

ARTICLE VII.

CALVINISM AND DARWINISM.

MUCH of the evolution of recent years is but a half-truth of Calvinism, without any of the redeeming features of that comprehensive system. The Calvinistic doctrine of predestination did not stand by itself; but was closely bound up with a doctrine of free will and with a tender conception of the abounding grace of a loving God. The "predestination" of the Westminster Catechism is "to eternal life." The foreordination which is spoken of with reference to eternal death is a milder word than predestination. The predestination of the Calvinistic system is the result of a decree dictated by perfect benevolence and unlimited wisdom. The predestination of the prevalent evolutionary system is but the outworking of a blind fate which has no regard for the individual and which is moving on to no assured goal of blessed perfection.

According to both the evolutionary and the Calvinistic system the outcome of the future is, indeed, definite and certain. But in the prevalent evolution this is the result of an unbroken causal connection of events running through all time. According to that philosophy, the present is the *necessary* outcome of the past, and the future will be the *necessary* outcome of the present. No room is left for the play of individual freedom in moral agents. In the Calvinistic system there is an equal certainty in the occurrence of events, but it is regarded as the result, not of blind mechanical forces, but of an original act of creation prompted by infinite wisdom and benevolence, and in full recognition of the rights and capacities of the free

moral agents who have been introduced into the universe, and endowed with the high prerogative of being the architects of their own fortune. In this system, the important truth is recognized that there can be *certainty* without *necessity*. For example, a clerk may be so honest that it is *certain* he will not pilfer from the cash-box though he is free to do so, and though there would be no violation of the law of cause and effect if he should do so. No more physical force was necessary to put a coin into his pocket than into his master's till. The forces which move the will are not commensurate with those that move material things. Moral motives are not to be compared with locomotives.

Upon the Calvinistic view, the universe is the result of a divine act of creation in which there is involved not only an expression of supreme power, but also of infinite wisdom and benevolence. The logical order of conception is that the knowledge of what would be the outcome of every conceivable order of creation preceded the determination to select one out of the number for the actual system. In the choice of the actual system there is a revelation of divine wisdom which determines all the subsequent actions of the Creator in dealing with the system. Having created moral beings endowed with freedom of will, he has bound himself to deal with them as such and secure the highest interests of the system through moral influences. Character cannot be forced. A man "convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." Love can be secured only by persuasion. The question, therefore, arises, to the infinite perplexity of the theologian, How can there be foreknowledge and certainty respecting the action of a free moral agent unless there is a necessary connection between the antecedents and the consequents of individual history?

The most satisfactory answer to this puzzling question is one which is derived from human experience. It is a matter of common observation that conduct is influenced by intensifying the motives, though in every case the individual has power to resist the motives and persist in the path either of virtue or vice to which he had committed himself. Where high and noble motives are persistently held up before a community, the probability that noble characters will be produced is greatly increased. But where ignoble examples are held up to the admiration of the young, an ignoble progeny is sure to follow. But that there is no necessary connection between the motives and the conduct is shown in the appearance of a Judas among the disciples, and of a Bunyan among the ribald jesters of Bedfordshire. Admitting that the increase of virtuous choices may be rendered *probable* by the use of moral motives without the existence of causal necessity, it is not far to the inference that infinite wisdom may infallibly perceive what consequents will follow from the application to moral beings of any series of motives; and so we may not shrink from accepting the seeming paradox that what is contingent may at the same time be certainly known beforehand. Divine foreknowledge is not inconsistent with human freedom of choice.

The doctrine of heredity as maintained by modern evolutionists is closely akin to the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin. It was not Dr. Holmes, nor the Darwinians, who first suggested that the education of the child should begin with his great-grandfather. In the Mosaic Law it was taught that the tender mercies of the Lord extended to thousands of generations of them that love him and keep his commandments; while the iniquities of the fathers were visited only to the third and fourth generations. The "original sin" of the Calvinist is not to be confounded with the "actual sin" which

involves personal guilt. In this case, as often in chemistry, the combination of two elements produces a result that differs from both, considered singly. Chloride of sodium is like neither chlorine nor sodium, but is an agreeable compound known as common salt.

So original sin is no sin at all in the proper sense of the word. The ground on which one is submitted to restraint for his "original sin" is not that he has done personal wrong, but that it is certain that he will do wrong. A young lion is caged not because he has yet shown a lion's nature, but because he certainly and necessarily will develop such a nature. Adam's descendants are condemned to endure restraints not because they will *necessarily* commit sin, but because they *certainly* will do so. It is thus that when a new state is organized a prison is built and courts of justice are established in anticipation of what we are sure will happen, though there is no necessity compelling any one to commit crime. So Dr. Hodge, while vigorously insisting that "in virtue of the union, representative and natural, between Adam and his posterity, his sin is the ground of their [man's] condemnation, that is, of their subjection to penal evils," makes haste to add that "the sin of Adam is no ground to us of remorse," and "there is no transfer of the moral turpitude of his sin to his descendants."¹ Such a sin of nature, which has "no moral turpitude," can scarcely be distinguished from the hereditary depravity of the evolutionists, which certainly serves as a "seed-bed" for the actual transgressions of the law by free moral agents. In short, the evolutionists have so reinforced the Calvinistic doctrine of original sin that it can never more be dislodged from human thought. The "solidarity" of the human race is more firmly fixed than ever in the doctrinal systems of the church.

¹ Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, p. 279.

But here the similarity ceases. A pure system of evolution has no doctrine of grace. It leaves no room for the loving care of a "Heavenly Father." According to the prevalent system of evolution, there is a constant struggle for existence both on the part of the individual and of the species, but it is a struggle with blind forces undirected by the wisdom and benevolence of a personal Creator. The fittest to survive in such a system are not the noblest and the best, but the extremes of cunning and obtuseness. In the animal world, as in the political, the flourishing classes are those which belong to the trusts and the proletariat. In the midst of the depressing gloom of this conception of the struggle of the individual soul with the fatalistic forces of the universe, the Calvinistic doctrine of election bursts forth with a flood of effulgent light. The love of God has opened the way, through Christ, whereby the Creator can be "just and yet the justifier of sinners." And the same love has devised a system of influences designed in the wisest possible manner to persuade men to forsake their evil ways and become reconciled to God.

But grace, to be effective, must not be unlimited. As miracles cease to be miracles when they are multiplied without limit, so grace ceases to be grace when it comes as a matter of course. The doctrine of reprobation is simply a corollary to that of election. In deciding upon the system as a whole, God must have designed the lesser points of privilege as well as those of greater advantages. In this he is dealing with a problem which is limited by the existence of logical contradictions. As there cannot be two hills without a valley between them, and as there cannot be anything *extraordinary* if everything is ordinary; so it is possible that motives lose their power if they become uniform and invariable. If manna be constantly supplied, or loaves and fishes constantly multiplied,

they lose their significance and fall to the level of every-day occurrences, where familiarity breeds contempt. So, in the distribution of the persuasive influences of the spiritual world, while every one has sufficient to insure his salvation if rightly used, he has no absolute claim upon the limited store of extraordinary privileges. Some must be content with the common conditions of life. If every one is given one talent, there is no just ground of complaint if, in the light of infinite wisdom, it is possible to give some others ten talents. If those who have only the one talent despise that and fail to put it out to interest, God must resign them to their fate. This is all there is to "reprobation."

The simple case is that God cannot bestow a superabundance of opportunity upon every one without robbing himself of the power of urging the greater motives which will be effectual upon other objects of his creative love. With reference to the lost, we must suppose, in the words of Finney,¹ that "God regards their destruction as a less evil to the universe than would be such a change in the administration and arrangements of his government as would secure their salvation. Therefore, for their foreseen wickedness and perseverance in rebellion, under circumstances the most favorable to their virtue and salvation in which He can wisely place them, he is resolved upon their destruction, and has already in purpose cast them off forever."

The saving article in the Calvinistic system is that of Divine Sovereignty, which is "nothing else than infinite benevolence directed by infinite knowledge." It is the Calvinist's privilege (and that of all who incorporate this article in their creed) to believe that there is a benevolent purpose running through all

¹ *Theology*. pp. 785-787.

the events of our daily life, that the very hairs of our head are numbered, and that not a sparrow falls without a Heavenly Father's care. Faith, such as is within the reach of every one, is the philosopher's stone, which can make all things work together for good to them that love God. The Calvinist is not an orphan cast out to struggle helplessly with the remorseless forces of nature, but he is a son over whom the Father grieves when he forsakes his home and for whose salvation heaven and earth are moved when he is lost.

The best consolation which a recent scientific man of great learning and of most lovely character could give to his pupils when depressed with sickness and adversity was "Grin and bear it." Had he possessed the vision of a Calvinist, he could have pointed triumphantly to the words of the Divine Master, who said, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter"; and so enabled the sufferer to rest in the arms of everlasting love like "a weaned child in the arms of his mother." The difference between evolutionary fatalism and the determinations of Divine wisdom and benevolence is absolute and irreconcilable. It is like that between light and darkness. Calvinism is comprehensive enough to shelter any reasonable system of evolution under its ample folds. If only evolutionists would incorporate into their system the sweetness of the Calvinistic doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, the church would make no objection to their speculations.