few texts, which *prima facie* appear to lean towards that doctrine. “ There “ are certain men crept in unawares, who “ were before of old *ordained to this con- “ demnation* \*.”—“ What, if God—endured “ with much long suffering the vessels of “ wrath *fitted to destruction* ? †.”—“ A stone “ of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even “ to them which stumble at the word, being “ disobedient: *whereunto also they were ap- “ pointed* ‡.” With regard however to the first of these passages, it is capable of a dif-

us more diligent in those means. But the difficulty still remains, or is indeed rather increased: for, if the means be predestined, it is superfluous to exhort us to diligence in those means; because it is already out of our power to refrain from being diligent in them. If it be answered, that exhortation itself is one of the predestined means of holiness, which is the predestined mean of election; I can only reply, that we may run on *ad infinitum* through a series of such predestined means as those. An infinite series of predestined means differs only in name from absolute fatalism.

\* Jude iv. † Rom. ix. 22. ‡ 1 Pet. ii. 8.

ferent translation: “ There are certain men, “ who were long since (prophetically) de- “ scribed \*, as meet for this condemna- “ tion.” With regard to the second, the past participle *καθηρτισμενα* is capable of a reciprocal, no less than of a passive signification; and may be rendered *fitted by themselves*, or, in other words, *meet*, for destruction. With regard to the third, the expression, *whereunto also they were appointed*, refers, not to *their being disobedient*, but to *the punishment which they were about to incur* in consequence of their disobedience. The Apostle had observed, that Christ was precious to those who believed; but that he was a stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, to the disobedient. The reason, *why* he was a stone of stumbling to them, was *their disobedience*, not surely *a decree of reprobation*; precisely in the same manner as a knowledge of Christ’s doctrine is promised to obedience †: in consequence therefore of their disobedience, “ they were appointed” to convert even the Saviour himself into a rock of

\* Gr. προγεγραμμενοι. † John vii. 17.

offence.

offence. *Their disobedience* then was the fault; *their making Christ a stumbling stone* was the punishment, to which “they were appointed.” Should this mode of interpretation be deemed inadmissible, the words, even with a Calvinistic interpretation, may easily be explained upon the principle of a well known Hebraism, viz. God is frequently said to *do*, what he either foresees *will be done*; or what *he permits a wicked man to do*, after the divine Spirit has long striven with him in vain \*. Thus, when the Lord is said to have “hardened Pharaoh’s heart †,” we should be apt to think that the Egyptian prince was reprobated by a divine decree, did we not find that he is also described as “hardening his own heart ‡.” The fact seems to be this. The incorrigible spirit of Pharaoh provoked the Lord to withdraw himself from him, as in after ages he did from Saul; the consequence of which was, that his heart became more and more hard. To compare natural things with spiritual, (as we are taught to do throughout the whole of Scripture)

\* Gen. vi. 3. † Exod. vii. 13. ‡ Exod. viii. 15.  
 † Sam. vi. 6.

when

when the Sun withdraws its heat from water, water hardens into ice; but, although the Sun is in one sense the occasion of winter, yet it cannot *literally* be said to be the cause of frost. *The consequential cause* it may indeed be termed, but surely not *the efficient one*. In a similar manner, when God commands his prophet to “make the heart of the Israelites fat, and to make their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed \* :” we cannot reasonably infer, either that the prophet possessed any power of hardening their hearts; or that God designed to make him *his* instrument for that purpose: on the contrary, the passage is obviously nothing more than a prediction. Accordingly, since St. Paul, when quoting this very text, does not confine himself to the precise words of the original, he must be understood to give us, upon inspired authority, the true interpretation of it: “The heart of this people *is* waxed gross, and their ears *are* dull of hearing, and their

\* Isaiah vi. 10.

“ eyes have *they*” (they *themselves*, even as Pharaoh hardened his own heart) “ closed ;  
 “ left they should see with their eyes, and  
 “ hear with their ears, and understand with  
 “ their heart, and should be converted, and  
 “ I should heal them \*.” The last argument, which I shall adduce to shew, that the three texts, cited from St. Jude, St. Paul, and St. Peter, ought not to be understood as inculcating the doctrine of reprobation, is ; that, according to such a mode of interpretation, they do not accord with God’s promises, as they are *generally* set forth to us in Holy Scripture.

5. The fifth conclusion, necessarily drawn from the doctrine of reprobation, was, that God willeth the death of sinners ; and for this plain reason : it is impossible, that God should will the salvation of a man, whom he himself hath predestined to damnation from all eternity. Notwithstanding however the plausibility of such a conclusion, God expressly saith, “ I have *no pleasure* in the  
 “ death of him that dieth †.”—“ As I live,  
 “ I have *no pleasure* in the death of the

\* Acts xxviii. 27. † Ezek. xviii. 32.

“ wicked ;

“ wicked ; but that the wicked should turn  
 “ from his way, and live \*.” Whence the  
 Church rightly declares, that “ God *desireth*  
 “ *not* the death of a sinner, but rather that  
 “ he may turn from his wickedness and  
 “ live.”

6. The sixth conclusion was, that Christ died, not for the reprobate, but only for the elect ; which constitutes, what is usually called, *the doctrine of particular redemption*. This however is certainly not the doctrine of Scripture, for declarations are accumulated upon declarations to prove to us the comfortable truth, that our Lord died for all men. St. John informs us, that Christ “ is  
 “ the propitiation for our sins, and not for  
 “ ours *only*, but also for the sins of the *whole*  
 “ world †.” What is here meant by *the whole world* is sufficiently evident from another passage in the same epistle, whence the preceding text is taken : “ The whole world  
 “ lieth in wickedness ‡.” So that the whole world, which lieth in wickedness, is the same whole world, for the sins of which Christ is a

\* Ezek. xxxiii. 11      † 1 John ii. 2.      ‡ 1 John  
 v. 19.



propitiation; agreeably to that declaration of St. Paul, “ God commendeth his love towards us, in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us\*.” In order to prevent the possibility of the expression, *the whole world* being mistaken, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews further informs us, that, “ by the grace of God, Jesus “ tasted death for *every man* †.” I have indeed heard it asserted, that *the whole world* means *the whole world of the elect*, and that *every man* means *every individual of the elect*: but surely, if so lax a method of interpretation be admitted, there is no longer any certainty in language; for, upon such principles, any thing or every thing may be proved from Scripture.

7. According to the seventh conclusion, God cannot be supposed ever to expostulate with sinners. To demonstrate gravely from the Bible, that God *doth* expostulate with sinners, would be an idle and impertinent waste of time.

8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. Were these conclusions true, (which by the way I have no

\* Rom. v. 8.

† Heb. ii. 9.

with to faddle upon Calvinists as articles of their Faith; for I am persuaded, that such gross and impious absurdities are as little believed by them as by myself, though, if systems *must* be fabricated, they may be legitimately deduced from the preceding conclusions.) Were these conclusions true, I say, it is impossible to conceive, that God should ever have condescended to submit the plan of his moral government to *our* notions of justice. Far be it from me to assert, *as an abstract proposition*, that God is bound to abide by what *we* think just; the weakness of our limited faculties sufficiently shews the folly of presuming to direct the counsels of the Most High: nevertheless, when he is pleased solemnly to appeal to *ourselves* respecting the strict impartiality of *his* proceedings, thus making us in some sort our own judges, we have surely a right to conclude, that the divine justice is at least *the same in kind* as human justice, however *superior it may be in degree*. Let any one seriously, humbly, and devoutly, with affections meet for him,

“ Into the heaven of heavens who would aspire,

“ An earthly guest ;”——

Let

Let any such person meditate upon the express declarations of God himself, as conveyed to us by the instrumentality of one of his inspired prophets \*; and let him then decide, whether those declarations be reconcilable with the Calvinistic doctrine of reprobation, and all its tremendous consequences.

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II. The second Thesis was; “ Repent,  
 “ and turn yourselves from all your trans-  
 “ gressions; so iniquity shall not be your  
 “ ruin. Cast away from you all your trans-  
 “ gressions, whereby ye have transgressed;  
 “ and make you a new heart, and a new  
 “ spirit: for why will ye die, O house of  
 “ Israel?”

1. Whence it was concluded, that a man is able to turn himself from all his transgressions, and to make for himself a new heart, and a new spirit; an opinion diametrically opposite to the decision of the Church of England †. I cannot expose the errone-

\* See Ezek. xviii.  
 Conclus. 1.

† See Art. 10, cited in Thes. i.

ousness of this tenet better than in the words of that late excellent divine, the Rev. William Jones, from whom I have already borrowed a similar train of reasoning in the beginning of the present short treatise. Mr. Jones is confuting the errors of a Socinian, but his arguments will apply with equal force to any other person, who holds the dangerous doctrine of *human sufficiency*. “ This proposition, that *Man has power of himself to do the will of God*, is repugnant to the whole Gospel, and especially to that declaration of Christ, *Without me ye can do nothing*: yet for this proposition our Socinian has soberly pleaded, attempting to prove it from those words of Scripture, where God saith to the people, *Turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Hence he argues, that the people had power to turn themselves, otherwife God would not have required it. But, unless we are to take the Scripture by halves, we shall find it said by the people, and by their prophets, *Turn thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned*. So that, if both these passages  
“ are

“ are laid together, it follows, that, in the  
 “ great work of conversion, there is a part  
 “ for man, and a part for God.—The will  
 “ of man, and the power of God, operate  
 “ together. We turn ourselves, and God  
 “ turneth us: we work out our salvation,  
 “ and God worketh in us at the same time.  
 “ This is what appears, when we lay the  
 “ Scripture together: and you see how  
 “ dangerous it is to listen to those, who  
 “ argue from a scrap of the Bible, mis-  
 “ understood and perverted, so as to render  
 “ the grace of God of none effect \*.”

2. The second conclusion is so nearly re-  
 lated to the first, that much the same answer  
 may suffice for both. An advocate for abso-  
 lute free will, *as possessed by us naturally*, in  
 contradistinction to its being *conferred upon*  
*us by grace*, would do well moreover to con-  
 sider the following texts: “ No man can  
 “ come unto me, except the Father, which  
 “ hath sent me, draw him †.”—“ Ye shall  
 “ know the truth, and the truth shall make  
 “ you free ‡.”—If the Son shall make you

\* Preferv. against Socin. chap. 5. † John vi. 44.

‡ John viii. 32.

“ free, ye shall be free indeed \*.” The obvious meaning of these several passages is, that a knowledge of Christian truth shall, through divine grace, restore to us that freedom, which, in consequence of the fall, we do not possess by nature.

3. The third conclusion asserted, that man hath no need of any extrinsic assistance, being able to turn *himself* unto righteousness. But our Lord asserts, in the fullest manner, that the fruitfulness of the members depends entirely upon their connection with himself, the almighty head of the Church. “ Abide  
 “ in me, and I in you. As the branch can-  
 “ not bear fruit of itself, except it abide in  
 “ the vine; no more can ye, except ye  
 “ abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the  
 “ branches; he that abideth in me, and I  
 “ in him, the same bringeth forth much  
 “ fruit: for *without me ye can do nothing*.  
 “ If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth  
 “ as a branch, and is withered †.” The same language is held by St. Paul. “ Not  
 “ that we are sufficient of ourselves to think  
 “ any thing, as of ourselves; but our suf-

\* John viii. 36.

† John xv. 4.

“ ficiency is of God \*.” Even faith itfelf, whereby a lively faith (as oppofed to a dead fpeculative belief, which may doubtlefs be acquired, like a belief in any particular of profane hiftory, by the mere exertion of our *natural* intellect) is evidently meant, is declared to be the fpecial gift of God. “ By “ grace are ye faved, through faith; and “ that not of yourfelves: it is the gift of “ God †.”

4. The fourth conclufion denied *in toto* the operations of the Holy Spirit. I am not now fpeaking of the *extraordinary*, but merely of the *ordinary* operations of God’s Spirit, by whose agency a fufficiency of ftrength is imparted to every believer. To multiply texts however, to prove that fuch agency is both abfolutely neceffary for us, and doth really exift, is furely fuperfluous.

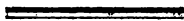
5. The fifth conclufion is answered by what hath been faid concerning the fourth.

6, 7, and 8. In thefe final conclufions the doctrine of *a particular Providence* is denied, in plain defiance of the univerfal fcope of Scripture. Let me again repeat,

\* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

† Ephes. ii. 8.

that I mean not to say, that such are the doctrines of an Arminian; any more than that the whole of the first chain of conclusions would be subscribed to by a Calvinist: I only assert, that all the preceding horrid tenets flow respectively from each system, if carried to its utmost limits. So long as men are determined to fabricate systems for themselves, and cannot rest contented with the simple word of God: we must not be surpris'd, if, on the one hand, we should occasionally find a Calvinist, wallowing in the mire of Antinomianism, or locked up in the immoveable ice of Fatalism; nor if, on the other hand, we should sometimes have reason to bewail the heretical pravity of an Arminian, inflated with the vain idea of his own sufficiency, and rushing madly into all the philosophising errors of determined Pelagianism.



Thus have I endeavoured to point out the mischievous consequences of fabricating systems, so far as respects soundness of doctrine: these however unhappily are not the  
*only*



*only* bad effects which flow from it. Violent contentions for favourite opinions are too frequently the harbingers of that bane of Christian meekness and charity, open schism. Obscure matters of doubtful disputation acquire an importance in the eyes of a party-man, which they by no means deserve. By long brooding over them in private, by associating with none but those who hold the same sentiments, and by reading no works but those which are written on one side of the question, his passions become inflamed, in proportion as his judgment is unexercised: and he can consider none orthodox, but those, who think precisely like himself; and who, in addition to the formularies of the Church of England, admit all the peculiarities of *his* system. Hence we find, that a high Calvinist views an Arminian with a sort of undefineable prejudice and dislike: while a high Arminian amply repays this uncharitable bigotry with jealousy, distrust, and contempt. According to the one, Calvinism, unmixed Calvinism, is the undoubted doctrine of the Church: according to the other, every Calvinistic divine, however exact

act

act in his submission to the discipline of the Church \*, is to be considered only in the light of a concealed foe, who would infallibly overturn the whole constitution, both ecclesiastical and civil, were it in his power to do so. The first terms his opponent *a doctrinal dissenter*, because he cannot subscribe to all the dogmata of Calvin ; and pro-

\* I speak of the *regular* Calvinistic clergy, and of them *only*. Many such divines I believe to be truly pious men, and heartily attached to our excellent constitution both in Church and State: indeed I never yet could discover, what *necessary* connection there is between Calvinism, and that spurious form of ecclesiastical government Presbyterianism ; an opinion, which I feel myself perfectly warranted in avowing, since it is sanctioned by no less an authority than that of Bishop Horsley. Those Arminians, who think themselves justified in suspecting the Calvinistic clergy of a tendency to Schism, merely because the turbulent Puritans of the seventeenth century were Calvinists, would do well to remember, that Mr. Wesley, the author of the Methodistic Schism, was a decided Arminian, and that he separated from his quondam associate, simply because that associate was as decided a Calvinist. Justice at the same time obliges me to remark, that those Calvinists are extremely unreasonable, and highly bigotted, who “ not only maintain Calvin’s “ tenets without exception, but seem to think, that there “ can be no orthodoxy out of Calvinism.” Bishop Horsley’s Rem. on Priestley’s 2d Letters, p. 75.

claims

claims his own party to be the only true members of the Anglican Church: the second returns the compliment by styling his adversary *a dissenter in the Church*, and by representing him as an enthusiastic admirer of all the whimsical extravagances of Methodism. Such are the unhappy disputes of the present day; which serve only to irritate the minds of the contending parties, to grieve all moderate men, and to delight the advocates for Infidelity and Schism\*.

Meanwhile that venerable branch of protestant episcopacy, the established Church of

\* “ If upon any branch of Christian duty,” (would that this generous and manly sentiment was adopted both by Calvinists and Arminians!) “ my conscience be at perfect ease; the precept, *Judge not*, is that which, “ I trust, I have not transgressed. The motives, by which one man is impelled, are, for the most part, so imperfectly known to any other; that it seems to me “ cruel to suppose, that the evil, which appears in men’s “ actions,” (actions perpetually misrepresented by malice, and therefore perpetually misunderstood by ignorance and prejudice) “ is always answered by an equal malignity “ in their minds. I have ever, therefore, held it dangerous and uncharitable, to reason from the actions of “ men to their principles; and, from my youth up, have “ been averse to censorious judgment.” Bishop Horsley’s Rem. on Priestley’s 2d Letters, p. 86.

England,

England, pursues the noiseless tenor of her way, unmoved by the din of theologic hatred, and unbiaſſed by the confident appeals of her reſtleſs children. “ Peace be within thy walls, and plenteouſneſs within thy palaces !” Thou haſt choſen the Word of God for thy guide ; and may that God be thy protection in the miſt of all thy troubles ! To the Calviniſt the Church declares the doctrine of *univerſal redemption, and good will towards all men* \*. To the Pelagian ſhe aſſerts the exiſtence of original ſin ; and pronounces, that we are weak, miſerable, wretched creatures, very far gone from primitive righteouſneſs, and naturally inclined to evil †. To the Antinomian ſhe plainly declares, that good works are *a ſine qua non* of ſalvation, although they are not the meritorious cauſe of it ; and informs him, that, notwithstanding Chriſt died for all, yet none will be ſaved but the pious only ‡.

\* Art. 15. † Art. 9.

‡ Athan. Creed towards the end. Hooker decides this point with his uſual prudence and accuracy ; “ We acknowledge a *dutiful* neceſſity of doing well, but the *meritorious dignity* of doing well we utterly re-nounce.” Diſcourſe on Juſtification.

To

To the Latitudinarian, who fancies it the height of philosophical liberality to consider all modes of worship as equally pleasing unto God, she scruples not to avow, that “ they  
 “ are to be had accursed, that presume to  
 “ say, that every man shall be saved by the  
 “ law or sect which he professeth, so that he  
 “ be diligent to frame his life according to  
 “ that law, and the light of nature \*.” And the Romanist she teaches, that “ we are  
 “ accounted righteous before God, only for  
 “ the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus  
 “ Christ by faith; and neither for our own  
 “ works or deservings †,” nor yet for the  
 supererogatory works of the Saints ‡. In fine, (to adopt the judicious remark of the present Bishop of Lincoln,) “ Our reformers  
 “ followed no human authority; they had  
 “ recourse to the Scriptures themselves as  
 “ their sole guide. And the consequence  
 “ has been, what might have been expected,  
 “ ed, that our Articles, and Liturgy, do  
 “ not exactly correspond with the sentiments  
 “ of any of the eminent reformers upon the

\* Art. 18.

† Art. 11.

‡ Art. 14.

“ continent, or with the creeds of any of  
“ the protestant churches, which are there  
“ established. Our Church is not Lutheran  
“ —it is not Calvinistic—it is not Arminian.  
“ It is scriptural \*.”

\* Charge 1803, p. 23.

FINIS.