

## LECTURE XI.

### THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION OF FAITH OR ARTICLES OF CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

*Part II.—Its sources and type of doctrine: answers to objections brought against it.*

IN my last Lecture I gave you a brief sketch of the development of doctrine in the British Churches before the meeting of the Westminster Assembly, and a pretty full account of the proceedings of the divines in preparing their Confession of Faith. To-day I am to speak to you of the sources and character of that Confession, and briefly to advert to certain charges made against it.

It was long the received opinion that the Assembly's Confession was derived in a great measure from foreign sources, either Swiss or Dutch. The fact was overlooked that in Reynolds, Perkins, Whitaker, Carleton, Downname, the Abbots, Davenant, Overall, Prideaux, Ussher, Hall, Twisse, Ames, Ball, Featley, and Gataker, England for half a century had had a school of native theologians developing an Augustinian or moderately Calvinistic type of doctrine, without slavish dependence on the divines of any Continental school—a system

perhaps quite as largely drawn from Augustine and other early western doctors, as from any of the Reformers. Mr. Marsden, who has done so much by his writings to vindicate the character and teaching of the Puritans, has ventured (p. 86) to say of the Confession of the Assembly that 'it is in many respects an admirable summary of Christian faith and practice,' 'pure in style, the subjects well distributed and sufficiently comprehensive to form at least the outline of a perfect system of divinity.' But he has failed to light on its sources, and expressed regret that Ussher and the leaders of the native English school were not present in greater force to check undue deference to the views of Calvin and Bullinger. The younger Dr. M'Crie again, in his *Annals of Presbytery* in England, has confidently affirmed that 'it bears unmistakably the stamp of the Dutch theology in the sharp distinctions, logical forms, and juridical terms into which the Reformed doctrine had gradually moulded itself under the red heat of the Arminian and Socinian controversies.'<sup>1</sup> Others, with greater want of caution still, have ventured to single out Cocceius<sup>2</sup> or

<sup>1</sup> *Annals of English Presbytery*, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> Hallam says somewhat equivocally of him,—'He was remarkable for having viewed, more than any preceding writer, all the relations between God and man under the form of covenants, and introduced the technical language of jurisprudence into theology. . . . This became a very usual mode of treating the subject in Holland, and *afterwards* in England.'

Turretine as the true and immediate prototype of the teaching of the Confession. But the Westminster divines had done their work before either of these men had become known as influential factors in the development of the Reformed theology. And there is abundant evidence that in its general plan, as well as in the tenor and wording of its more important Articles, the Assembly's Confession is derived immediately, not from foreign, but from native sources, and that it embodies, not conclusions adopted slavishly from any continental school, but the results of the matured thought and speculation of the native British school,<sup>1</sup> which led quite as much as it followed in the wake of others, both in reviving the life of the Churches and in systematising their doctrines. The Confession may confidently, and I may now say confessedly,<sup>2</sup> be

<sup>1</sup> *Irish Articles.*—Of the Holy Scriptures and the three Creeds, of Faith in the Holy Trinity, of God's Eternal Decree and Predestination, of the Creation and Government of all things, of the Fall of Man, Original Sin, and the State of Man before Justification (including article on Free Will), of Christ the Mediator, of the Second Covenant, of the Communicating of the Grace of Christ, of Justification and Faith etc. *Westminster Confession.*—I. Of the Holy Scripture. II. Of God and of the Holy Trinity. III. Of God's Eternal Decree. IV. Of Creation. v. Of Providence. VI. Of the Fall of Man, of Sin and of the Punishment thereof. IX. Of Free Will. VII. Of God's Covenant with Man. VIII. Of Christ the Mediator. x. Of Effectual Calling. XI. Of Justification. XIV. Of Saving Faith, etc. For fuller statement of this and other correspondences, see the works referred to on pp. 374, 376.

<sup>2</sup> Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*, vol. i. p. 761; Killen's *Ecclesiastical History of Ireland*, vol. i. pp. 494, 495.

traced up to those unquestionably Augustinian Articles<sup>1</sup> of the Irish Church, which are believed to have been prepared by Ussher when Professor of Divinity in Trinity College, Dublin, and which in 1615 were adopted by the Irish Convocation, with the assent of the Viceroy or the King, as 'Articles to be subscribed by all ministers,' and at least not to be contradicted by them in their public teaching. This, I hardly need to remind you, was before the Synod of Dort had met, or the intense heats, which the agitation of the Arminian and Socinian controversies occasioned there, had extended to Britain; while the more important of the juridical terms were already in use both on the Continent and in Britain, and

<sup>1</sup> These Articles were held in high repute by almost all the sound Protestant ministers in Britain as well as in Ireland. They embodied the mature opinions of Ussher and of several other learned and orthodox divines, who scrupled at no ceremony required in the Service Book, shrunk from no submission required to the absolute will of the King in things indifferent, and were in no sense liable to the charge of following Puritanism, if that was anything else than a nickname extended to the opinions of all who did not favour the views of Laud and his school. In these articles we have certainly the main source of the Westminster Confession, and almost its exact prototype in the enunciation of all the more important doctrines of the Christian system. In the order and titles of most of the articles or chapters, as well as in the language of many sections or subdivisions of chapters, and in a large number of separate phrases or *voces signatae*, occurring throughout their Confession, the Westminster divines appear to me to have followed very closely in the footsteps of Ussher and the Irish Convocation. There are not wanting indeed proofs that other Reformed Confessions, particularly those of the French and Belgian or Dutch

several of them, in fact, in the Roman Catholic as well as in the Protestant Church.<sup>1</sup> 'This elaborate formulary,' Dr. Killen tells us, 'when adopted, was signed by Jones, Archbishop of Dublin, Speaker of the House of Bishops in Convocation and Lord Chancellor of Ireland; by the Prolocutor of the other House of the clergy, in their names; and by the Lord Deputy Chichester, in the name of the Sovereign. It has indeed been questioned whether it was ever submitted to the Irish legislature; and on the presumption that such an oversight occurred its authority has been challenged; but as Parliament was sitting it is quite possible that even this form was not neglected, though we have no positive proof of its observance. It is certain that at the time the Articles were understood to possess the highest sanction which the State could confer on them.' Ussher at least did not regard them as superseded by the adoption of the English Articles in 1634, and continued to require subscription to them as well as to the latter while he remained in

Churches were also kept in view by them. But if the order of the chapters in these other confessions be compared with that of the Irish and Westminster formularies, it will at once be perceived that these last two have a special affinity in that respect, as well as in regard to the exact titles of the chapters and the language in which many of the sections are expressed. For particulars, see Introduction to the *Minutes of Westminster Assembly*, pp. xlvii. xlviii., and my lecture on *The Westminster Confession*, pp. 8-12, and 33-42.

<sup>1</sup> Paper by Prof. A. A. Hodge, p. 366 of *Report of the Proceedings of the Second General Council of the Presbyterian Alliance.*

Ireland. The adoption of these Articles induced a number of Puritan ministers from England, as well as from Scotland,<sup>1</sup> to settle among the colonists of Ulster, among whom, till the time of Strafford, they enjoyed a generous toleration, and more than repaid it by the good service they did to these motley immigrants. Perhaps equally with the similar efforts in Scotland the following year, to unite both parties in drawing up a new Confession and formularies, they are indications of a nobler policy on the part of Abbot to emphasise the great matters on which moderate Puritans and Churchmen of his own school agreed, and to cast into the shade or allow a large toleration on the minor matters on which they differed,—a policy for which the times were not ripe, or to which the King himself proved fickle.

In a lecture on the Confession of Faith published in 1866,<sup>2</sup> I exhibited in detail the correspondence between these Irish Articles and the Westminster Confession, both in general arrangements and the wording of many sections. The more important of the correspondencies have been reprinted in that great work of Dr. Schaff on the Creeds of Christendom, for which we owe

<sup>1</sup> 'All of them enjoyed the churches and tithes though they remained Presbyterian and used not the liturgy.'—*Neal*. 'Episcopacy existed, but only in a very modified form.'—*Perry*.

<sup>2</sup> *Westminster Confession of Faith: A Contribution to the Study of its History, and to the Defence of its Teaching*. Edinburgh, 1866.

him such a debt of gratitude. The subject has been treated more succinctly but very satisfactorily since, by Dr. Briggs of New York, in his paper in the *Presbyterian Review* for January 1880. I do not venture to assert that the Assembly have in no case determined questions which Ussher and the Irish Convocation had left undecided; but I do say that these questions are neither many nor important, and are rather details than principles of their system, which they did not mean thereby to elevate to a factitious importance. Besides, when occasion called they took the greatest pains to express their sentiments in such a way as to obviate or minimise objections which had been taken or might fairly have been taken to the words or matter of the English and the Irish Articles.<sup>1</sup> Dean Stanley has on various occasions admitted that this, in several important instances, has been fully made out.<sup>2</sup> The volume of their minutes which has been published clearly shows that more than one

<sup>1</sup> While the terms *predestinate* and *predestination* are used in the same sense as in the English and Irish Articles, the term *reprobated*, which had been admitted into the Lambeth and Irish Articles, is exchanged for the word *foreordained*. The expression, 'to reconcile His Father unto us,' retained both in the English and Irish Articles, is also changed. See notes in *Minutes*, pp. xlvi., etc.

<sup>2</sup> In his paper in the *Contemporary* for March 1866, p. 547, also in the paper written by him just before his death, and inserted in *Macmillan's Magazine* for August 1881, this is admitted in regard to several very important particulars.

attempt made to persuade them to determine questions wisely left undecided by the Irish Convocation and the Synod of Dort, was strenuously resisted<sup>1</sup> by a number of the English members, who were true successors of the great English divines who had attended that Synod, and claimed in various respects to have moderated its conclusions. With respect to the doctrine of the Covenants, which some assert to have been derived from Holland, I think myself now, after careful investigation, entitled to maintain that there is nothing taught in the Confession which had not been long before in substance taught by Rollock and Howie in Scotland, and by Cartwright, Preston, Perkins, Ames, and Ball in his two catechisms in England, while there is a perceptible advance beyond what is exhibited as the general teaching of the Dutch divines in the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiæ* as late as 1642. The later and most remarkable treatise of Ball, on the 'Covenant of Grace,' was published with recommendatory notices by Reynolds, Cawdrey, Calamy, Hill, Ashe, and Burgess at the very time the Assembly began to frame its Confession, and it contains all that has been admitted into the Westminster standards, or generally received on this head among British Calvinists.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of Westminster Assembly*, pp. 150, 151, 152, etc.

<sup>2</sup> See the account given of it in my paper in the *Report of the Proceedings of the Second General Council of the Presbyterian Alliance*, pp. 478, 479; also Appendix, Note N.

work of Cocceius, even in its earliest form, was not given to the world till after the Confession had been completed and published ; nor was it brought substantially into the shape in which we now have it till 1654, by which date several other treatises on the subject of the Covenants had issued from the English press. Some have forgotten these patent facts ; many more have overlooked the less patent but not less important ones that Cocceius was the pupil of Ames or Amesius,<sup>1</sup> the well-known English Puritan who was called to teach theology in Holland. He, as well as Cloppenburg his colleague, taught and published views as to the Covenants, similar in character to those of Ball already referred to. Cocceius, it is true, does not directly acknowledge his obligations to the English divines as he does his obligations to Olevianus. Still, there are resemblances in his work to theirs, and there are more marked resemblances to Ball's, especially to its historical sections, in the great work of Witsius *De Œconomia Fœderum*. Had the Dutch writers really preceded the English these resemblances would no doubt have been confidently appealed to as proof that the English had borrowed from or followed in the wake of the Dutch.

<sup>1</sup> 'Amesius the Puritan insisted upon piety of heart and life, and Amama his friend specially enforced the study of the original text of Scripture. The two latter obtained great influence over the mind of the piously educated young student.'—Dorner's *History of Protestant Theology*, vol. ii. p. 31.

In regard to the important chapters of the Confession on the Holy Scriptures, God and the Holy Trinity, God's Eternal Decree, Christ the Mediator, the Covenant of Grace, and the Lord's Supper, which so largely determine its character as a whole, the resemblance to the Irish Articles both in expression and general arrangement is so close, that not the slightest doubt can be entertained about the main source from which the materials for these chapters have been derived.<sup>1</sup> As little doubt can be entertained in regard to the design of the framers in following so closely in the footsteps of Ussher and his Irish brethren. They meant to show him and others like him, who had not had the courage to take their place among them, that though absent they were not forgotten nor their work disregarded. They meant their Confession to be in harmony with the *consensus* of the Reformed Churches, and especially of the British Reformed Churches, as that had been expressed in their most matured symbol. They desired it to be a bond of union, not a cause of strife and division, among those who were resolutely determined to hold fast by 'the sum and substance of the doctrine' of the Reformed Churches—the

<sup>1</sup> See my paper on the bibliology of the Westminster Confession in the Appendix to *The Proceedings of the First General Presbyterian Council* (Edinburgh, 1877); Introduction to the *Minutes of the Westminster Assembly*, pp. xlix. to lxix.; and *Lecture on the Westminster Confession of Faith*, pp. 8-12.

Augustinianism so widely accepted in the times of Elizabeth and James. In that logical and system-loving age, it was thought that they had been wonderfully successful in their efforts to carry out their desires and intentions, so that Baillie could boast of their work being 'cried up by many of their greatest opposites as the best Confession yet extant,' and Baxter could concede that it was 'the most excellent for fulness and exactness he had ever read from any Church,' and, with all his individualism, could pitch on nothing in it as contrary to his judgment save a few minor matters which he did not venture to deny were capable of a benign interpretation. The Independents both in England and New England, and the Baptists in England, expressed their substantial approval of it, so far as it had been accepted by the English Parliament. In our own day a different view has often been taken of the Confession, and many hard things have been said of it, some by professed friends, more by avowed opponents of its teaching. I have endeavoured, in the Introduction to the published volume of the *Minutes of the Assembly* already referred to, to vindicate it from the more serious charges which have been brought against it, and to claim for it and its authors that the justice be done them to read it in the light of the writings and known sentiments of the men who drew it up, and less exclusively than has long been done in the light of the teaching and traditions of later and narrower

times—to strip it as far as possible of the accretions which in the lapse of time have gathered round it, and marred in greater or lesser measure its goodly form and true proportions.<sup>1</sup> I must refer any of you who wish to go thoroughly into this matter to what I have there advanced and still abide by, as to the inspiration and consequent canonicity and authority of Holy Scripture, the doctrines of the Blessed Trinity, of the creation and the fall of man, of Christ the Mediator, of redemption and justification through his obedience unto death, of the Christian Sabbath and the Lord's Supper, and above all, of the mysterious doctrine of predestination, in the exposition of which the Irish Articles are *most closely* adhered to.<sup>2</sup> On this last it has been again grievously misrepresented by some, of

<sup>1</sup> We have several excellent commentaries on it, but they are mostly expository or dogmatic, and have made comparatively little use of the vast mass of materials we possess in the writings of those who framed it, to illustrate its spirit and expound the more delicate shades of its teaching. Quotations from Owen and later men are not without their use, nor those from Hooker and Pearson; but more use must be made of the writings of the members of the Assembly, and of the writings of that great divine from whose Articles and Catechisms they drew so largely.

<sup>2</sup> I place the two once more in opposite columns, that it may be seen how closely the later has followed the earlier, and how faithfully, in regard to this important head, the terms of pacification agreed to by the Irish Convocation in 1615 were adhered to:

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION.

IRISH ARTICLES.

CHAPTER III.—OF GOD'S  
ETERNAL DECREE.

I. God from all eternity did,  
by the most wise and holy coun-

ARTICLE III.—OF GOD'S  
ETERNAL DECREE AND  
PREDESTINATION.

II. God from all eternity did,  
by his unchangeable counsel,

whom better things might have been expected, and the fairness at least have been shown to deal with its teaching on this mysterious subject as it was explained in the writings of the great English

sel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass : yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

II. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions ; yet hath he not decreed anything because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

III. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

IV. These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed ; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

V. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose,

ordain whatsoever in time should come to pass : yet so as thereby no violence is offered to the wills of the reasonable creatures, and neither the liberty nor the contingency of the second causes is taken away, but established rather.

12. By the same eternal counsel, God hath predestinated some unto life, and reprobated some unto death : of both which there is a certain number known only to God, which can neither be increased nor diminished.

13. Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, he hath constantly decreed in his secret

scholars and divines from whom mainly it came, and as it has been guarded by the authors of the Confession themselves, and not as it has been exaggerated by the representations of any later or narrower

and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

VI. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ; are effectually called to faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

counsel to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ unto everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.

14. The cause moving God to predestinate unto life, is not the foreseeing of faith, or perseverance or good works, or of anything which is in the person predestinated, but only the good pleasure of God himself.

15. Such as are predestinated unto life, be called according unto God's purpose (his Spirit working in due season), and through grace they obey the calling, they be justified freely, they be made sons of God by adoption, they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ, they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

32. None can come unto Christ unless it be given unto him, and unless the Father draw him. And all men are not so drawn by the Father that they may come unto the Son. Neither is there such a sufficient measure of grace vouchsafed unto every man whereby he is enabled to come unto everlasting life.

school, or as it may be distorted by questionable inferences of their own. In regard to the doctrine actually taught in the Confession I cannot compress into shorter space what I have already said, but must content myself with referring to the

VII. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

VIII. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending to the will of God revealed in his Word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may, from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence, and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

The only section of this chapter of the Westminster Confession which has not a correspondent paragraph in the Irish Article is the second. This simply negatives the Jesuit theory of a predestination based on *scientia media*, and that was the least that could be expected from an Assembly over which Twisse presided.

But such as are not predestinated to salvation shall finally be condemned for their sins.

14. For all things being ordained for the manifestation of his glory, and his glory being to appear both in the works of his mercy and of his justice; it seemed good to his heavenly wisdom to choose out a certain number towards whom he would extend his undeserved mercy, leaving the rest to be spectacles of his justice.

17. We must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth unto us in Holy Scripture; and in our doings, that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.

pretty full statement I have given in the Introduction to the *Minutes of the Westminster Assembly*, pp. lii. to lxiv. I subjoin, however, a brief reply to some of the objections brought against it.

In reply to the reckless assertion, that those who hold this doctrine as it is set forth in the Westminster Standards cannot preach to their perishing fellow-sinners the love of God and the freeness of Christ's salvation, I deem it sufficient to point to the fact that they have never ceased to preach these truths fully and faithfully. They believe them in their inmost hearts, and allow their belief to influence their conduct and mould their teaching, and none have ever set forth these precious truths with more winning tenderness or more marked success, than the men who embraced their system of doctrine, and had a firm grasp of their principles as Leighton, Rutherford, Sedgewick, Arrowsmith, Tuckney, Calamy, and Bunyan, in the seventeenth century, Willison, Boston, Whitfield, and the Erskines in the eighteenth, and Chalmers, M'Cheyne, the Bonars, Nicolson, and Crawford in the nineteenth century. By none in recent times has the general Fatherhood of God been more resolutely defended than by the last named of these divines, who was fully persuaded that, in that as well as in the other distinctive articles of his creed, he was following faithfully<sup>1</sup> in

<sup>1</sup> See the views of Harris and Ball in *Minutes*, pp. lx., lxiii.

the footsteps of the Westminster divines. Even the so-called 'grim' Synod of Dort denounced it as a calumny against the Reformed Churches to assert that they held 'that God of his own absolute or arbitrary will, and without any respect of sin, hath foreordained or created the greater part or any part of mankind to be damned, or that his decree is in any such sense the cause of sin or of final unbelief as it is the cause of faith and good works.' And as to the atonement of Christ they say, 'This death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sins, of infinite price and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.' 'Furthermore, it is the promise of the gospel, that whosoever believes in Christ crucified should not perish but have everlasting life ; which promise, together with the injunction of repentance and faith, ought promiscuously and without distinction to be declared and published to all people to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel. But forasmuch as many being called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ, but perish in their infidelity, this comes not to pass through any defect or insufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ offered upon the cross, but by their own proper fault.' And again they say, 'This default is not in the gospel, nor in Christ offered by the gospel, nor in God who calleth them by his gospel, and moreover bestoweth

diverse special gifts upon them, but in themselves who are called ; of whom some are so careless that they give no entrance at all to the word of life ; others entertain it, but suffer it not to sink into their hearts, and so . . . afterwards become revolters.'

Even this much misrepresented Synod, no less than many Calvinists in our own day, appears to represent God our Father as having done as much for all to whom the gospel is sent, as the opposite system represents Him as having done for any. As Dr. Crawford has so well put it: 'It is only with reference to the non-elect that the Fatherly love of God can be deemed to be obscured by Calvinists. And hence the question comes to be, Wherein does the atonement present a less gracious aspect to those who are not eventually saved, according to our view of its special destination, than according to the views entertained by those who differ from us? The atonement *per se*, according to the Arminian view, does nothing more for all men than, according to the Calvinistic view, it does even for the non-elect. It does not *per se* secure their actual salvation, but merely renders salvation attainable by them on condition of their repenting and believing the gospel. Now certainly it cannot be said to do less than this according to the doctrine of the most decided Calvinists, who hold, in the words of Owen, that "Christ's oblation of himself was every way suffi-

cient to redeem and save all the sinners in the world, and to satisfy the justice of God for all the sins of all mankind," and that if there were a thousand worlds the gospel of Christ might on this ground be preached to them all—there being enough in Christ for the salvation of them all, if so be they will derive virtue from him by faith.'

In reply to the not less reckless charge some have preferred, that they who hold this doctrine teach 'that scarcely anybody can be saved,' and so drive many into the opposite error of universalism, I say that Calvinists have good cause to feel amazed that any one having claims to scholarship and candour should ever have preferred it. In none of the authorised formularies of the Calvinistic Churches with which I am acquainted is any foundation given for such a caricature of the system or for putting a narrower meaning on the 'some' who are to be saved than on the 'others' who are not. The nearest approach to it I remember occurs in the Confession of Lord Bacon, who was free from any taint of Presbyterianism or Puritanism, and he merely uses, to describe the elect, the scriptural epithet 'little flock.' It is not from among them only that occasional discourses have come on the fewness of the saved. They are quite as much entitled as the representatives of any other school to speak of those who shall ultimately

be gathered into one, under Christ their head, as a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, and to hold, as some of the most pronounced of them in our own day have avowed they do, that the number of the saved will at last far exceed that of the lost. With respect to the charge that Calvinism has tended greatly to foster Rationalism and Socinianism, one might at once admit that these have been the errors to which Protestantism in every form has been most liable, just as credulity and superstition have been the besetting sins of the Roman and Anglo-catholic schools. And yet such an one need not hesitate to affirm that it is not the case that Calvinism has been in any special sense chargeable with or responsible for these erroneous tendencies. In the age of the Reformation their chief advocates were found among the Spaniards and Italians who had joined the Reformers, and Spain and Italy were just the two countries in which the theology of Augustine was least in repute and living power. In the following century it was not among the Calvinists of France, Switzerland, or Britain, but among the Remonstrants of Holland, that the tendency to rationalising and Socinianising modes of thought first markedly showed itself. It spread to many of the Lutheran Churches of Germany before it seriously injured the Calvinistic Churches. It affected the Church

of England herself before it touched the Non-conformist Churches. In our own day no one not utterly blinded by prejudice will venture to deny that the tendency in question is to be found in Lutheran and Arminian Churches quite as much as in the Calvinistic, in the Church of England herself quite as markedly as in any communion of Scottish or American Presbyterians.

Further, it is asserted that Calvinism has been unfavourable to literature. It may be admitted at once that many of the eminent literary men of the present age are unfavourable to the doctrinal system of Augustine and Calvin, but it must be admitted also that the greater part of them are not more friendly to many of the doctrines which used to be held firmly by Arminians, and in particular to that view of the atonement which has been current among Lutherans and Arminians as well as Calvinists. But literature did not take its origin in the nineteenth century, and Calvinism has contributed its fair share to the cultivation of it. It is admitted that it has had quite its due proportion, and even more than its due proportion of the great preachers who have adorned the Christian Church from the age of Augustine to that of Whitfield, and some of the greatest preachers since Whitfield's time have held and taught its principles. It is admitted also that it has had a few poets and hymn-writers. The father of English poetry has

at least spoken of it more respectfully than some modern divines :—

‘ But I can ne bolt it to the bren,  
As can the holy doctor St. Austen,  
Or Boece or the bishop Bradwardin.’

But in his day perhaps it was still a half truth, though in ours it is said to have become wholly false. Then, should he be left out who wrote :

‘ Some I have chosen *of peculiar grace*,  
Elect above the rest ; so is my will :’

and should not the names of Doddridge, Newton, Cowper, and Bonar be added to those of Toplady and Watts, if what it has done for hymnology is to be fairly weighed ? It is admitted it has given us one religious allegory ; it might have been admitted that it had given us two at least, for the *Holy War* of Bunyan is only inferior in pathos and spiritual power to his *Pilgrim's Progress*. And before it is urged to its disparagement that it has not given us more books of this class, let any other school be named which has given as many of equal merit, and which have been as richly blessed. In practical divinity and treatises which appeal to the heart and conscience as well as to the intellect it is admitted that Calvinism is rich, and in our own language there are no treatises can be named which, in their power of rousing the careless, encouraging the doubting, and cheering the desponding, deserve to be set alongside of Baxter's

*Call to the Unconverted* and his *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, and Bunyan's *Jerusalem Sinner Saved*; and notwithstanding all his individualism, the former as well as the latter sides with Calvin in regard to the doctrine of predestination and many of the other articles of his creed. Then, as has been already hinted, Lord Bacon, Hooker, Ussher, Hall, Leighton, and Sibbes were Calvinists, and it is so far from being true that Calvinism has been unfavourable to literature in Britain that on the contrary it may be affirmed that if the names of all who were Calvinists were struck out of the list of her worthies, the Church of England herself would find the number of the great names which adorn her annals seriously curtailed.

What has been asserted by some of Calvinism in general has been affirmed by others of Scottish Calvinism in particular. The account I have already given of the works of its theologians in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will I hope suffice to show that during these ages it held its own among the Reformed Churches, and in proportion to its size contributed its fair share, and somewhat more, to the elucidation and defence of a moderate Calvinism, and bore the heaviest share of the contest for the autonomy of the Church, the Presbyterian constitution of its governing councils, and the rights of its ordinary members in the choice of their pastors. Leighton, the only one of

its prelates in the seventeenth century who gained a name and fame for himself as a theologian, passed his happiest days as a minister of its Presbyterian Church; and most of those discourses which charm us still, and which were treasured in many a humble Presbyterian household ere yet they had come to be so generally valued elsewhere, were preached from the pulpits or delivered from the chair of Divinity in our Covenanting Church. In the eighteenth century the literary fame of the leaders, lay as well as clerical, of the national Church of Scotland is universally acknowledged, and the contributions made to theological literature in an untheological age by a single Scottish divine—Dr. Campbell of Aberdeen—by his Dissertation on Miracles, his Lectures on Ecclesiastical History, and his *opus magnum* on the Gospels, were such as many larger Churches in that century might have been proud of. Then in the same century there arose or came to maturity a school of history and philosophy which added greatly to our country's fame. Its chief ornaments were ministers, preachers or elders of the national Church, and Sir William Hamilton, the greatest ornament of that school in our own times, expressed himself far more respectfully regarding its Calvinistic theology than many have the assurance to do who have not a tithe of his learning, insight, and speculative power. He had been alienated not

from Calvinism but from what he held was a misrepresentation of it. 'He regarded Calvinism,' his biographer tells us, 'as the more philosophical system,' and spoke 'with the highest respect of its author,' but 'he protested against its alliance with [Edwards's system of] philosophical necessity—a protest in some measure shared by his strenuous antagonist Principal Cunningham.' At present Biblical and historical studies show quite as decided a tendency to revive in Scotland as in England. A Scottish publisher, by naturalising among us the best products of German thought, has done more to promote such studies than any of his brethren in Britain. Scottish scholars have held their own in the Jerusalem Chamber in the revision of our venerable translation of the Scriptures, and especially of the Old Testament. Dr. Pusey himself did not disdain, for the elucidation of the Chaldee of Daniel, to call in the aid of a Scottish scholar, whose untimely removal from the chair he was so peculiarly fitted to adorn we all deeply regret.

The charges I have still to mention are of minor importance.<sup>1</sup> The first of them is the assertion, so often and confidently propounded of late, that the Confession represents the creation of the world as having taken place in six 'natural or literal days,' which almost all orthodox divines now grant that

<sup>1</sup> This, somewhat abridged, appears in paper named, p. 377.

it did not. But the whole ground for the assertion is furnished by the words 'natural or literal' which the objectors themselves insert or assume. The authors of the Confession, as Dr. A. A. Hodge has well observed,<sup>1</sup> simply repeat the statements of Scripture in almost identical terms, and any interpretation that is fairly applicable to such passages of Scripture as Gen. ii. 3 and Exodus xx. 11, is equally applicable to the words of the Confession. It is quite true, as he has shown, that since the Confession was composed, many facts of science previously unknown have been brought to light respecting the changes through which our globe and probably the stellar universe had passed before the establishment of the present order of things, and that new arguments have thus been furnished against interpreting the days mentioned in the above passages of Scripture as literal days. But it is a mistake to suppose that this method of interpreting the days in these passages originated in modern times, and was altogether unknown to the men who framed our Confession. To prove it a mistake it is not necessary to have recourse to the ingenious conjecture, that some of the Cambridge men in the Assembly may have been acquainted with the manuscript work of Dean Colet, preserved in their archives, and only given to the public in our own time, in which the figura-

<sup>1</sup> *Commentary on the Confession of Faith*, p. 82.

tive interpretation of the days of creation is maintained.<sup>1</sup> There is no lack of evidence, in works published before the meeting of the Assembly, and familiar to several of its members, to show that the figurative interpretation had long before Dean Colet's time commended itself to several eminent scholars and divines with whose works members of the Assembly were acquainted. If there was one Jewish scholar with whose writings such men as Lightfoot, Selden, Gataker, Seaman, and Coleman were more familiar than another, it was Philo of Alexandria; and Philo has not hesitated to characterise it as 'rustic simplicity, to imagine that the world was created in six days, or, indeed, in any clearly defined space of time.' Augustine,<sup>2</sup> the great Latin doctor, with whose works several of the Westminster divines were far better acquainted than most of their successors, in his literal Commentary on Genesis, maintains that the days of the creation-week were far different from (*longé dispares*), and again, very unlike to (*multum impares*) those that now are in the earth. Procopius, a Greek writer not unknown to some of the Westminster divines, teaches that the number of six days was assumed not as a mark of actual time, but as a manner of teaching the order

<sup>1</sup> Colet's *Letters to Radulphus on the Mosaic Account of the Creation*, with translation and notes by J. H. Lupton. 1876.

<sup>2</sup> Migne's edition of Augustine, *De Genesi ad literam*, iv. 27.

of creation ; while in certain commentaries in that age, attributed to the Venerable Bede, and largely read in England, though now deemed spurious, a similar opinion is said to be found.<sup>1</sup> The figurative interpretation therefore of the six days of creation is no make-shift of hard-pressed theologians in the nineteenth century. It was held by respectable scholars and divines, from early times, and was known to the framers of our Confession ; and had they meant deliberately to exclude it they would have written not six days, but six natural or literal days.

The next topic to which I advert is the charge made against the Confession of teaching that not all infants dying in infancy, but only an elect portion of them, are saved. Here again scrimp justice has been dealt out to it. Its exact words are, ' Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit.' This statement, it has been averred, necessarily implies that there are non-elect infants dying in infancy who are not ' regenerated and saved.' It does not seem to me when fairly interpreted to imply any such thing. It might have been susceptible of such an interpretation had it been allowed to stand in the form which it appears to have borne in the

<sup>1</sup> Most of these testimonies are referred to, and the opinion they express is admitted to be *probabilis*, in the sense his sect used that term, by Sixtus Senensis in his *Bibliotheca Sancta*, p. 422.

draft first brought in to the Assembly—‘elect OF infants,’<sup>1</sup> not elect infants. But the very fact that the form of expression was changed shows how anxious the divines intrusted with the methodising of the Confession were to guard against pronouncing dogmatically on questions on which neither Scripture nor the Reformed Churches had definitely pronounced. The statement occurs, it is important to notice, not in the chapter treating of predestination, but in the chapter treating of effectual calling ; and is meant, not to define the proportion of infants dying in infancy who shall be saved, but to assert the great truths, that even they are not exempt from the consequences of the fall, but are by nature every one of them in the *massa perditionis* ; that they can only be separated from it, and saved, by the electing love of the Father, the atoning work of the Son, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost ; and that they, however as yet incapable of the exercise of reason and faith, may by the Holy Spirit be regenerated and made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. As Dr. Hodge has briefly and clearly expressed it :<sup>2</sup> ‘ The phrase “elect infants” is precise and fit for its purpose. It is certainly revealed that none either adult or infant is saved except on the ground of sovereign election—that is, all salvation for the

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of Westminster Assembly*, p. 162, Sess. 534.

<sup>2</sup> Hodge on the *Confession of Faith*, pp. 174, 175.

human race is pure grace. It is not positively revealed that all infants are elect, but we are left for many reasons to indulge a highly probable hope that such is the fact. The Confession affirms what is certainly revealed, and leaves that which revelation has not decided to remain without the suggestion of a positive opinion upon one side or the other.' In historical vindication of this interpretation of their meaning, I deem it only necessary to refer to the judgment of Davenant and the other English divines at the Synod of<sup>a</sup> Dort, who were the precursors and teachers of the leading English divines of the Assembly. The Arminians had maintained that, as all infants dying in infancy were undoubtedly saved, there could not be said to be any election, so far as they were concerned. The English, though personally not much in advance of their brethren on the Continent, gave special prominence in their reply to the statement that, even granting the premises of the Arminians, the conclusions drawn from them were by no means legitimate or necessary. Election and preterition, they said, had respect to the whole mass of fallen humanity, not to certain separate divisions of it according to age or circumstances, and that though a certain number of infants dying in infancy might not be separated from or elected out of a certain number also dying in infancy and not elected, yet if all were separated from the

common mass of mankind sinners, and bound up in the bundle of life with Christ, that was quite sufficient to constitute an election of them, and to warrant such an expression as elect infants dying in infancy. *Ad rationem electionis divinæ sive ponendam sive tollendam circumstantia ætatis est quiddam impertinens. . . . Fac, igitur, omnes infantes servari ne uno quidem præterito, tamen quia electio et præteritio respicit massam non ætatem, licet non e numero infantium, tamen e communi massa hominum peccatorum segregati sunt quod ad electionis rationem constituendam sufficit.*<sup>1</sup> Few of these divines, or of their successors at Westminster, had probably, in personal opinion, advanced as far as good Bishop Hooper, who, as I told you in a previous Lecture, said, 'It is ill-done to condemn the infants of Christians that die without baptism, of whose salvation by the Scriptures we be assured. . . . I would likewise judge well of the infants of the infidels who have none other sin in them but original. . . . It is not against the faith of a Christian man to say that Christ's death and passion extendeth as far for the salvation of innocents, as Adam's sin made all his posterity liable to condemnation.' But the best of them had come to adopt the first part of his opinion (which was more than many high churchmen had then done), and from reverence for him and others whom they loved, to

<sup>1</sup> *Acta Synodi Dordrechtanæ*, p. 499, 4to editio.

refrain from pronouncing positively against the second.

The last topic to which I shall advert as having been quite as much misunderstood as either of the preceding, is the concluding statement in the same chapter: 'Much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of the religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious and to be detested.' This is a slight softening down of a statement made in more extreme form in the English Articles,<sup>1</sup> and in some of the other Reformed Confessions, and perhaps the Baptists somewhat improved it in 1677 when, under the guidance of Bunyan, they changed the words 'not professing the Christian religion' into 'not receiving the Christian religion,' to make it more clear that they meant the statement to be limited to those who had had the Christian religion tendered to them, but had refused to receive it, and continued obstinately to live by the light of nature and the law of the religion they professed. That, I think, was what the Westminster divines also had chiefly in view (I will not, in remembrance of certain questions

<sup>1</sup> 'They also are to be had *accursed* that presume to say,' etc.—*Article XVIII.* 'We utterly abhor the *blasphemy* of them that affirm,' etc.—*Scottish Confession* of 1560. 'Abominamur impiissimam vesaniam.'—*Conf. Helv. Post.*

in the larger Catechism, say exclusively in view), to bear their testimony, in common with other Reformed Churches, against the Spiritualists or the Pantheists of the school of Servetus, as well as against the Deists and Free-thinkers among themselves, who, living in the full blaze of the light of revelation, preferred nature's twilight, and despised the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and long-suffering. They who hold that the words of the Confession were meant to have a wider application should at least do its framers the justice to remember that all they do absolutely define is, that the persons spoken of cannot be saved by the light of nature, or the law of the religion they profess; and that when they go on in a subsequent chapter to define the Church of visible professors and outward ordinances, all that they venture to affirm is, that out of it there is no 'ordinary possibility of salvation,' not that the salvation-bringing grace of God is never manifested outside the portals of 'the house of his continual residence,' or otherwise than through its ordinances. Even a Scottish divine, more than half a century before, in a catechism which circulated in England as well as in Scotland, had in answer to the question, *How is a man framed and made able to serve God?* inserted the following statement: 'By the effectual working of God's Spirit in him, *extraordinarily and without ordinary means*, howbeit but seldom in a Reformed Church,

and ordinarily by ordinary means at all times in a Reformed Church.'<sup>1</sup> That is, I suppose, where a church had been planted, and brought into harmony with the requirements of the word of God, the influences of the Spirit were ordinarily (though not even then exclusively) communicated through the channel of its ordinances; but where a church had not been set up or had fallen from pristine purity, the Spirit of the Lord was not restrained from working extraordinarily and without ordinary means. Ball, whose treatise on the Covenant of Grace was published in 1645, and recommended by several members of the Assembly, affirms (p. 47): 'We know God is not tied to the means, nor do we absolutely exclude every particular man from the grace of the covenant who is excluded from the covenant outwardly administered, but we cannot think they shall universally be partakers of the grace of the covenant.'

Yet once more, let me repeat, that all I contend for is that the Westminster divines have not pronounced against the more liberal views on such subjects which modern Calvinists have commonly adopted; not that they themselves generally held them, but that they knew of them, and knew them to be tolerated or favoured by several whom they loved and honoured for the good service they had done in their day and generation, and that they were content to give forth no binding determina-

<sup>1</sup> *Galloway's Catechism.*

tion in regard to them. Their main object, as I said in the outset, was to set forth in their Confession the great principles of the faith common to the Reformed or Calvinistic Churches, without exalting into principles points on which these Churches had not thought fit to decide. And I believe that in adherence to their creed and method lies our only hope of a United Anglo-Saxon Presbyterianism—Calvinistic yet comprehensive, strong yet forbearing in the use of its strength, earnest and untiring in self-sacrificing Christian work, orderly yet free in its worship.

It is hardly possible for a minister of the national Church to conclude a lecture on this subject without reference to the very remarkable paper on it which appeared in *Macmillan's Magazine* for August 1881, and was the last literary labour of one whom even those who most differed from him had learned to love and esteem. Dean Stanley, more than any Englishman of our day, had striven to understand our ways and to reciprocate the warm regard in which we held him, and in this the last paper which proceeded from his pen we have, with all its defects, a generous and valuable testimony to the merits of that Confession to which the Presbyterian Churches, under scorn and obloquy and misrepresentation, have so resolutely clung. While others who have never managed to rid themselves of early *idola specus*

about it, can hardly speak with patience of the representation it gives of the character and purposes of God, this 'eirenic' divine does not hesitate to vindicate its teaching on the latter as in substantial accord with that of his own (and he might have added still more of the Irish) Church, and not unreasonable in itself; while of its teaching on the former subject he affirms that the glowing words it adds to the definition of God<sup>1</sup> in the English (he might have said too in the Irish) Article 'have no parallel' in those or 'any of the earlier creeds.' He speaks in terms of like admiration of the chapter relating to Christ the Mediator and his mediatorial work, and of 'the much larger and nobler description of the sacred volume' in Chapter I. 'than is to be found in the Tridentine or the Anglican Confession.' And from a different point of view from that I have thought fit to take, he finds something to say for the language it uses in speaking of elect infants and of those who do not profess the Christian religion. The three questionable statements to which he is disposed to take objection are, as himself admits, of inferior moment, and will not generally in Scotland be regarded as very questionable by those who are

<sup>1</sup> 'Most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, and withal most just and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.'

not inclined to question much more. The first refers to the assertion of the autonomy of the Church, which he admits is made in moderate terms, and in regard to which Scotchmen generally still think that England has more to learn than they have. The second relates to the passage which by implication condemns marriage with a deceased wife's sister. And if there is nothing in the English Articles on that subject, the principle on which the condemnation is based is as firmly rooted in English as in Scottish law, and far more closely bound up with certain prominent events in the history of its Reformation. The third statement to which he takes objection is that which affirms the Pope to be the 'man of sin.' This however is taken from the Irish Articles of 1615, and if it is not in the English Articles there is no doubt it is in the Homilies<sup>1</sup> to which the Articles refer, so that not even in regard to these is there material difference between the position of the clergy in the two Churches save in the matter of the autonomy of the Church, and in regard to that many of the clergy of the Church he adorned, as they think of the freedom we enjoy in the meeting of our courts and the exercise of our discipline, would be much more ready to say, 'Happy is the people that is in such a case' than 'God, I thank thee that I am not as this Presbyterian.'

<sup>1</sup> *On Peril of Idolatry*, pt. 3; *against Wilful Rebellion*, pt. 6.