

*Guardian* included. Though never used as a binding creed, or as a standard to which assent should be required, this Declaration is still accepted as embodying "the leading doctrines of faith maintained by Congregational Churches in general." In regard to Dr. Dale's testimony, referred to at the outset of this article, there can be no doubt of his competency as a witness. But one would like to know what he means by "the general disappearance of Calvinism." Does it relate to the beliefs of the ministry and membership, or to the current teaching of the pulpit? There has been of late years a general disappearance alike of Calvinism and Arminianism from sermons, because of a greater earnestness in the proclamation of those truths of the gospel which are common to all Christian denominations. We would not on this account infer and proclaim the decadence of Arminianism, especially in the face of such a statement concerning Methodism as recently appeared in the *Christian Guardian*, to wit:—"Not one of her doctrines has she eliminated, smoothed over, or sought to teach as something else, during all of her past; but openly and freely she has always taught them, and they are as fresh and pure to-day as when John Wesley formulated them." Still, we feel sure that free-will, falling from grace, entire sanctification, and in fact all the "five points" are less conspicuous in Methodist preaching to-day than they were a quarter or a half-century ago—sufficiently so, we think, to justify a *nota bene* as to the "general disappearance of Arminianism." The real truth probably is that there are doctrinal approximations, unconsciously, perhaps, to some extent, on both sides; for has not Arminianism its ultrasisms, its extreme points, equally with Calvinism? We, at any rate, think so? Will the time ever come when the projecting, jagged edges being polished off, these two conflicting systems will "fit like smooth mosaic"? At present, there seems not much probability of this, but time works wondrous changes.

We firmly believe that Congregationalists generally cling not merely with faith, but with a warm love, to the doctrine of saints' perseverance. This logically implies the essential principle of Calvinism. The mildest and most moderate statement of this essential principle of which we have any knowledge is that found in Finney's Theology, which bases

election to eternal life on God's foreseen ability to bring certain persons to the knowledge of the truth by such means as He can consistently use for their salvation. But a gracious discrimination lurks even in this gentle proposition. All are not treated precisely alike, as Arminianism maintains. Between Finney's position and the one essentially characteristic of Arminianism, which bases election on foreseen faith and repentance, there is apparently a wide difference. Is it irreconcilable? Can no *tertium quid* be found that will abolish it? Who is the Author of faith and Giver of repentance? Is the divine influence which induces faith and repentance a matter of accident or of purpose? If of purpose how far back does it date? And why do some have more of the divine influence than others? Around the last of these queries there hovers the hitherto impenetrable mystery out of whose depths the Arminian conjures up the abhorrent ghost of Calvinism in its worst form. Nor will it down, with our present lights. Shall we have clearer lights in the not-far-away future? We Congregationalists do not despair of this, for we hold to the grand sentiment of the Pilgrim Father, Robinson: "God hath yet much more light and truth to break forth from His Holy Word." The alleged decadence of Calvinism does not trouble us very much, because we call no man master, and pin our faith to no human standard. Moreover, we look for the ultimate decadence of all *isms*, and the triumphant ascendancy of truth over the errors that more or less impair the creeds of Christendom. Among the purified and crystallized forms of religious thought which will prevail in the golden age of the church when the watchmen shall see eye to eye, there will be found souvenirs of all evangelical systems of doctrine, and to that invaluable collection Calvinism will not fail to contribute its full quota.

Our little systems have their day,  
And slowly totter to their fall.

It will be our wisdom not to be too prodigal of trust and glorying in these. Rather let us raise the eager heart-cry:—

O Lord and Saviour of us all,  
Whate'er our name and sign,  
We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,  
And form our lives by Thine!

We faintly hear, we dimly see,  
In differing phrase we pray,  
But dim or clear, we own in Thee,  
The Life, the Truth, the Way.