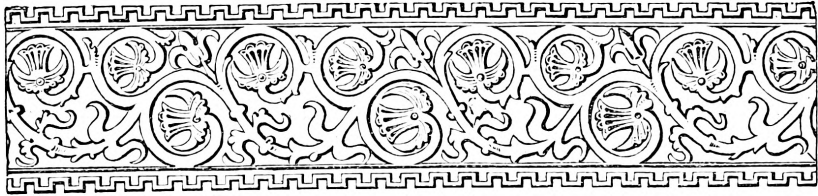


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MR. MATTHEW ARNOLD AND THE NONCONFORMISTS.

R W Dale

MR. ARNOLD has recently shown so much solicitude for the moral and spiritual welfare of the Nonconformists, that I trust he will not think it a sign of sectarian presumption and conceit, if I express the regret that he has not written a book for our exclusive benefit. As he told us several months ago, he is no enemy of ours, though at times he rebukes us sharply; what he aims at is our "perfection." But if his estimate of us is just, the errors into which we have fallen are so fatal, our faults are so grave, and our separation from the National Church is so serious an obstacle to the free development of our Christian thought and life, that he can hardly render us the service on which he has set his heart, unless he devotes himself to his kindly task a little more seriously. In his essay on "St. Paul and Protestantism," though he intended to address himself specially to the Puritans, he has raised innumerable questions in which Puritans have no separate interest. Any one of them would have been large enough for a volume—for half-a-dozen volumes. He reconstructs the theology of St. Paul; presents us with a perfectly original and very surprising account of the ultimate principle which constitutes the foundation of the English Church; speculates on the science of theological method, and on the relations between theology and philosophy; and, in the course of a very few paragraphs, lands us

in the very melancholy conclusion that the creeds and formularies of all Churches—the Nicene Creed and the Westminster Confession, the decrees of the Council of Trent, and the Thirty-nine Articles—are all equally worthless, as being the results of premature attempts to solve problems which are likely to remain insoluble for several centuries to come. It is disheartening to a Nonconformist to find his own small affairs overshadowed and suppressed by such vast discussions as these.

Nor is it easy to separate what Mr. Arnold has said about English Dissent from those bold speculations of his, which affect the dogmatic creed of all Christendom. This, he will probably reply, is not his fault. It is, no doubt, impossible to touch any question relating to the spiritual life of a Church or even of an individual man, without assuming or appealing to principles which determine our whole conception of the history and destiny of our race, and of its relations to truth and to God. So far as I can, however, I intend to limit myself in this paper to what Mr. Arnold has said about Puritanism and Nonconformity.

Mr. Arnold tells us that his one qualification for his attempt to reconstruct the theology of St. Paul, and so to rescue the great Apostle from the hands of the Puritans, is that belief of his "so much contested by our countrymen, of the primary needfulness of seeing things as they really are, and of the greater importance of ideas than of the machinery which exists for them." He would probably say that this is his chief qualification for criticising the history, traditions, policy, creed, and institutions of the Nonconformists. Like most other Englishmen, we are in danger, he thinks, of following staunchly, but mechanically, certain stock notions and habits, "vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly, which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically." He wishes to assist us to turn "a stream of fresh and free thought" upon our theory of religious establishments, which appears to him to have become a mere fetish, and upon our theological dogmas to which we seem to be holding with a blind and superstitious fidelity. For himself he is resolved to look at the Nonconformist Churches—their life, their practices, their creed—with his own eyes, to see them "as they really are;" and he has frankly told the world what he has discovered.

To Mr. Arnold the Evangelical Nonconformists are the true heirs and representatives of the Puritans. The Nonconformist Churches are the Puritan Churches. He discusses the grounds on which our theological and ecclesiastical ancestors separated from the National Church, and the grounds on which the separation is perpetuated. The theory which he has formed of us and of our history is definite

and intelligible. I will give it as far as I can in his own felicitous language. He believes that the main title on which Puritan Churches rest their right of existing is the aim at setting forth purely and integrally the "three notable tenets of predestination, original sin, and justification." "With historic churches like those of England and Rome it is otherwise; these doctrines may be in them, may be part of their traditions, their theological stock; but certainly no one will say that either of these Churches was made for the express purpose of upholding these three theological doctrines jointly or severally." But it was precisely for the sake of these dogmas that the Puritan Churches were founded; and now that the dogmas—at least in the form in which the Puritan theologians stated them—are no longer credible, "Protestant Dissent has to execute an entire change of front and to present us with a new reason for existing." It is admitted that the Evangelical party in the Church of England holds the same scheme of doctrine as the Puritans; "but the Evangelicals have not added to the first error of holding this unsound body of opinions, the second error of separating for them." Nonconformist Churches are built on dogma; and to build on dogma is to build on sand. The Church exists for the culture of perfection, and rests on "the foundation of God, which standeth sure, having this seal—*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*"

This is Mr. Arnold's account of the Nonconformists. That to most Nonconformists it has all the novelty of a discovery, that we never had the slightest suspicion that we and our Churches exist simply for the purpose of upholding the doctrines of predestination, original sin, and justification by faith, will be to him no proof that his theory is unsound. He thinks that he understands us better than we understand ourselves, and will ask us for some account of ourselves and of our ecclesiastical position which shall be truer than his own to history and to fact. Claiming no authority to speak for any one but myself, I will attempt to satisfy him. I think it can be shown that he has altogether missed the true "idea" of Puritanism; that he has misread our history; and that his capital charge against us—that of separating for opinions—rests either upon a misapprehension of facts, or upon a principle destructive of all morality.

I shall have something to say further on about Mr. Arnold's new explanation of the controversy between Puritanism and the Church of England—Mr. Arnold's history is, if anything, more original than his philosophy—but it may be well to consider at starting the "error" by which we are discriminated from the Evangelicals of the English Church. They remain in the Establishment; this is their virtue. We have left it; this is our offence. But our only reason

for leaving it was that we could not remain in it honestly. Are we to be blamed for this? There were Nonconformists before the Act of Uniformity, but modern Nonconformity dates from St. Bartholomew's Day, 1662. It is notorious that the "Two Thousand" did not secede from the National Establishment; they were "ejected" from it. Their Calvinism was not more rigid than that of the men who drew up the Articles. Nor were they very zealous for any particular form of ecclesiastical polity. The majority of them had been Presbyterians; they were willing to accept Episcopalianism; most of them soon became, in practice if not in theory, Independents. They had no desire, as Mr. Arnold suggests, to invent new organizations for enforcing more purely and thoroughly any schemes of theological doctrine. What they wanted was to remain where they were, and to continue to minister to the congregations they loved; but they were resolved not to lie either to man or God, and it was this resolution which forced them to a separation. They did not believe that every baptized child is regenerated of the Holy Ghost, and therefore they refused to say over every child they baptized, "We yield Thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for Thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into Thy holy Church." They interpreted the service for the Visitation of the Sick as compelling them to address to the impenitent as well as the penitent the words, "I absolve thee from all thy sins; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" they refused to say such words as these to men whose sins, as they feared, God had not pardoned; and they doubted whether such authority as these words imply had been entrusted by Christ to His ministers. They believed that there are some men who at death pass into outer darkness, and suffer eternal destruction; and when they were asked to say at the mouth of every grave, "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God of His great mercy to take unto Himself the soul of our dear brother here departed," they answered that it was impossible for them to say this honestly. Nor could they truthfully declare "their unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained and prescribed in and by the book intituled the Book of Common Prayer."

The modern Evangelicals, who are favourably contrasted by Mr. Arnold with the Nonconformists, hold that same body of opinions—sound or unsound—which seemed to the ejected, and which seems to us, inconsistent with the services of the Prayer-Book. In this, the "first error," of which we are guilty, they have their full share; in the "second error," of refusing to use the services, we stand alone. I do not mean to censure Evangelicals for using the formularies which

appear to us inconsistent with the creed which they and we hold in common. I am quite sure that vast numbers of them have discovered some subtle method, satisfactory to themselves, of reconciling their formularies and their faith. But are our fathers to be very severely blamed for not being equally subtle—for not seeing how they could honestly thank God for the spiritual regeneration of all baptized infants, though they believed that all baptized infants were not spiritually regenerate? Was it a crime to suffer the loss of home and income, and honourable place and great opportunities for doing the work for which they most cared, rather than thank God for the eternal salvation of people who, as they feared, might be eternally lost? It seems to me that the principle which, Mr. Arnold tells us, lies at the foundation of the National Church, *Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*, lies at the foundation of Nonconformity.

Mr. Arnold admits that separation from a Church "on plain points of morals" is right and reasonable, "for these involve the very essence of the Christian Gospel;" but he does not appear to think that it would be immoral for Dr. Cumming to celebrate the service of the mass, or for Mr. Spurgeon to baptize infants, or for Mr. Martineau to profess his unfeigned assent and consent to the Athanasian Creed. For the true elucidation and final solution of questions about the Real Presence, about Baptism, about the Trinity, he argues that "time and favourable conditions are necessary," and no such conditions have as yet been fulfilled since the apostolic age. The controversy between the Nominalists and the Realists has not yet been determined; and since that controversy has very much to do with the doctrine of Transubstantiation, the Pope is precipitate in insisting on the adoration of the Host. But if Dr. Cumming, with all his present convictions, had happened to have been born in the Church of Rome, he would be just as precipitate in refusing to adore; it would be his duty to remain in the Church, and so to leave "the way least closed to the admission of true developments of speculative thought when the time is come for them;" for the Church does not rest on opinions, and "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*"

Mr. Spurgeon may believe that it is a lie to say that every baptized infant is regenerate. He may believe that to baptize infants at all is contrary to the will of Christ, and to the practice of the apostles; but "the happy moment" for solving these questions has not yet arrived; the science of historical criticism is as yet hardly constituted, and none of us can be quite sure what the will of Christ was on such a matter as this, or about any of the

practices of the apostolic Church. Mr. Spurgeon's opinions, therefore, are no "valid reason for breaking unity;" he ought to use the baptismal service as it stands, and to remember that "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*"

The orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is nowhere expressly taught in Holy Scripture; it is a development of what is revealed concerning God in our sacred books; it is, moreover, a philosophical development, and therefore "of a kind which the Church has never yet had the conditions for making adequately." This may seem to Mr. Martineau a very valid reason for not accepting Athanasianism; but to Mr. Arnold it seems a reason for not rejecting Athanasianism, and he would, therefore, if I understand him aright, recommend Mr. Martineau not to remain "shut up in sectarian ideas" of his own, but to return to the National Church, join in the worship of Christ as God—because practice, not doctrine, is of the essence of the Gospel, and "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal—*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.*"

It is only just to Mr. Arnold to say that he has expressly told us that "the object of this essay is not religious edification."

Perhaps Mr. Arnold might reply that all that he means by his theory of development is, that as yet no man can be quite sure that he has discovered the very truth of God, and that therefore Churches should be very careful of imposing creeds and enforcing the use of doctrinal formularies. But if this is his meaning, his homily should be addressed to the Church of England, not to the Nonconformists. Its "first error" was in holding with presumptuous confidence the absolute truth of the dogmas contained in its services; its "second error" was in resolving that the Puritans should either use the services or leave the Church.

But may not Mr. Arnold be right after all in his main thesis? Though the Nonconformists came out of the Church in 1662 simply because they could not remain there and yet remain on "the foundation of God, which standeth sure, having this seal—*Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity,*" the "ejectionment" may have only liberated an impulse which the wholesome influence and discipline of the Establishment had repressed. From the first, the true instinct of Puritanism may have been to separate for the sake of the "three notable tenets." Its characteristic spirit—so it may be argued—could find adequate expression only in Churches resting on a basis of dogma, instead of a basis of Christian morals. That the Puritans were forced into Nonconformity by the rigid imposition of formularies which they could not use honestly, was an accident; for the free development of

Puritanism, separate Churches, founded not for the culture of Christian perfection, but for the maintenance of the doctrines of election, original sin, and justification by faith, were a necessity. To Mr. Arnold, at least, it appears that modern Nonconformity can give no better or more rational explanation of its existence.

There is some excuse for his error; though the excuse should avail him less than any other man. Nonconformists themselves have often declared that it is their special function to maintain the true theology of the Reformation. Such statements have been sufficiently common both in popular meetings and in ecclesiastical assemblies. But if the speakers had been pressed for an explanation, very few of them would have admitted that their Churches had no surer, deeper foundation than the Westminster Confession. They never meant that their Churches were mere theological schools. Or even if some Nonconformists have honestly believed that Calvinistic dogma constitutes part, at least, of the very foundation of a Nonconformist Church, Mr. Arnold had no right to believe it on their bare authority. He is no Philistine, and he ought to maintain "a watchful jealousy" against the mistakes into which it is so natural for Philistines to be betrayed. Is it not our great peril—the very peril to deliver us from which he has been raised up—that we are always forgetting the difference between the mere machinery of religious life and its inner spirit and power? Should he not, therefore, have received with great suspicion any account that we may have given of ourselves? It was more likely to be wrong than right. When orators and controversialists exulted in the unswerving loyalty of the Independents and Baptists to the Calvinistic creed, ought he not to have said to himself, "Perhaps these men are wrong after all, and the true 'idea' of Nonconformity, and of the Puritanism from which it sprung, may be something very different from what they suppose?" Neither individual men, nor nations, nor Churches, are always distinctly conscious of the true significance and value of their position and history. "We know not" what we are, any better than "what we shall be." It is only as the characteristic life and principles of any spiritual movement are manifested under a great variety of conditions, and in a long succession of prosperous and disastrous circumstances, that any trustworthy theory of it becomes possible.

Looking back, then, upon the last three centuries of English ecclesiastical history, what is it that constitutes the unity, originality, and power of that great movement which Mr. Arnold has tried to interpret?

It is an historical blunder to suppose that the characteristic element of Puritanism has been any exceptional zeal for Calvinistic doctrine. Goodwin, the illustrious Arminian of the Commonwealth, was as

good a Puritan every whit as John Owen. In Elizabeth's reign Calvinistic doctrine was dominant in the English Church, but the Puritans were subjected to pains and penalties. Whitgift, their chief enemy, approved the Lambeth Articles, in which the Calvinistic theology is expressed in its most offensive form. With a fine and true instinct, Mr. Arnold recognises the old Puritan spirit in the various communities of Methodists, who have always denounced the Calvinistic dogmas as a blasphemous libel on the character of God. The Methodists are Puritans, he says, because of their excessive zeal for the doctrine of justification by faith. But this is the explanation of a mere Philistine, who mistakes "machinery" for "ideas;" and it is an explanation with which a moderately enlightened Philistine would not be quite satisfied. For surely the antagonism between Methodism and Calvinism on such capital doctrines as predestination, a limited atonement, and the perseverance of the saints, more than annuls what at first sight appears to be a merely accidental agreement on the doctrine of justification by faith.

Puritanism can hardly have its roots in any theological creed, for there have been Arminian Puritans and Calvinistic Puritans; the Puritans have been persecuted by Arminian Conformists, and they have been persecuted by Calvinistic Conformists; and on the controversy between Arminians and Calvinists, the living representatives of Puritanism are widely divided. The only doctrine not included in the confessions of all the great churches of Christendom in which the Puritans seem to have agreed—and they have not been perfectly agreed in that—is the doctrine of justification by faith.

I believe that the ultimate secret of Puritanism is to be found in the intensity and vividness with which it has apprehended the immediate relationship of the regenerate soul to God. To the ideal Puritan, God is "nigh at hand." He has seen God, and is wholly possessed with a sense of the divine greatness, holiness, and love. For him old things have already passed away, and all things have become new. His salvation is not remote; he is already reconciled to God, and his citizenship is in heaven. He is akin to God through a supernatural birth, and is a partaker of the divine nature. All interference between himself and God he resents. He can speak to God face to face.

This consciousness of the intimacy of the soul's present relationship to God underlies the Calvinistic Puritanism which destroyed the Church of England in the seventeenth century, and the Arminian Puritanism which was expelled from it in the eighteenth. It is this which explains that zeal for the Calvinistic discipline which divided so sharply the Elizabethan Puritans from the Conformists, though both were equally zealous for Calvinistic doctrine; and it is this which is the spiritual root of Independency. The true function

of Puritanism in the religious life of this country has not been to set forth "certain Protestant doctrines;" but to assert and vindicate the reality, the greatness, the completeness of the redemption that is in Christ, and the nearness of God to the soul of man.

It is not surprising that Mr. Arnold should have misinterpreted English Puritanism, for he has failed to apprehend the true spirit and scope of a still greater movement. He appears to suppose that the only ground and justification of what it is becoming fashionable to describe as the Protestant schism of the sixteenth century, lay in the moral corruptions of the Church of Rome. Separation for opinions on points of discipline and dogma would in his judgment have been neither right nor reasonable. "The sale of indulgences, if deliberately instituted and persisted in by the main body of the Church, afforded a valid reason for breaking unity; the doctrine of purgatory, or of the real presence, did not." But though Luther's moral indignation at the sale of indulgences was the accidental cause of his ultimate breach with Rome, the supreme force of Protestantism was spiritual, not ethical. For centuries the religious life of Christendom had been stifled and crushed. A vast mechanical system of "means of grace" came between the soul and the Fountain of mercy, life, and blessedness. Of immediate access to God men were taught to despair. Between Him and them there were sacraments, priests, and a constantly increasing crowd of interceding saints. The free grace of God had been so obscured by the portentous dogmas which the Church had developed from the simpler faith of earlier times, that salvation could never be anything more than a probability. The penitent could never be sure that he had finally done with his sin. Penances in this world were to be followed by purgatory in the next. Nor was it possible to learn the thought and will of God at first-hand. It was not to the individual soul that God spoke; no man could hear the divine voice for himself. The teaching of Christ and the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost, belonged to "the Church," and men were told to listen not to God, but to councils and popes.

Luther broke through all this. He declared that God was near enough to man to be spoken to without the intervention of saint or priest. Sacraments had their significance and worth; but the grace of God came directly into the soul of man. Men were not to depend on external rites for the pardon of sins and for the nourishment and strength of the supernatural life. From God's own lips every man who desired absolution might have it, and have it at once. Between the penitent child and his Father no elder brother, be he saint or angel, can be permitted to come. No intercession is needed to move the Father's heart to mercy—no good work to placate His anger. Let the prodigal who has wasted his substance

in riotous living come home, and while he is yet afar off the Father will see him, and go out to meet him, and at once the best robe shall be put upon him, and there shall be a ring for his finger and shoes for his feet, and the house shall be filled with music and dancing. Do you want salvation?—this was the gospel which Luther preached to Europe,—you may learn from God Himself how you are to be saved. The parables of Christ, and the Epistles of St. Paul, and the supernatural teaching of the Holy Ghost are within every man's reach. *God is nigh at hand, and not afar off.* Every man may speak to God for himself. God's mercy is so large and free, that all He asks for from those who desire to be saved is that they should have the courage and the faith to leave themselves in His hands.

The doctrine of justification by faith, as Luther preached it, was no mere dogma. It was the assertion of a most vital spiritual fact. To receive it was to pass out of bondage into freedom, and out of darkness into light. Its power lay in this, that it represented God as appealing directly to every human heart, and appealing to it for absolute trust. At a stroke it swept away priests, and popes, and councils, and saints, and penances, and purgatory, and left the soul alone with God. The terms in which the doctrine was defined may be very open to criticism. The human analogies by which it was illustrated may be very imperfect. The theological method of those days, common to the Reformers and to the Romanists, may have led theologians to draw out from the doctrine technical inferences which the moral sense vehemently rejects, and which the spirit pronounces absolutely unreal. But the world knew what Luther and the Reformers meant; Rome knew what they meant; and the real controversy was not about the form in which the fact was to be stated, but about the fact itself. I am very willing to leave Luther's "machinery" to Mr. Arnold's criticism, if he thinks it worth his while to criticise it; but Luther's "idea" seems to me to have been even a more valid ground of separation from Rome, when Rome rejected it, than Luther's moral wrath at the sale of indulgences. To make it possible once more for the human soul to stand face to face with God was a work worth doing at any cost. It is the very greatest work that any religious reformer can attempt. To accomplish it, is indeed the true aim of every religious reformation.

When the Reformers began to construct a scientific expression of the vital spiritual truths which had been committed to their trust, it was almost inevitable that they should revert to the doctrines of Augustine. The dogmatic system, which appeared to them to obscure the vision of God, was but another form of Pelagianism. The spirit of Pelagianism, as well as its creed, had taken possession of the Church. The work of the great African doctor had to be done over again. Between themselves and him, the Reformers felt that

there was the most perfect spiritual sympathy. His inspiration was essentially the same as their own. The mystical theology might have afforded a still more perfect expression than Augustinianism of the transcendent facts which they desired to vindicate; and a few of the less conspicuous Reformers became Mystics; but mysticism does not take kindly to the rigid definitions and the severe logical method which the scholastic training and habits of the Reformers compelled them to introduce into their theological system. The Augustinian theory was their only choice; and it was no slight controversial advantage for them to be able to appeal to the authority of one of the most illustrious of the fathers.

The Puritans strove hard, according to the light which was in them, to complete the work of the Reformation. They accepted the Calvinistic theology, and appear to have found in it a complete and satisfactory interpretation of the most appalling and the most glorious experiences and discoveries of the spiritual life. To many of us, in these days, Calvinism may be incredible. It seems very easy to demonstrate that its theory of moral inability annihilates moral obligation; that its dogma of imputed righteousness renders the solemnities of the final judgment an unmeaning pageant; that its confident assertion of the perseverance of the saints must take off the edge of the most urgent exhortations contained in the New Testament to spiritual vigilance and the repression of the lusts of the flesh; that its eternal decrees of election and reprobation must paralyze all human energy by reducing human effort to absolute insignificance; and that its unqualified and daring representations of the divine sovereignty, and its reference of all good and evil to the determination of the divine will, are destructive of the moral character of God, and render it irrational and impossible to claim for Him the love, and trust, and reverence of the human heart on the ground of His moral perfections. Calvinism—so most of us are accustomed to think—cuts away the roots both of morality and religion. And yet the Calvinistic Puritans, with their dogma of moral inability, were stern and vehement in their denunciation of sin; with their doctrine of imputed righteousness and the perseverance of the saints, they wrought out their own salvation with fear and trembling; with a theory of the universe which represents the whole course of events as predetermined by the eternal counsels of God, they were men of an iron will and of inexhaustible energy; and with a conception of God which surrounds His moral character with impenetrable mystery and a darkness that might be felt, they were not only filled with awe when they confessed His majesty and greatness, but they loved Him with a passionate affection.

The paradox is not inexplicable. Calvinism may be approached

from two precisely opposite points. It is the theological form of the philosophy of necessity. Let a man come to the conclusion that the will is determined by the forces which act upon it, and that every volition is the result of the sum of the motives which preceded it, and the logical result of his theory will be the denial of the reality of moral distinctions and a blind surrender of human destiny to the irresistible laws by which its development is controlled. If he adopts any form of Christian theology, he will call these laws the divine decrees, and will imagine that he is a Calvinist.

But the Puritans did not arrive at the Calvinistic theology through the philosophy of necessity. They began, not with Man but with God. Their philosophy was an accident; they learnt it from others; but their theology was their own. With their clear and immediate vision of God, their own nature and the nature of every man appeared to them altogether corrupt, a thing to be despised, and loathed, and cursed. Remembering their own unregenerate days, when their "carnal mind" was "enmity against God," the very virtues and good works of the unregenerate seemed to them deserving of no praise; "yea, rather," they said, "for that they are not done as God hath commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin." That a nature so infected with evil could have come in its present condition immediately from the hands of God they did not believe, and they explained "the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam" by ascribing it to Adam's sin. Through that offence "man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, and therefore in every person born into this world it [the infection of our nature—Original Sin] deserveth God's wrath and damnation." To the philosophy of necessity the utter inability of man to escape from the law of his nature is a reason for denying human responsibility; but to Calvinism, filled with the vision of God, man's inability to keep God's commandments is the supreme crime. The moral instincts quickened into intense activity by the immediate presence of the personal God, refuse to be suppressed for the sake of preserving the coherence of a theological system. They insist on asserting human responsibility and guilt. The logical faculty, working under the control of a method in which moral ideas can find no legitimate place, is forced to yield, and the result is hideous confusion.

It is a common saying that all men are Calvinists when they pray. In the presence of God the regenerate soul claims nothing for itself. His infinite mercy pardoned its sin. Its perverse reluctance to receive salvation was overborne by his grace. The supernatural life is his free gift. It confidently relies on His compassions which

fail not and His mercy which endureth for ever, to preserve it from apostasy. Calvinism, with its noble incapacity to escape from the glory of the Divine presence, endeavoured to translate these intuitions of the soul into the language and forms of a mechanical philosophy. The doctrines of election, of irresistible grace, and of the perseverance of the saints, are but the best logical expressions it could find for the deepest truth of all philosophy and of all religion. Our highest life is a life in God. It is not we who live, but God that "liveth in us." Some day we may reach that "happy moment" in the intellectual history of the human race in which all the conditions will be fulfilled for the adequate scientific expression of this truth. But it is the great merit of Calvinism that however ignominiously it may have failed in a scientific task reserved for other centuries, it strove with sublime faith and magnificent courage and energy to assert the truth itself; and in asserting it Calvinism gave a fresh inspiration to the religious life of Europe.

Mr. Arnold says that "what essentially characterizes a religious teacher, and gives him his permanent worth and vitality, is, after all, just the scientific value of his teaching, its correspondence with important facts, and the light it throws upon them." Whether this proposition is true or false depends upon what he means by it. Does "the scientific value" of any religious teaching depend upon its "machinery" or upon its "ideas," upon its intuitions of divine and spiritual truths, or upon its expression of them? The Calvinism of the Westminster Assembly, with its "machinery of covenants, conditions, bargains, and parties—contractors," was trying to make men feel and believe that God is "nigh at hand;" it succeeded in making men feel and believe it. Notwithstanding its clumsy formularies, with which alone a shallow scientific and philosophical criticism occupies itself, Calvinism brought men face to face with God Himself, taught them to find their life in Him, to trust with immovable confidence in his mercy, and to suffer gladly the loss of all things rather than wilfully break any of his commandments. The formularies were powerless to destroy the supernatural virtue of the Truth which lay behind them. It was for the Truth that the Puritans cared; the formularies were dear only for its sake.

I have already said that Mr. Arnold has the penetration to recognise the essential unity of Methodism and Calvinistic Puritanism, notwithstanding striking divergencies of theological opinion. In his vindication of that unity, he touches for a moment the ultimate principle of the whole Puritan movement. He says that:—

"The foremost place, which in the Calvinistic scheme belongs to the doctrine of predestination, belongs in the Methodist scheme to the doctrine of justification by faith. . . . This doctrine, like the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, involves a whole history of God's proceedings, and gives also,

first, and almost sole place to what God does with disregard to what man does. It has thus an essential affinity with Calvinism. . . . The word 'solifidian' points precisely to that which is common to both Calvinism and Methodism, and which has made both these halves of Puritanism so popular—their sensational side, as it may be called, their laying all stress on what God wondrously gives and works for us, not on what we bring or do for ourselves."

It is hardly accurate, I think, to say that justification by faith occupies a position in Methodist theology quite analogous to that which is occupied by predestination in the theology of Calvinism. The theological characteristic of Methodism is, perhaps, the emphasis with which it has insisted on the necessity and the instantaneousness of the new birth. But in the present discussion this question is unimportant. Mr. Arnold might, however, have given us a very different account of Puritanism had he followed the clue on which he laid his hand when he tried to discover the hidden spirit which makes the Arminian Methodist one with the Calvinistic Puritan. His essay would have taken altogether a different form had he seen clearly that the great and constant endeavour of Puritanism has been to proclaim and exalt "what God wondrously gives and works for us," disregarding "what we bring or do for ourselves." This would have been a spiritual, not a mechanical interpretation of the movement, and it might have led him to the conclusion that the essential and permanent element of Puritanism is not zeal for the "three notable tenets," nor a blind attachment to any system of church order, but a vivid and intense sense of God's nearness to the regenerate soul.

The theology of Methodism, like the theology of the Calvinistic Puritans, begins not with Man, not with the Church, but with God. Like Calvinism, its basis is theological, not philosophical. It affirms the freedom of the will; but this is an accident, or holds at most a merely secondary position. Had Methodism commenced with the freedom of the will, it is doubtful whether it would have reached its great doctrines of the new birth, assurance, and sinless perfection. It began with God; but Wesley was happily free to accept some other conception of God's ways to man than that which had been forced upon Augustine and Calvin. Wesley's religious life had received a powerful stimulus from the mysticism of William Law and of the Moravians. The triumph of Calvinism at the Synod of Dort, early in the seventeenth century, had proved fatal to its power over Continental Protestantism, and his intercourse with Continental Protestants had very much to do with the development of his theological system. In England itself, Calvinism was sinking rapidly into decay even among the spiritual descendants of the Puritans. It was not the Anglican divines alone who had contributed to its fall. John Goodwin's "Redemption Redeemed" had not been written in vain. It had become possible for a man whose vision of God was as clear and as immediate as that

of any of the Puritans, to adopt an Arminian theology. But Wesley's Arminianism was penetrated and transfigured by the Puritan spirit. He can never claim enough for God. With him, as with the Puritans, God is all. He concedes that man has power to resist Divine grace, but only because the concession is necessary to explain why it is that the infinite love, of which he has so bright and rapturous a vision, does not rescue all men from sin and destruction. But when grace has once subdued the stubborn soul to penitence and inspired trust—for with Wesley, as with Calvin, it is God who seeks man, not man who seeks God—its triumphs are illimitable. Between the soul and God there is at once the most intimate union. It is made partaker of the Divine nature, and it is not wonderful if the sudden influx of a supernatural life floods the soul with unutterable joy. The change is so great, that for its reality to remain doubtful appeared to Wesley almost impossible. Immediate inspiration is among the prerogatives of the regenerate, and they receive the witness of the Spirit that they are the sons of God. All sin may not be expelled from the soul in the moment of regeneration, but to deny the possibility of perfect sanctification would be to dishonour the Holy Ghost. The regenerate man may, even in this world, be filled with God, and be perfectly restored to the image of God's holiness. Methodism takes little account of what man does for his own redemption. Like Calvinistic Puritanism it has seen God, and all its hope is in Him.

That the passion of the Puritans for plainness and severe simplicity in the external forms of worship, and for "the Geneva discipline," had its deepest root in the same spiritual experiences as their theology, appears to me incontestable. No doubt they were intolerant of everything that seemed to them to belong to Romanism. They dreaded altars because they dreaded the mass. They feared that priestly vestments might perpetuate the infection of the priestly spirit. Diocesan bishops might grow into patriarchs and popes. They fought against what roused their suspicion and their hostility in the English Church, with the same weapons with which Luther and Calvin, and the English Reformers, had fought against Rome. They appealed to the Scriptures. Texts were quoted with uncritical recklessness; but on neither side was there any intelligent appreciation of the value and limits of Scriptural precedents or precepts in a controversy like this. Passages from Leviticus and from the books of Kings, and the boldest images of the Apocalypse, were tossed about in astonishing profusion, and with inexhaustible energy. Whatever came to hand was good enough to fling at an opponent. Hooker appears to stand almost alone in his manner of conducting the argument.

But the struggle had a moral and spiritual meaning. It was not

to be decided by texts. The policy of the Conformists was controlled by the exigences of their position, by their solicitude to make sure of the ground which the Reformation had already won, by their sagacious estimate of the strong hold which the ancient forms still retained on the imagination and the sentiment of the great masses of the people. The spell of the ancient worship and stately organization of the Church was still unbroken. Their own hearts confessed its power. The practical task which they had in hand—the task of maintaining and defending Protestant doctrine, and of subduing to something like order the religious confusion and irregularities caused by the violent separation from Rome—was enough for their strength. They did not wish to provoke unnecessary difficulties, and they therefore endeavoured to avoid all unnecessary changes in the ceremonial of the Church and its government. They determined to accept and retain whatever was not flagrantly inconsistent with the Protestant faith. The Puritans were men of a different temperament. They were disposed to treat very lightly the suggestions of expediency and the common infirmities of human nature. For them, what they believed to be the divine voice had absolute authority, and in the organization of the Church, it was their great endeavour “to make reason and the will of God prevail.” Concessions to unreasoning superstition they could not tolerate; and they believed that mere human inventions had no place in a divine kingdom. The Church was the very palace and temple of God; He had founded it; He dwelt in it; it was treason to Him to allow any authority but His to determine the most insignificant details of its polity or worship. In the Church, the Puritan wanted to stand face to face with God. The instinct which impelled him to acknowledge God always and everywhere, his abiding conviction that between the regenerate soul and God nothing should be permitted to interfere, made him impatient of rites which appeared to him to corrupt the simplicity of spiritual worship, and of ecclesiastical authorities which could claim no direct divine sanction. No doubt he was blindly prejudiced against the most innocent ceremonies and symbols which perpetuated the remembrance of the days of darkness. No doubt he was the victim of the Protestant habit of appealing to the letter of Scripture for the decision of all controversies. But the instinct which governed the Puritan movement for a reformation of discipline and worship, and which revealed itself, after the manner of the age, in vehement and violent hostility against diocesan episcopacy, altars, vestments, the use of the ring in marriage, and the sign of the cross in baptism, painted windows, and other legacies from the old Romish days, was a real spiritual force; and was striving, often perhaps very blindly, to translate into a visible and organic form, a great spiritual “idea.”

What this "idea" was may be best understood by considering the Church government and the modes of religious worship of the Independents, among whom Mr. Arnold would probably admit that the characteristic spirit of Puritanism has received its most complete expression.

The Independents believe that a man's conscious surrender of himself to Christ is an act of transcendent significance. It is the critical moment in the history of the soul. It secures the gift of that supernatural life which the Lord Jesus Christ came to confer upon the human race, and as soon as this life is received a man passes into the kingdom of God. His moral habits may be faulty. His knowledge of spiritual truth may be very elementary. There may be little fervour or intensity in his spiritual affections. But the difference between himself and other men is infinite. He has received the Holy Ghost, and has become partaker of the divine nature.

For the development and perfect realization of this life it is necessary, or if not unconditionally necessary, it is something more than expedient—that there should be free fellowship between himself and those who have received the same supernatural gift. He and they have a common life. He is one not only with God but with them. In the absence of any mechanical bonds of union, and of all external signs of mutual recognition, and of all acts of common worship, the union is real and indestructible. But it requires expression, if the spiritual life is to attain all its possibilities of vigour and joy. God is hardly less solicitous to restore us to each other than to restore us to Himself, and He has made the nobler and more gracious forms of spiritual experience and perfection almost as dependent upon the influences and gifts which reach us through our brethren as upon those which come directly from his own hand. Churches exist by virtue of this law.

The idea of a Church requires that it should be constituted of regenerate men, for the purpose of united worship and free spiritual communion. The true condition of membership is not profession of any human creed, or of any rule of moral discipline, but possession of supernatural life. When an Independent Church receives a man into membership it acknowledges, therefore, his regeneration of God. It has a right to ask him for nothing beyond the evidence which ascertains the reality of this inward fact; it will imperil the realization of its "idea" if it is content with less. The right of excluding from the society is inseparable from the right of admitting into it.

A Church so constituted fulfils, according to the faith of the Independents, Christ's conception of an assembly of His disciples gathered in His name, and may therefore confidently rely on the promise that

He will be "in the midst of them." No recognition or assistance from without is necessary for the validity of its ecclesiastical acts, the efficacy of its sacraments, or the acceptableness of its worship. It is enough that He, the Lord of the Church, is with His disciples, and that they have received the Holy Ghost. As no society can exist without officers, and as the supernatural gifts of the Spirit for the instruction and edification of the Church are conferred on men according to the divine will, the Church appoints to office those who appear to be divinely qualified to fulfil the various functions and ministries necessary to the development of its life. It finds such men either among its own members or among the members of kindred societies. That the right of appointing a man to be its spiritual teacher should vest in a patron, and be a marketable commodity, that it should be the privilege of any Minister of State, appears too monstrous to require discussion. The Church has the special presence of Christ and the immediate inspiration of the Spirit; the interference of any external and merely secular power is a violation of its prerogatives, to be resisted at any peril.

On the same grounds Independency refuses to acknowledge the authority of diocesan bishops and of Presbyterian synods and general assemblies. The supernatural qualifications of ministers come direct from the Holy Ghost, and may be recognised by those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells. The intervention of Episcopal ordination, or of synodical authority, as though it were necessary either to confer ministerial gifts or to secure the Church from mistakes in ministerial appointments, is rejected as being a direct or implicit denial of the immediate intercourse between the Church and Christ, and of the direct action of the Spirit. Independents are in the habit of inviting the ministers and members of neighbouring churches to be present at the ordination of a minister, but their presence is not necessary to make the ordination valid.

Churches in the same county associate for mutual counsel, and for co-operation in various good works, but the "Association" has no ecclesiastical authority. It cannot appoint or remove a minister, or interfere in the internal discipline of any of the associated Churches. The Congregational Union of England and Wales is equally powerless. It is an Assembly for the discussion of questions in which Congregational Churches are interested; but the utmost care has been taken to prevent it from becoming a Court of Appeal. The principle of the Independent polity is the characteristic principle of Puritanism. Independency is an attempt to give form and expression to a vivid sense of God's nearness to every regenerate soul.

It is an obvious consequence of this principle that Independents should repudiate the fancy that buildings erected for Public

Worship have any peculiar sanctity. The revival during the last thirty years of a taste for ecclesiastical architecture has affected the style of their chapels; the old square "meeting-houses" are everywhere disappearing; their new "churches"—many of them, at least—have spires and transepts and chancels and apses and windows bright with angels and gorgeous with saints; but it is a mistake to suppose that there is any meaning in it all. There are some Independents who find a sentimental gratification in trying to make the buildings in which they worship as nearly like, as they can, the venerable churches around which cluster the solemn and pathetic associations of centuries; there are some who have an honest love and admiration for the beauty and grandeur of which Gothic is capable; there are others who think they show their freedom from prejudice against the Establishment, and their brotherly kindness for Episcopalians, by copying their architecture; there are others, again, and these, perhaps, are the most numerous, who accept Gothic because, as yet, architects seem to want either the courage or the genius to erect a building that would be really suitable for Independent preaching and worship; there are none, so far as I know, who have renounced the old Puritan contempt for the consecration of stone and mortar.

The hymns which are found in all Nonconformist Hymn Books, and which are sung at the opening of all Nonconformist Chapels, hymns in which chapels are called "Temples," and are dedicated to God, His presence being solemnly invoked, and the building presented as an offering to Himself, are never meant to be rigidly interpreted. It is quite understood that the "machinery" of Judaism, of which the hymn writers are thankful to avail themselves, is obsolete. The true Independent conviction is as strong as ever, that God's presence is promised, not to consecrated places, but to consecrated persons.

It is often alleged by Independents themselves that there is nothing in their ecclesiastical principles to prevent them from using a liturgy, the liturgy of the Church of England, or a liturgy composed by themselves, or compiled from the prayers of the saints of all churches and all ages. This is true in a certain sense. But it would be a departure from our traditions, and from the spirit of the movement from which we have sprung. It belongs to the "idea" of Independency that we are as near to God to-day as were any of the saints of former centuries. The Holy Ghost rests upon us and "helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groans which cannot be uttered."

And if it is suggested that there may be a true and deep and

inspired yearning for fellowship with God, and for all spiritual blessings, where the "gift," which is necessary for expressing the devotional life of others, is not conferred, the reply is obvious; the "gift" may not be possessed by the head of every Christian household, and this may be a reason for tolerating the use of a prayer-book in the family. But to admit the possibility of its not being present in a Church—to despair of its recovery if it has been lost—is a surrender of the Independent idea of the Church. "Gifts" of teaching and "gifts" of prayer and intercession appear to be necessary to a Church which claims to stand in the immediate presence of God, and to be filled with the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. That, as a rule, there will be more to appeal to refined religious sentiment in a liturgy than in free prayer—that a liturgy is likely to be more stately and impressive, is no argument to a true Independent for a change in his mode of worship. When he prays he is thinking of God and speaking to God. His desire is to be absorbed in that high intercourse. He regards with jealousy and distrust whatever would invest worship with any charm for those elements of our nature which are not purely spiritual. To care for what men may think of the form in which the soul is expressing its reverence for the majesty and holiness of God, and imploring His mercy, appears an indignity to God himself. To try to give delight to a cultivated taste while he ought to be struggling for deliverance from sin and eternal destruction, would destroy the simplicity and energy of the supreme act of the soul. It is no concern of his whether men who are not as intent as himself upon glory, honour, and immortality, are charmed or repelled.

I am not vindicating the traditional severity and plainness of the religious services of the Independents—severity and plainness which are rapidly disappearing—but trying to explain how it was that they rejected the noble liturgy which had been enriched by the penitence, the trust, the sorrow, and the gladness of the saints of many ages and many lands. They were sure that the Spirit, who had dwelt in the great doctors and martyrs of the Church, dwelt in themselves. And if they were unable to confess their sin, invoke the divine grace, and give thanks for the divine goodness in forms of devotion which even the unregenerate might admire for their solemnity and beauty, this was a matter which Puritans and Independents regarded with perfect indifference.

Those who charge Puritanism with caring more for the "machinery" of the religious life than for "ideas," misunderstand and misrepresent it. It rejected the theology of Rome for Calvinism because in Calvinism it found a truer and fuller expression of its great discovery,

that the strength and glory of man come from the immediate inspiration of God. It accepted the Arminianism of John Wesley because Wesleyan Arminianism is a vindication, under other forms, of the same vital spiritual truth. It was restless under the restraints of Episcopacy, and the rites and ceremonies which Episcopacy had inherited from the Mediæval Church, because they seemed to interfere with the direct access of God to the soul. If it has found its highest ecclesiastical expression in the polity of the Independents, and if, disregarding all the suggestions of æstheticism and religious "sentiment," it has created among us what may be an unreasonable preference for extreme simplicity and bareness in the circumstances of public worship, its justification is to be found in this,—that in the Independent polity there is less of mere "machinery" than in any other form of church government—the Church stands almost unclothed in the presence of God,—and in its services the soul is left to the solitary aid of the Spirit, and is unsustained in its acts of prayer, of thanksgiving, and of adoration by the resources of Art, or by the more legitimate stimulus which it might derive from the devotion and genius of the saints of other generations.

To investigate the validity of Mr. Arnold's statement, that the Puritans were guilty of attempting to narrow the doctrinal freedom of the English Church, an attempt which the Church in the spirit of charity resisted, would require more space than I can command in this paper. "Everybody knows," he says, "how far Nonconformity is due to the Church of England's rigour in imposing an explicit declaration of adherence to her formularies. But only a few who have searched out the matter know how far Nonconformity is due also to the Church of England's invincible reluctance to narrow her large and loose formularies to the strict Calvinistic sense dear to Puritanism." That the Puritans were very zealous for Calvinistic doctrine is admitted. That they were very likely to desire that these doctrines should be maintained and defended by all those instruments of secular and ecclesiastical authority in which the members of an Episcopal and Established Church were, once at least, in danger of placing a blind reliance, may be admitted too. But some stronger proof of Mr. Arnold's charge is necessary than that which is contained in his essay.

"From the very commencement the Church, as regards doctrine, was for opening; Puritanism was for narrowing." This is the charge. How is it sustained?

We are reminded that though the Lambeth Articles of 1595 exhibit Calvinism as potent in the Church of England itself, and among the bishops of the Church, Calvinism could not establish itself there. The Lambeth Articles were recalled and suppressed,

and Archbishop Whitgift was threatened with the penalties of a *premunire* for having published them. These Articles consisted of nine propositions :—

(1). God hath from eternity predestinated certain persons to life, and hath reprobated certain persons unto death.

(2). The moving or efficient cause of predestination unto life is not the foresight of faith, or of perseverance, or of good works, or of anything that is in the persons predestinated, but the alone will of God's good pleasure.

(3). The predestinate are a pre-determined and certain number, which can neither be lessened nor increased.

(4). Such as are not predestinated to salvation shall inevitably be condemned on account of their sins.

(5). The true, lively, and justifying faith, and the Spirit of God justifying, is not extinguished, doth not utterly fail, doth not vanish away in the elect, either finally or totally.

(6). A true believer, that is, one endued with justifying faith, is certified, by the full assurance of faith, that his sins are forgiven, and that he shall be everlastingly saved by Christ.

(7). Saving grace is not allowed, is not imparted, is not granted to all men, by which they may be saved if they will.

(8). No man is able to come to Christ unless it be given him, and unless the Father draw him, and all men are not drawn by the Father that they may come to His Son.

(9). It is not in the will and power of every man to be saved.

But are the Puritans to be held responsible for this terrible Calvinistic manifesto? Was it the production of a knot of sour and rigid fanatics, who, although they may accidentally have found a refuge in the Church—for which, from the commencement of its history, Mr. Arnold has claimed the credit of generous doctrinal toleration—had no sympathy with her large and catholic spirit? The Lambeth Articles were drawn up by a Conference at Lambeth, assembled by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and consisting of the Bishop of London, the Bishop of Bangor, Tindal, the Dean of Ely, Dr. Whitaker, the Queen's Divinity Professor, and other learned men from Cambridge. They were framed in opposition to the teaching of William Barrett, a Fellow of Caius College, who had preached against predestination, and who appears to have been forced to make a public recantation.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Whitgift, as is well known, hated Puritanism, and did his best to extirpate it. His severity inspired Lord Burleigh with indignation. The "oath *ex officio*," which was tendered by the Archbishop to such of the clergy as were suspected of Puritanical tendencies, was described by the treasurer as "so curiously penned, so full of branches and circumstances, as he thought the inquisitors of Spain used not so many questions to comprehend and to trap their preys." And yet Mr. Arnold produces a series of doctrinal Articles drawn up by Whitgift as proof

that "from the very commencement, as regards doctrine, the Church was for opening, Puritanism was for narrowing."

It is true that at the Hampton Court Conference in 1604, when Arminianism was beginning to find its way into the Church of England, the Puritans proposed that the Lambeth Articles might be inserted in the Book of Articles, and that the bishops resisted. But if any value is to be attached to the imperfect reports which we have of that Conference, the whole pressure of the Puritan demand was for relaxation in the stringency of regulations touching rites and ceremonies. The suggestion that the Thirty-nine Articles should be "explained in places obscure, and enlarged where some things are defective;" and that "the nine assertions orthodox . . . concluded upon at Lambeth" should be added to them, appears to have been made only to be dropped. However this may have been, the worst that can be said about the Puritan demands at the Hampton Court Conference is that the Puritans were guilty of forgetting their old grudge against Whitgift, and of accepting the scheme of their inveterate enemy for narrowing the doctrine of the Church.

The complaints of the Committee appointed by the House of Lords in 1641 amount to little more than this, that the Calvinistic doctrines which the Articles of the Church were plainly intended to maintain were being preached against by many of the clergy. Opinions were held by Laud and his party which Whitgift would have punished with the utmost severity. In condemning them the Puritan Committee showed no greater zeal for "the two cardinal doctrines of predestination and justification by faith" than their enemies had shown before them. The alterations in the Prayer-Book which the Committee suggested would not have made the formularies more Calvinistic, but only less Romish.*

* Cardwell gives the following summary of the changes which the Committee proposed, p. 240:—

"They advised that the Psalms, sentences, epistles, and Gospels should be printed according to the new translation; that fewer lessons should be taken from the Apocrypha; that the words 'with my body I thee worship,' should be made more intelligible; that the immersion of the infant at the time of baptism should not be required in case of extremity; that some saints which they called legendaries should be excluded from the calendar; that the 'Benedicite' should be omitted; that the words 'which only workest great marvels,' should be omitted; that 'deadly sins,' as used in the Litany, should be altered to 'grievous sins;' that the words 'sanctify the flood Jordan,' and 'in sure and certain hope of resurrection,' in the two forms of baptism and burial, should be altered to, 'sanctify the element of water,' and 'knowing assuredly that the dead shall rise again.' To these and other changes of a like nature they added the following more difficult concessions:—'That the rubric with regard to vestments should be altered; that a rubric be added to explain that the kneeling at the communion was solely in reference to the prayer contained in the words, 'preserve thy body and soul:' that the cross in baptism should be explained or discontinued; that the words in the form of confirmation, declaring that infants baptized are undoubtedly saved, should be omitted; and that the form of absolution provided for the sick should be made declaratory instead

Mr. Arnold thinks, of course, that the Church has much to blame herself for in the Act of Uniformity. "Blame she deserves, and she has had it plentifully; but what has not been enough perceived is, that really the conviction of her own moderation, openness, and latitude, as far as regards doctrine, seems to have filled her mind during her dealings with the Puritans, and that her impatience with them was in great measure impatience at seeing these so ill appreciated by them." His account of the Savoy Conference in 1661 leaves the impression on one's mind that in his belief the Puritans left the Church, not merely because other men insisted that they should use formularies which they could not use honestly, but also because they did not succeed in so narrowing the formularies that other men, with an equal right to be in the Church with themselves, would be unable to use them honestly; that the struggle of Baxter and his party was, therefore, not merely to obtain freedom for themselves, but also to impose bondage on others. To sustain this original representation of the transactions immediately preceding the ejection, no better proof is given than that the Puritans complained that "the confession is very defective, not clearly expressing original sin." This is surely very inadequate ground on which to rest so grave a charge. The doctrine or the fact which the Puritans desired to recognise in the confession may be true or false, but it was not the characteristic tenet of a party. None of their enemies, so far as I know, denied it; it was expressed in the Articles with all the vigour and decisiveness which they could desire; and no man who signed the articles could have objected on doctrinal grounds to Baxter's proposal to insert it in the confession. The real nature of the proposal would have been explained had Mr. Arnold given the whole of the paragraph from the "Exceptions against the Book of Common Prayer," in which it occurs, which reads thus, "The confession is very defective, not clearly expressing original sin, nor sufficiently enumerating actual sins, with their aggravations, but consisting only of generals; whereas *confession, being the exercise of repentance, ought to be more particular.*" The same ground of exception is taken in a subsequent paragraph against "the whole body of the Common Prayer." The Puritans contended that "it consisteth very much of mere generals, as 'to have our prayers heard, to be kept from all evil, and from all enemies, and all adversity, that we might do God's will,' without any mention of the particulars in which these generals exist."

of being authoritative.' These concessions, surrendering by implication some of the most solemn convictions of a great portion of the clergy, on the authority of the Church, the nature of the two sacraments, and the sanctity of the priesthood, would meet with the most strenuous opposition, and tend to increase the causes of discontent, instead of abating them."

Towards the end of the Conference, Bishop Cosins offered a paper drawn up by "some considerable person," and intended to lead to a reconciliation. In their answer to the proposals contained in this Eirenicon, Baxter and his friends made this statement:—"Though we find by your papers and conferences that in your own personal doctrines there is something that we take to be against the Word of God, and perceive that we understand not the doctrine of the Church in all things alike; yet we find nothing contrary to the Word of God in that which is indeed the doctrine of the Church, as it comprehendeth the matters of faith, distinct from matters of discipline, ceremonies, and modes of worship." From this it appears that to the doctrine of the Church the Puritans made no objection. It is remarkable that in many of the trust-deeds of early Presbyterian chapels it is provided that the doctrine preached in them should be in harmony with the doctrinal Articles of the Church of England; and in the "Heads of Agreement," drawn up in 1691, as the basis of a union between the Presbyterians and Independents, it is declared to be sufficient if a Church acknowledges the divine origin of the Scriptures, and accepts the doctrinal part of the Articles, or the Westminster or Savoy Confessions.

It is possible that those "who have searched out the matter" may be able to allege more substantial evidence of the contrast between the catholic moderation of the Church and the narrowness of Puritanism than Mr. Arnold has thought it worth while to adduce; but to persons like myself, who have not made it their special business to study the unfamiliar aspects of the Puritan controversy, Mr. Arnold's discovery appears to be very inconsistent with facts. Neither Puritans nor Conformists—this has been the general impression—could claim much credit for their generous treatment of theological adversaries.

There may seem to be better ground for Mr. Arnold's allegation that the free development of religious thought is possible only in a National Establishment, and that separatist Churches are by their very position rigidly bound to the theological system and formularies of their founders.

But it should never be forgotten that the Independents have from the first protested against the imposition of creeds and articles of faith, and that one of the very earliest and noblest of them declared, in words which are familiar to all English Congregationalists, the inalienable right and duty of the Church of every age to listen for itself to the Divine teaching. John Robinson, preaching in 1620 to the Independents who were about to leave Delft Haven to found the Puritan colonies of New England, "charged us," writes Winslow, "to follow him no farther than he followed Christ; and if God should reveal anything to us by any other instrument of His, to be

as ready to receive it as ever we were to receive any truth by his ministry: for he was very confident that *the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of His holy Word*. . . . Here also he put us in mind of our Church covenant, at least that part of it whereby we promise and covenant with God and one with another to receive whatsoever light or truth shall be made known to us from His written Word; but, withal, exhorted us to take heed what we received for truth, and well to examine and compare it and weigh it with other scriptures of truth before we received it. For, saith he, it is not possible the Christian world should come so lately out of such thick anti-Christian darkness, and that full perfection of knowledge should break forth at once." John Robinson was not alone in his assertion of the principle of "development," and his repudiation of all human authority that might thrust itself between the soul and the Fountain of all Truth. In 1658 the ministers and delegates of the Independent Churches met at the Savoy, and drew up the well-known Savoy "Declaration of the Faith and Order owned and practised in the Congregational Churches in England." In the preface they say, "Such a transaction" [as a confession of faith] "is to be looked upon but as a meet or fit medium or means whereby to express their 'common faith and salvation,' and no way to be made use of as an imposition upon any. Whatever is of force or constraint in matters of this nature of confessions causeth them to degenerate from the name and nature, and turns them, from being confessions of faith, into exactions and impositions of faith." Mr. Thomas S. James, in his curious and learned "History of the Litigation and Legislation respecting Presbyterian Chapels and Charities," makes the following pertinent comment on this passage:—

"They declare that they published and recorded in the face of Christendom, 'the faith and order which they owned and practised' for the information of their fellow Christians, and not for any practical use for themselves. That such a document was necessary to defend them from the attacks of the enemies of their religious and political opinions may be learnt from the calumnies against them noticed by Mosheim and Rapin. If they had followed the example of all other bodies they would have legislated for their infant Churches under the notion of giving definiteness and permanence to their opinions, but they trusted their Churches, and the truths they held, to the blessing and protection of God, being satisfied that they were according to His will, and they disregarded the devices and safeguards which human affection and foresight could supply. It should be remembered that the declaration copied above is to be found in a synopsis of Calvinistic doctrine, published in the middle of the seventeenth century, by men on the one hand supported by the party then in power, and on the other fully convinced that the belief of great part of what they stated was necessary to salvation, and that no part of it could even be doubted without peril to the soul. The non-use of creeds by such men is a very different matter from the rejection of them by persons who hold that there

are no essential and fundamental doctrines of Christianity. With the latter it is a matter of course ; with the former it is a proof of the highest wisdom."

It is also a singular fact that, so far as published accounts go, the trust-deeds of the Independent chapels founded during the twenty years following the Toleration Act—a period within which the Independents were of course very active in chapel-building—did not contain any provisions as to the doctrines to be preached in them. Mr. James thinks that this shows that the Independents "trusted to the rule of law, that the simplest form of trust for the benefit of a particular denomination is tantamount to a detailed statement of the principles and practices by which it is characterized." I agree with him that the absence of doctrinal provision from the trust-deeds does not prove that the Independents of those times regarded definite theological doctrine with indifference ; this is contradicted by their whole history. But is not the true explanation to be found in their traditional hostility to the authoritative imposition of human creeds ? I believe that they held, with John Robinson, that "the Lord had more truth and light yet to break forth out of His holy Word."

It was in this spirit that the men who seceded in the middle of the last century from the Presbyterian congregation in Birmingham on the election of an Arian minister, and founded the Independent Church which still worships in Carr's Lane, made no attempt to secure the orthodoxy of their successors by inserting any doctrinal safeguards in the trust-deed of their new "meeting-house." For the maintenance of what they believed to be the truth of the Gospel, the instincts and traditions of the Independents have led them to rely not on parchments and courts of equity, but on the promise of Christ that the Spirit of Truth should abide in the Church for ever. The practice which has grown up among us, and become almost universal within the last sixty or seventy years, of appending a doctrinal schedule to the deeds of our chapels, is a departure from the habits of our fathers. It should, however, be understood that this schedule, except in cases in which the deeds have been drawn up by solicitors absolutely ignorant of our principles and usages, never touches the "Church" directly ; it simply provides that the trustees are not to permit the *building* to be used for the propagation of doctrines contrary to those determined by the trust. The provision is defended on the principle that people who contribute money to create a property have a right to control to the end of time the purposes to which it shall be devoted. The principle is as bad as any principle can be ; and the particular application of the principle is a violation of the fundamental idea of Independency. No true Independent will desire to impose any pecuniary penalties on a Church for the defence of his own conception of Christian doctrine. That

doctrinal trust-deeds should have been adopted by Independent Churches is a proof, I think, that Independency has lost something of the ardour of its "first love" for perfect religious freedom.

But doctrinal trust-deeds are not of the essence of Independency. They are hardly less contrary to its spirit than authoritative confessions and creeds. Our principles and traditions require us to leave the theological development of our Churches unrestrained by any human tests, formularies, or articles of faith; and practically that development is absolutely free.

Can equal freedom be claimed for the religious thought of the English Church? Its Articles it might dispense with. I am not sure that their authority has not already disappeared under the influence of what I think is described in law books as the law of obsolescence. But every religious community must have some bond of union, and in the Establishment this bond is the enforced use of the services of the Book of Common Prayer—services which have great merits, but which perpetuate the theological conceptions of centuries which have vanished away. Every fresh movement of thought in the English Church has to accommodate itself, as best it can, to the formularies. The new wine must be put into the old bottles. The new doctrine must express itself in the old technicalities. The first task of every man who believes that God has revealed to him any truth which has not already vindicated for itself a secure position in the Establishment, is to show how it can be made to agree with the Services; or, if he finds this difficult, he takes refuge in the Articles. Dr. Newman has to write *Tract Ninety*, and Dean Goode his treatise on Baptism. The sensitive spirit of Rowland Williams was stung to the quick, not so much because men thought that his free criticism of Holy Scripture was illegitimate in itself, as because they charged him with a dishonest violation of the obligations of subscription.

What real "development" of theological thought has there been in the Establishment since its separation from Rome? There has been a succession of theological movements, but they have never found their highest expression in the English Church itself. Calvinism was triumphant for two generations; but in the Church its growth was repressed, and it had to leave the Church to reveal its true spiritual genius, and to obtain a visible embodiment of its essential principle. The High Church movement in the reign of Charles I. was brought to a premature end by the Puritan revolt against the bishops and the throne; but it reappeared in 1833, and for a time seemed likely to take complete possession of the Church. What was its fate? It had no room for growth in the Establishment. It found itself "cribb'd, cabin'd, and confin'd" by the

Articles, and by what it regarded as the poverty of the Services. To breathe free air, the true chiefs of the Anglo-Catholic party, those in whom the spirit of the movement was strongest, went over to Rome. Methodism was born in the English Church, but it hardly began to feel its limbs before it discovered that they were fettered; and for the "development" of Methodism, the Methodists had to become Nonconformists. Will Mr. Arnold explain this paradox? The Church, he alleges, is eminently favourable to the free development of theological thought and religious life, and yet every fresh growth, whether of thought or life, appears to want air and sunlight and soil and room to expand, so long as it remains in the Church; and just when it promises to flower, it either dies off, or has to be transplanted.

He may say that the very function of the Church is to regulate the excesses of religious movements, and by its moderation to discipline their strength to practical religious uses. But this is to remove the whole question to another ground—a ground on which a Nonconformist need not fear to continue the discussion. If, however, the plea is to be maintained that in the English National Church the principle of development has fairer play than among the Nonconformists, it requires explanation how that principle is recognised in a system which refuses to grant to any new religious forces freedom to create an organization and a ritual in which they might reveal the fulness of their strength. For perfect development every living "seed" must have "its own body." This condition of growth the English Church refuses to any new ideas or impulses which may struggle to assert themselves within the limits of its communion. It cannot be said that there has been in the English Church a continuous unfolding of any great theological and spiritual ideas. Not a single movement of religious thought has had time to work itself fairly out. No sooner has any spiritual impulse begun to make itself felt than there has been a reaction against it. The history of the Church has not been a history of development, but of revolutions.

It has not been so with Nonconformity. Whatever life there has been in the Churches outside the Establishment has had freedom to grow. For good or for evil, the intellectual tendencies and spiritual forces which have revealed themselves among us have been able to assert themselves without restraint. Within a few years after the ejection, "the irresistible breath of the *Zeit-Geist*" began to make itself felt in a very large number of the Presbyterian Churches in England, and under the disastrous guidance of the unspiritual philosophy of Locke, they made a rapid descent, first into Arianism, and then into Socinianism. The Independents, for the most part, continued faithful to Calvinism; but since among them Calvinism was not a mere system of dogmas, but the expression of a vital faith,

it gradually alleviated the severity of its doctrinal definitions, and, without losing its characteristic life, embodied itself in new intellectual forms. The transformation was assisted by the writings of theologians who are almost unknown to the divines of the Established Church, but who exerted in their day a very powerful influence on the thought of the Nonconformists. Pre-eminent among them are Andrew Fuller and Dr. Edward Williams. Within the present century it has gone on still more rapidly, and received a powerful impulse from the controversies which thirty or forty years ago divided the Presbyterians of the United States. Methodism developed a new type of Arminianism, and created for itself a new ecclesiastical organization—admirable, notwithstanding all its imperfections, for the union of extraordinary elasticity with the solidity and strength derived from an almost imperial centralization of authority—a system equally effective for defence and for aggression.

The modern Nonconformist "idea"—I venture to call it so with all deference to Mr. Arnold—touching the true relations between the Church and the State, is not an after-thought suggested to us by the necessity of discovering some new ground for our ecclesiastical position, now that what he supposes to have been the old ground is melting away under our feet. Nor does our proposal to disestablish the English Church originate, as he seems to think, in any feeling of discomfort, like that of the fox who had lost his own tail, and who proposed to put all the other foxes in the same boat, by a general cutting off of tails. Our conviction that there should be a clear separation between the organization of the State and the organization of the Church, and that the separation would make the Church less worldly and the State more Christian, is a genuine spiritual "development." It is one of the growths of our freedom. Men must be virtuous before they create theories of virtue. Science had already begun to work on the inductive method before Bacon could write the "Novum Organum." The early Nonconformists believed in religious establishments. Had we remained in the Church, we might have continued to believe in them too; and the "idea" of ecclesiastical freedom which has now taken possession of Nonconformity might never have been revealed to us. Many Churchmen are beginning to receive it; but we think that this is partly owing to the illustration it has had in our own history—an illustration which, though necessarily incomplete, and on a very inconsiderable scale, has contributed something to the wealth of the common thought of Christendom. For two centuries our Churches have been free from the control of politicians; we have not been dependent on the will of Parliament for any modifications we have desired in the form of our worship and in our ecclesiastical polity; we have had to rely for the support of our religious institu-

tions on the unforced contributions of those who love Christ and desire the salvation of men; and we have come to learn that there is a strength and blessedness in liberty of which our fathers never dreamed.

The more entertaining passages in Mr. Arnold's recent animadversions on us, which I had marked for notice, must be dismissed with a word. The two main types of Nonconformist provincialism of which he speaks—the "bitter type" and the "smug type"—are they quite unknown among those adherents of the English Church who belong to the same social rank as ourselves? I quite admit that what Joubert says of the Romish services—" *Les cérémonies du Catholicisme plient à la politesse,*" an aphorism verified in the manners of the common people of all Catholic countries—is true in a measure of the ritual of the English Church; but is not something of the alleged difference between ourselves and Churchmen due to the fact that Nonconformity is strongest among the rough and vigorous people of the great towns who live together in masses, and whose social habits are not controlled by intercourse with those who inherit the traditions of many generations of culture? And if in villages and small towns there is something more of self-assertion and hardness in the Dissenter than in the Churchman, is not this also partly due to the long exclusion of Dissenters from all free intercourse with the "gentry," who have had the advantage of a university education, of foreign travel, and of the refining influence of the recreations and intellectual pursuits which are at the command of leisure and wealth?

That "watchful jealousy" of the Establishment with which he reproaches us—whose fault is it? When farmers are refused a renewal of their leases because they are Nonconformists, when the day-school is closed against a child on Monday because it was at the Methodist Sunday-school the day before, when in the settlement of great properties it is provided that no site shall be sold or let for a Dissenting chapel, and that if a tenant permits his premises to be used for a Dissenting service his lease shall be void, can Mr. Arnold wonder that we are "watchful?" Does he think that the uniform conduct of the clergy has been calculated to encourage an unsuspecting confidence in their fairness and generosity? Have we not had reasons enough for maintaining a "watchful jealousy" against the growth of their power? If sometimes we speak roughly and harshly, and bear ourselves ungraciously, does all the blame lie with us? It might be more creditable to ourselves and more agreeable to others if we could always "writhe with grace and groan with melody;" but our critics should remember the infirmity of human nature.

Nor does it seem to us quite true, as Mr. Arnold seems to imply, that all "strife, jealousy, and self-assertion" come from breaking with the Church. The literature of the controversies which have

disturbed the Church itself as long as we have known it, does not appear to us to be more distinguished for "mildness and sweet reasonableness" than the pamphlets of the Liberation Society. Prosecutions for heresy and for the introduction of unauthorized innovations into the service of the Church, do not confirm Mr. Arnold's theory that if we had only remained in the Establishment, the religious peace of the country might never have been disturbed. In the *Record* and in the *Church Times*, the evangelical asserts his "ordinary self," and the ritualist asserts his "ordinary self," with quite as much vigour as the Dissenting Philistine displays in the *Nonconformist* or the *English Independent*.

Mr. Arnold thinks that it is a special failing of the mind of a Dissenter that it is "pleased at hearing no opinion but its own, by having all disputed opinions taken for granted in its own favour, by being urged to no return upon itself, no development." But surely this is a vice of nature for which the Establishment has discovered no specific. The evangelical Churchman drives by the Church of the ritualist on Sunday morning and travels four or five miles to hear a clergyman appointed by Simeon's trustees, and the ritualist trudges into a neighbouring parish to delight himself in the "People's Hymnal," in vestments, and in a fervent, passionate sermon on Penance, thinking with bitter contempt of the Protestant baldness of the service and the Protestant coldness of the sermon in the Church which stands within a stone's throw from his own door.

Mr. Arnold's representations of us are too much like the engravings in some of the cheap illustrated papers. The blocks are kept ready for all emergencies. A few slight touches will make them available for a railway accident in France or a similar catastrophe in America, for a yacht race at New York or at the Isle of Wight, for the "Derby" or for the "Grand Prix" at Paris. He has not given us descriptions of the characteristic vices of Nonconformity,—perhaps I could assist him with a few confidential hints about these if he wishes to try his hand at work of this kind again,—he has only amused us with a collection of clever but unfinished sketches of faults and follies common to men of all churches and all creeds.

Let us part good friends. Mr. Arnold bears a name which Nonconformists regard with affection and veneration. From his own writings we have received intellectual stimulus and delight, for which we are grateful to him. Nor is this all. Every man who is striving to know at first hand the truth which most concerns the higher life of the soul is the friend and ally of all who, with whatever resources and whatever success, are attempting the same great task. We can but bid each other God-speed.

R. W. DALE.