THE

CARDINAL DOGMAS OF CALVINISM

TRACED TO THEIR ORIGIN.

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THE CARDINAL DOGMAS OF CALVINISM TRACED TO THEIR ORIGIN.

IT is not my business at present to dogmatise. I propose to submit to the reader a historical sketch, rather than a doctrinal disquisition. A rational mind finds the ground on which to reject orthodox dogmas conclusive enough, in the fact that they are felt to be at variance with *reason*. But it cannot fail to strengthen the convictions which spring directly from the exercise of common sense, to be assured that those convictions are supported by *history*. The inductive method to be applied here in disproving the doctrine of unconditional and eternal election, may be applied with equal success in demolishing, point by point, the entire system of Calvinistic theology. *Ex uno disce omnes.*

It is much more rare to hear the repulsive dogmas of Calvinism preached now than it was a quarter of a century ago. They still linger, however, under a more or less austere aspect in town and country. They are publicly taught by not a few clergymen who received them as a traditional inheritance, which they would deem it sacrilegious to inquire narrowly into. They are professed by many laymen also. Some of these laymen have outlived Calvinism in heart, though they are unable to muster the courage necessary to avow their opinions openly; others of them, with yet less independence of thought, cling to the system with simply a blind sentimentalism which rests in the worship of the past.

The doctrine of eternal and unconditional election would have no place in Calvinistic theology, but for the alleged "fall" of Adam, and the supposed fatal consequences of this catastrophe to the human race. The doctrine under notice represents God as foreseeing that such an untoward event would happen, and as, in consequence, proposing in a past eternity to save a limited portion of mankind from the eternal ruin which their own sin *directly*, and the imputed sin of the first man *indirectly*, should bring upon them. This deliverance of the elect from the ceaseless punishment of hell, to which the non-elect were exposed, was determined upon by God *unconditionally*—one might almost say, *arbitrarily*, according to Calvinism. The choice is said to have been sovereign, absolute, spontaneous,—without any perception on the part of Deity of inherent merit as distinguished from ill-desert in the elected persons, in order that all pretext for their taking any credit to themselves in the transaction should be excluded, and that the unreasoning preference of the infinite chooser might be vindicated and extolled. The web of metaphysical exposition that has been woven round this tenet of orthodoxy is indescribably ingenious and complicated. The profound treatises which have attempted to deal with the topic during the last fourteen centuries, have been *legion*. The controversies that have been waged all through that period about it, are they not familiar to every student of that most unsatisfactory branch of theological learning—Church History? Who can number the honest minds that have been narrowed and twisted by the dismal teaching of the creed of which this doctrine is the central element!

The Pantheist is consistent and intelligible, however strongly we may disagree with him, when he frankly says that "he cannot frame to himself the conception of a *personal* God; that he cannot understand sin as *real*, but only as *apparent* in the universe, and that

what physical and moral disorder exists no power can remove, till, in the slow progress of events, the world has gained sufficient scientific knowledge and experience to swamp what we are accustomed to call wrong-doing and folly. All error, absurdity, and evil work their own cure by wearing themselves out. What we technically call *sin*, marks the fact that mankind has on certain matters to pass from a state of ignorance to a state of knowledge." This view may be right, or it may be wrong, but it has at least the advantage of leaving out all implied moral imputations upon the character of a personal deity. The assertion that an intelligent God predestined only a certain number to everlasting life necessarily carries with it the anterior condition, that he must have fated the circumstances which made that predestination inevitable. Unless the Calvinist is prepared to believe that there is a devil in the universe equally potent with the Almighty—a conception as impossible as it is monstrous,—he is bound to hold that God deliberately arranged for corruption and death, material, spiritual, and everlasting, to flood the world. For without this supposition the theory of a mediatorial ransom for the favourites of the Calvinistic deity would be meaningless. I pass over the horrid but necessary counterpart of the doctrine of the eternal and unconditional election of *some*, namely, the eternal and unconditional reprobation of *others*. With such a representation of God constantly before the mind, the Predestinarians must from the first have been unique in the grounds of their reverence for their deity. Conflict with reason could surely no further go than appears in the spectacle of their professed devotion and affection for his character and will, in spite of the crimes and cruelties ascribed to him by their creed, which traces to his agency and permission acts totally irreconcileable with the principles of human reason, right, and benevolence. That there should be found in Europe and America a section of civilised men venerating the

Calvinistic God, despite characteristics in him which would be denounced as intolerable if seen in a human being, is itself an unanswerable reply to all the theological rant about the universality of human depravity. If ever argument was wanting to retrieve the libelled character of mankind, and atone for its imperfections, it is abundantly supplied in the worship and consecration shown by so many to the God of eternal and unconditional election! Never was the mantle of charity so forbearingly thrown over the vices of man by man, as has in this case been thrown over the vices of deity by man.

The dogma under consideration is somewhat anachronously designated when associated with the name of Calvin. The origin of the doctrine dates back just eleven centuries before the Reformation, *and to no earlier a period.* Its real author was Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, who flourished in the fifth century. The system known as Calvinism is little more than a revival of Augustinianism. A section of the Roman Catholic Church in the time of the Genevan Reformer had veered round into the track of practical Pelagianism, and in order to beat down what Calvin held to be deadly error, he repaired to the armoury of Augustine, and furbished up the old weapons of the saint to fight over again the battle of Grace *versus* Works. The question returned, "Can man think or do any right thing of himself?" "Yes, certainly," said the semi-Pelagian of Calvin's day. "No, nothing," replied Calvin, "without the inspiration of the sovereign, eternal, and electing grace of God." The two postulates on which the entire predestinarian scheme, as originated by Augustine, and revived by Calvin, rested, were *original sin* inherited from Adam, and the *irresponsible sovereignty of God.* From these premises it was plausibly argued by Augustine that "an absolute election of certain individuals to eternal life, though resulting from the divine will purely, is not on the

part of the supreme ruler abstractedly unjust. For since, both by original and actual sin, all are transgressors of God's law, it were assuredly no injustice if all had been left to perish. Therefore, if all might justly be left to perish, clearly no breach of justice can be committed in the free election of some to eternal life." Strange metaphysical infatuation to blind a great mind like Augustine's! What caused "original sin?" The predetermination of God. What caused "actual sin?" Proximately it must have been *original sin.* Therefore, for God to save a few sinners, and to hold the rest responsible for their doom—a doom which could only be averted either by his predestinating that sin should not enter in any shape into the world, or by his exerting some irresistible influence in redeeming the non-elect, is a palpable and cruel injustice. But the *exigencies* of a theological system with a polemical divine are vastly more urgent than any scruples about the moral issues of the system. Consequently, Augustine, with all the partisan zeal of a retained counsel, rushed blindly on in the narrow ruts of his scholasticism, and we need not be surprised, therefore, to read these words of his respecting the elect and the reprobate:—"Although in the present state we cannot certainly know the elect from the reprobate (for as the reprobate may seem for a time to be leading holy lives, so the elect, anterior to their effectual calling may for a time appear to be in nowise actuated by godliness), yet a definite number of individuals, as well from among the existing members of the visible church as from the great mass of the unbelieving world at large, who shall hereafter become members of the visible church, are, by the mere sovereign pleasure of God, personally elected to eternal salvation." So strong a passage prepares us for one still stronger in the same direction, written apparently under the influence of a remorseless logic which utterly tramples on the sentiments of even common humanity, to say

nothing of deity. "Since the number of the elect can neither can be increased or diminished, all the rest of mankind, equally by the mere sovereign pleasure of God, being ultimately given over to the unrestrained exercise of their own free will, are *personally* reprobated to eternal damnation."

In natural sequence to this terrific assertion we next encounter the theory of "particular redemption," the necessity for which latter dogma previous links in the chain of argument had created. "When it is said," says Augustine, "that God will have all to be saved, though in point of fact, all men are not saved, this language relates exclusively to the elect, who, through God's sovereign pleasure are out of all classes of men predestined to eternal life." True to his favourite tenet of *originale peccatum*, which he believed to involve the mass of men in hopeless spiritual insensibility, Augustine summons to his aid the correlated dogma of "effectual calling" and dovetails it into his system. "In due season," he says, "while to the reprobate reproof acts only as a penal torment, to the elect that same reproof is instrumentally blessed as a salutary medicine." Having thus reasoned out to his own satisfaction the remote and proximate causes of human depravity; having set forth the outward provision for the cure of this evil which he tells us was expressly and exclusively ordained for the benefit of the elect; having further put forward the doctrine that the elect were supernaturally inspired with an inclination to appropriate *effectually* the provided cure, only one more theological extravagance was wanted to round off and cap this dismal system. Augustine taught "the final perseverance of all the elect through the indefectible grace of God;" that is to say, their safe conduct to heaven. This synopsis of the bishop's theory, stated for the most part *in his own words*, covers all that need be said now in the way of preliminary exposition.

It is not generally known, however, that the contem-

poraries of Augustine rejected the views which I have summarized, as "novelties," and demanded his authority for dogmas so unheard of in the previous experience of the church. But the following facts will enable us to judge for ourselves the actual worth of the testimony he laboured to adduce in their support.

The first occasion on which he is known to have promulgated his peculiar theories was in his controversy with Pelagius, Celestius, Julian, and their followers, on "Divine grace and human nature." The points at issue between the combatants are briefly as follows: the Church asserted first that "the grace of God is not given according to man's antecedent merits." Secondly, that "whatever may be the comparative righteousness of one man in particular, no person lives in this corruptible body without incurring the actual guilt of a certain degree of positive sinfulness." Thirdly, that "we are all born obnoxious to the sin of the first man, and consequently are all subject to damnation unless the guilt which is contracted in our generation be removed by our *regeneration.*" These were the points stoutly argued by Augustine in behalf of the church. The Pelagians, on the contrary, insisted that "we only sin by vicious imitation and that grace is given according to antecedent merit." Augustine appealed in favour of his views—which all orthodox people have done ever since—to the bible,*

* What orthodox *ism* cannot be proved from the bible? It is on record that a Cambridge professor a century or two back, got the notion into his head that the book of Psalms could be interpreted throughout on a new hermeneutical principle, viz.: that of *rain.* He solemnly believed and maintained that the Psalmist had before his mind the idea of *moisture* in composing every verse of his Psalms, and when the Professor comes upon the beautiful words, "Light is sown for the righteous; and gladness for the upright in heart," as might be expected, he canters easily over critical difficulties. He gravely explains, "Light was produced among the Orientals by oil expressed from the castor tree, and the castor tree was nourished and refreshed by *rain!*"

as interpreted by the fathers, and in particular, as interpreted by Polycarp (who was reported to have received his theology direct from the Apostle John), St Cyprian of Carthage, and his own personal friend and patron, Ambrose of Milan.

In the course of the controversy Augustine was induced to publish a treatise on "Correction and Grace" for the purpose of crushing the heresy against which he fought. This treatise contains theological speculations never before elaborated in support of orthodoxy. In this work the doctrinal system now known as Calvinism first saw the light, and the theories of *unconditionalism* and *necessitarianism*, now for the first time propounded, were strongly objected to by the author's most intimate friends and denounced by the great majority of Augustine's orthodox contemporaries as "novelties."

When this work on "Correction and Grace" reached Gaul, Augustine's notions in the book which were accounted "novel" were openly opposed. Prosper of Aquitane, formerly a disciple of the bishop of Hippo, and Hilary of Arles remonstrated with Augustine in letters which they addressed to him on the subject in the name of the believers of Massilia. In one of these epistles we are told that many of "the servants of Christ" who lived in Marseilles and in other parts of Gaul (the description is given by Prosper himself) had instructed Prosper and Hilary to expostulate with Augustine. The following are the words of the expostulation: "We heartily approve of your general confutation of Pelagius and his followers. But why do you superfluously mingle with it a system of *novel peculiarities which we cannot receive?* [The reference here is to the distinctive Augustinian dogmas of unconditionalism and necessitarianism now known as the fundamentals of Calvinistic theology.] To say nothing of what we at least deem the utter inconsistency of that system with scripture, it is, in truth, quite new

to us. *We never even so much as heard of it before.* We find it unsanctioned by any of the preceding fathers, and we perceive it to be contrary to the sense of the whole Catholic church." The weight attaching to this communication of the Massalian believers consists in the fact that they were general admirers of the bishop of Hippo, whom, in this instance, however, they felt bound to take to task, and they were not likely to be animated by silly prejudice against him. For the letter referred to, concludes in these flattering terms: "Be assured, however, that, *this one matter excepted*, we cordially admire your holiness both in all your doings and in all your sayings."

Now the gist of the inquiry turns upon this point: were the suspicions of the Massilians as to Augustine's novelties well-founded? If they were, clearly the dogmas of unconditionalism and necessitarianism had no existence within the knowledge of the orthodox church prior to the Pelagian controversy.

The remonstrance of Prosper and Hilary called forth from the irrepressible bishop a published defence of the "novel" positions he had taken up, in a second treatise entitled "The predestination of the Saints and the gift of Perseverance." How does he attempt to vindicate himself from the charges brought against his doctrine by the Christians of Marseilles? He falls back on two sources of proof: *the authority of the Catholic church, and the testimony of the preceding fathers*, though the Massilian Christians denied that support could be found for his views either in the one quarter or in the other. In reference to the former of these sources of proof he admits that the church "*was not wont to* bring forward in preaching, the doctrine of predestination, because formerly there were no adversaries to answer." But yet he maintains that "notwithstanding her habitual silence on the topic, she *must* have held the doctrine in question *because she has always prayed that unbelievers might be converted*

to the faith and that believers might persevere to the end." So much for church authority and Augustine's way of manipulating it!

Let us now see how he manages to manufacture encouragement for his "novelties" out of the testimony of the fathers. Strange to say, from the whole host of them he can only find *three* names as pillars for the fabric of his "novel peculiarities:" Cyprian, Gregory-Nazianzen, and Ambrose, and the only assistance his ingenuity could extract from these fathers consists only of a very few brief and extremely ambiguous passages from their writings. From these few vague passages he draws the sweeping inference that "these all harmoniously teach his system of predestination." He had already based his necessitarian dogmas on the plea that the church had held the doctrine of final perseverance, forgetting, as he did, that such a doctrine as that of final perseverance might be logically enough held by persons who repudiated altogether the notion of unconditional election and predestination. We shall soon find that his appeal to the fathers is as meagre, frivolous, and unsatisfactory, as his appeal to the authority of the church. We may be quite sure, from the vast array of ancient names he opposed to Pelagianism that had he been able to bolster up his predestinarian system, especially by patristic authority, he would not have contented himself, as he felt compelled to do in this instance, with naming only *three solitary fathers* as favouring his side of the question.

Now for the testimony from the fathers which he adduces. Cyprian, the first of the three cited by Augustine, flourished about the middle of the third century, and the two others—Gregory Nazianzen and Ambrose—in the latter part of the fourth century, the two last named fathers actually belonging to the patristic generation immediately preceding his own. So that, after all his boasted claims for the antiquity and inspired authority of his theories, he relied upon fathers,

the earliest of whom lived as late as a century and a half, at least, after the death of St John, and the latest of whom was only his own senior by about twenty years.

Had these three fathers yielded any distinct support to the Augustinian theories, we might have been disposed to lay less stress on their remoteness from the Apostles. But the passages the bishop of Hippo brings forward from their writings, are found to be utterly irrelevant, and show the desperate shifts to which he was driven in attempting to make out his case.

What says Cyprian, on this subject of eternal and unconditional election? He simply prayed along with the "Church Catholic" that "infidels might be converted, and that believers might persevere to the end." "Therefore," concludes Augustine, "this father must have held my sentiments respecting Election and Reprobation." Could logic be more completely set at defiance?

Again, Gregory-Nazianzen, exhorting his flock to confess the Trinity in Unity, stated that "he who gave them in the first instance to believe that doctrine would also give them in the second instance to confess it." A conclusion similar to the one just indicated, is instantly drawn also from these words. Gregory is supposed to be at one with Augustine.

Ambrose said that "when a man became a Christian he might fairly allege his own good pleasure in so doing, without, in anywise, denying the good pleasure of God; for it is from God that the will of man is prepared, and Christ calls him whom he pities."

For any man in his senses—and especially a man of the unquestioned talent of Augustine—to clutch at such a pretence of proof as is afforded by this passage, of the doctrines of unconditional election and reprobation—reveals an ignorance of the first principles of reasoning perfectly astounding.

Another passage from the writings of the same

father, is quoted by the Bishop of Hippo for the same purpose. It occurs in a comment by Ambrose on a certain verse in St Luke's gospel. Ambrose expresses himself thus : "Learn, also, that Christ would not be received by those whom he knew had not been converted in simplicity of mind. For if he had so pleased, he might, from being undevout, have made them devout. But why they did not receive him, the Evangelist himself shows us, when he says, 'because his face was as of one going to Jerusalem.' For the disciples were wishing him to be received into Samaria. God calls them whom he deigns to call, and him whom he wills he makes religious."

On these two statements of Ambrose unitedly, Augustine, with touching simplicity, based the opinion that this father and himself were agreed on necessitarian doctrines. But, in point of fact, so far from Cyprian, Gregory and Ambrose intending to lend any countenance to Augustinian "novelties," passages might easily be adduced from the works of all three demonstrating that they were flatly opposed to these *novelties*. But even had their teachings been apposite to Augustine's purpose, when it is remembered that the very earliest of these witnesses was not born till *a hundred and fifty years after the last of the Apostles*, the value of their testimony becomes seriously impaired.

There are one or two further considerations worthy to be noted as supplying evidence that the origin of the specious opinions of Augustine could only be traced to himself.

After Augustine's death, Prosper, who became a convert to the dogmas of Augustinianism, and was carried away by heroic loyalty to the memory of his great teacher, continued to defend them zealously. This being the case, an appeal was made to the judgment of Pope Celestine on the subject, and that pontiff, while commending the skill and earnestness of Augustine in contending with the Pelagians for "the doctrines of

grace," significantly enough passed over in silence the two elaborate treatises which develop his "novel" views, viz., "Correction and Grace," and "The predestination of the saints and the gift of perseverance." The Pope, sensible of the obligation under which the Church of Rome was laid to the learning, ability, and devotion of Augustine, was naturally unwilling to deal out formal censure against his controverted opinions, and thus expose his memory to reproach. Celestine and his successors, therefore, chose to evade the appeals made to them to pronounce against the necessitarian dogmas of the Bishop of Hippo. From an early preface to "the Predestination of the Saints and the gift of perseverance," we learn that, in the time of Leo the Great, the dispute as to Augustine's new views, was still unsettled in the church, and ultimately this pope adopted the evasive method of referring it to the Council of Orange, which sat in the year 441, that the Council might bear the responsibility of gravely deliberating and of finally deciding on the subject. It must be candidly owned that the judges in this council were as far removed from prejudice as men of their type and times could possibly be, and yet they found Augustine's sentiments to be contrary to the most ancient and authorised interpretations of the Bible, and though they make no direct allusion to his "novelties" in the first twenty-four canons framed by them, still, in the closing canon, they assert in manifest opposition to these *novelties*, that "all baptised Christians may, through grace, if they will only labour faithfully, accomplish those things which appertain to their salvation, and that *the doctrine of God's predestination of some certain individuals to evil is not only to be disbelieved, but also* TO BE ANATHEMATISED WITH ALL DETESTATION." The Council of Orange met expressly to consider all matters relating to the Pelagian controversy, but nevertheless, when they had occasion to mention the Augustinian dogmas in question, it was

only to repudiate them. This Council searched, in vain, the records of the four preceding Councils of the church for support to the views of the Bishop of Hippo, and were forced to the conclusion that these views were at variance with the received articles of the Catholic faith.

John Calvin appeared about eleven centuries after Augustine, revived the "novelties" of his great theological master, and followed in the wake of his arguments. But, with clearer and more discriminating perceptions than the bishop seems to have had of the comparative weight of patristic authority on the side of predestinarian tenets, Calvin rejected the testimony of two of Augustine's witnesses—Cyprian and Gregory-Nazianzen—altogether on this head. But Calvin laid special emphasis on the statements of Ambrose, as a certain writer remarks, "with more complacency than fairness." We have already seen that the citations from this father are just as futile as a buttress for Augustinianism or Calvinism, as are the citations from the other two fathers mentioned above. Yet, with a strange inconsistency, Calvin speaks as if the Bishop of Hippo were united in opinion with all his ecclesiastical predecessors and contemporaries; for, says the Genevan Reformer, "Augustine does not suffer himself to be disjoined from the rest, but, by clear testimonies, shows that any such discrepancy from them as that with the odium of which the Pelagians attempted to load him, is altogether false. For out of Ambrose he cites: 'Christ calls him whom he pities,' and also, 'if He had pleased, he might from undevout have made them devout; but God calls those whom he deigns to call, and him whom he wills, he makes religious.'"

So that in spite of Calvin's assertion that Augustine was in harmony with the entire body of the preceding fathers, he himself only ventures to quote from one of them, for the obvious reason that he could obtain no plausible show of aid from any of the rest;

and the one brief passage he *does* cite is essentially vague, and even inappropriate.

Again, with more zeal for his cause than pure regard for *fairness*, Calvin attempts, in his remarks on this subject, to produce the impression upon his readers that the only persons who accused Augustine of error were the Pelagians, whereas the plain truth is, that this charge was made against him by individuals whom he himself, on several occasions, addressed as "Christians," and who were designated "servants of Christ" by his disciple Hilary, as well as by the judicious Council of Orange.

There is a further consideration of some importance as bearing on the same point. In the reply which Augustine sent to the letters of Prosper and Hilary, when they wrote in the name of the Massilian Christians, and expressed their surprise at his "novel peculiarities" (while approving his general confutation of the Pelagians), the following passage occurs: "Provided they (*i.e.*, the believers of Marseilles) walk in such doctrines (viz., as those with which he opposed the Pelagians), and pray to Him who giveth understanding if they differ from us, He will also reveal this to them!" In the whole of his epistle he never once attempts to strengthen the faith of his wavering friends, by supplementing the empty show of historical proof he had before adduced, but takes the easy method—so frequently resorted to in all ages by ecclesiastics when in similar straits—of making the acceptance of his dogmas a test of their general fidelity to truth. If they walked in the right path they would be sure to become disposed to embrace his novel tenets! What does this imply, but that with all the acquaintance of the Christians of Marseilles with the historical foundations of their faith, the favourite necessitarian theories of Augustine had never before been heard of by them!

I will mention a circumstance, in conclusion, which stamps Augustine, beyond the possibility of doubt, as

the *originator* of the cardinal points of the system more recently known as Calvinism. This father distinctly avers in the treatise, "The Predestination of the Saints," that he had "diligently searched it (his necessitarian system) out and discovered it," and frankly owns that there was a time when he had maintained entirely different opinions. But if, as he elsewhere holds, these peculiarities were recognised as orthodox by the Christian Church in his day and before it, with what consistency can he be said to have *diligently searched them out* and *discovered* them? Besides, if they were not new in the theological world, how comes it that none of his religious compeers had happened to hear of them previous to the Pelagian controversy, and that it was so difficult for him to find a single definite passage favouring his views in the writings of preceding fathers?

Such is a brief, but, as I cannot help believing, a convincing summary of the facts connected with the rise and progress of what still passes under the name of Calvinistic theology. The father who has been justly credited with the paternity of the system was a superior type of the class of controversial theologians who have become distinguished in church history. He inherited the fiery temper of his father, blended with something of the gentleness and dreamy piety for which his mother was remarkable. Up to manhood he held aloof from dogmatic fetters of all kinds, and gave his mind to bold and free thought* in all directions, equally proof against the influence of bribes on the one hand, and of threats on the other. He had mastered in his twentieth year, by his own efforts, as he tells us, "omnes libros artium quos libe-

* As an instance of the *once* rationalistic tendency of Augustine's mind, we find the following indisputably theistic sentiment in his writings: Res ipsa quæ nunc Religio Christiana nuncupatur, erat apud antiquos, nec defuit ab initio generis humani, quousque Christus veniret in carnem unde vera Religio quæ jam erat, cœpit appellari Christiana.—(*August. Retr.*, i. 13.)

rales vocant," but the organising and logical attributes of his mind inspired him specially with a love of Aristotle, and soon inclined him strongly towards the Manichæans. After a time he made the acquaintance of Ambrose, bishop of Milan, and under the influence of the bishop's kindness, eloquence, and piety, Augustine was induced to renounce Manichæanism. But it was not till he had long struggled in the abysses of scepticism that he received Christianity, and was baptised. His aspiring and unquiet spirit, ever panting for some high occasion to put its powers on tension, seized the opportunity offered by the heresy of Pelagius to render eminent service to the church, and achieve fame in defeating the heresiarch. The germ of fatalism which had been nourished in him under Manichæanism was singularly developed in the heat of controversy. In fact, his supreme effort consisted of incorporating fatalism with the dogmas of the church. But in the learning requisite to trace the history of church dogmas, as well as in the patience of an inductive student, he was essentially wanting. He understood the Latin language, and had read extensively in it; but with much *naiveté* he states that he "hated the Greek," probably owing to its being to him a foreign tongue, and to the fact of the harshness of his teacher, who enforced his lessons "sævis terroribus ac pœnis." Of Hebrew he knew absolutely nothing.

Calvinism, or, more correctly, Augustinianism, has cropped up on four successive occasions in the history of religious controversy, and each time has been associated for a while with intense religious activity. In the fourth century, the attempt to unravel the alleged eternal decrees of a *personal* God brought together on one side Augustine, Fulgentius, and others; and on the other side Chrysostom, Ambrose, and other bishops of the Greek and Latin Churches. Next, the necessitarian dogmas of Augustine were the subject of keen debate among the Schoolmen, and were long the cause of bitter

strife between the Franciscan and Dominican orders. Again, at the Reformation, there was a diversity of opinion on the subject of divine predestination. Calvin, Beza, and Knox, defended the Augustinian view; and Luther, Erasmus, Melancthon, Bullinger, Sacerius, Latimer, and other leaders of the Reformed faith, opposed it.

At the end of the seventeenth century, that tendency to rationalism set in, which, in the course of a generation or two, swept over all Europe. This change in theological thought was largely due in England to the inductive method of inquiry applied to science by Newton in his *Principia,* and applied to psychology by Locke in his *Essay;* both of which works, finished in the same year, inaugurated an epoch, not only in the history of science and literature, but also of theology. In Germany a similar sceptical spirit was developed by the works of Leibnitz. In France the rebound from *church faith* to *human reason* culminated in Voltaire and the Encyclopædists. In this influence of inductive science and inductive philosophy we have a remarkable illustration of the superior potency of these two agencies as compared with theology. There is no instance on record since the inductive method was first propounded by Bacon, of science and philosophy *following* theology. On the other hand, for all the progress theology has made and is making towards truth, courage, and freedom, it is solely indebted to the inoculating power of philosophy and science. The stern aspect of dogma gradually becomes softened in an age distinguished for scientific research and philosophic analysis; but theology has no influence in moulding science and philosophy. The wave of free thought just referred to overtook all evangelical churches throughout Europe, and a real though unavowed Arianism prevailed among the Lutherans of Germany, the Calvinists of Switzerland, the Reformed Church of Holland, the Established Churches of England and

Scotland, the Presbyterians of Ireland, and even the English Evangelical Dissenters. Religious fervour throughout the whole of Protestant Christendom was in consequence wholesomely moderated by the rationalistic spirit which then predominated.

It was in recoil from "moderatism"—as the sober religious condition of this period was called—that Augustinianism for the fourth time revived. Vice and sensuality abounded in the masses of the people; the middle class, as a rule, were indifferent about the dogmas and ceremonies of the church, and thus an opening was made for some stern dealing with the universal religious indifferentism that existed. Hence arose the "Pietists" of Germany, the "Evangelicals" of England, and the followers of Jonathan Edwards in America. These parties made a capital point of "personal" and "subjective" religion. The adherents of Whitfield and Wesley equally did so. But, for a while at least, the Calvinistic dogmas of Edwards, Whitfield, and Simeon took a deeper hold of the "low church party" north and south of the Tweed, and of the Evangelical Nonconformists than the Arminianism of Wesley did. All the old terrorism of threatened fire and brimstone against the "unbeliever," and of the restricted provision of "salvation" for "the elect;" all the mystery of "predestination," "reprobation," and "irresistible grace," was once more brought to bear in order to awe the penitent, and narrow the way to heaven. The temptations to sin and eternal death were represented as many and strong, and the chances of being saved as few and weak! Under this latest phase of Calvinism religion became a dismal business, and up till recently it has in general continued to be so, wherever "the doctrines of grace" have been logically held by the orthodox. The altered phase of religious controversy within the last twenty years is the *accident* that mainly keeps Calvinistic dogmas in the background. But these dogmas have not yet died out. They are still avowed, however

tacitly, by a considerable *section* of the religious world, and a certain school of professional religious teachers are still expected, by way of saving their theological reputation, now and then to declare their belief in them. But the day of Calvinism, as a theological power, is nearly over. It is at best but a metaphysical relic of the dark ages, and has no mission to the strongest minds of the *present*, far less to the ordinary minds of the *future*. Like most other questions capable of being treated inductively, theology is now dealt with from its *historical* side. Even high-churchmen are faintly imitating the inductive method in their inquiries, for they profess to go back to the early fathers for their *faith* and their *ceremonials*. The doctrines of the Reformation professed by the "Evangelicals" are too modern and uncertain for high church acceptance. High-churchmen ground their very reasons for receiving the authority of the Bible on *the traditions of the church*. Theological sceptics are pursuing a similar course, only with a more unbiassed and unsparing historical analysis. These last claim the right of searching out the history of THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE itself as well as the *history of the church*, and of rejecting whatever asserted facts cannot stand the test of rational consistency, and produce satisfactory evidential vouchers in their favour. The biblical criticism of to-day is not of the flimsy character of "Paley's Evidences" or "Lardner's Credibility of Gospel History." These works are now impotent and effete, as far as they claim to prove a *supernatural Christianity*. Paley and Lardner now seem antiquated indeed, in defending the dogma of New Testament infallibility on the plea that some scraps of passages contained in Irenæus and Justin Martyr resemble certain sayings in the Gospels. Traditional authority in the matter of churches and doctrines is now with all independent and cultured minds a thing of the past, and only statements in the "Canon" which will bear the sifting of modern historical criticism and

dispassionate reason are accepted as true by enlightened scholars. No array of tradition or gush of sentiment can possibly supply the deficiency of historical evidence. For "supernatural Christianity," as a historical system, must stand or fall by historical tests. Dogmatic theology is fast being relegated to the last resting-place of exploded superstitions. The intellectual power and spiritual life of civilized communities in the future will be nourished and developed from a totally different source. Theological dogma, with the countless figments of the priestly brain, will be superseded by the inspiration of devout genius, the manifold discoveries of science in the realms of material and spirit life, and by the universal religion of the moral intuitions, another name for which is THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY.

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RECENT THEOLOGICAL ADDRESSES.