

Contributions.

The Commission vs. Denominationalism.

XVIII.

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The teaching of the creeds, as has been shown—

1. Destroys, completely, man's power to either do or think any good. He is simply a totally depraved being! And he must so ever remain, unless he "be called according to God's purpose by his spirit working in due season." (Book Com. Pr.) And, further, God only "promises to give unto all those that are ordained unto life His Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe." (Confession of Faith, ch. vii. 3.) That is to say, even elect sinners must receive the Holy Spirit before they have faith! The apostle knew no better than to promise the Holy Spirit to all, and only those, who would "Repent and be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins." (Acts ii. 38.) Another apostolic mistake! We have also the statement of Rev. N. L. Rice, that, "without the special agency of the Holy Spirit, all must die in depravity, and be eternally lost." (C. and R. Debate 625.) And he further assures us, that, "If the Bible does not teach the operation of the Spirit distinct from the word, I defy mortal man to teach it by any language." (p. 707.) It is plain, therefore, that the idea of conversion advocated by denominationalism is that of a miracle, as is maintained by Dr. Pressense, who says: the church was "born of a miracle, by a miracle it lives . . . it grows and is perpetuated by the ever-repeated miracle of conversion." (Early Y. of C. Ch. p. 24.) But such it must be, and nothing less, the doctrine preached by the Wesleyans, namely, "The guilt and total depravity of man." (M. E. Catech. p. 45.) And, according to the Dis., art. viii., which says: "Wherefore we have no power to do good work, pleasing and acceptable to God." And the Confession of Faith again as follows: "From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil." (vi. 4.) The same position was taken by Prof. Crawford, in his debate with J. S. Sweeney: "We have no power in and of ourselves," said Mr. C., "but man's inability is, after all, a moral, not a physical inability." "When he, Adam sinned, I sinned in him." And so says Rev. J. B. Jeter: "The Spirit of inspiration has drawn the picture of man's moral corruption in glowing colors. He is utterly depraved, fleshly, sensual, and impure. . . . This depravity pervades and controls the whole man." (R. C. Ex. 135-136.) This agrees, of course, with the manual of their own church, which, speaking of the "Fall of Man," says: "Being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil, and therefore under just commendation to eternal ruin, without defence or excuse." (Bap. Ch. M., iii.) And Evans, in his History of Christian Sects, pg. 79, thus put this Calvinistic view: "Mankind are totally depraved in consequence of the fall; and by virtue of Adam being their public head, the guilt of his sin was imputed, and a corrupt nature conveyed to all his posterity, from which proceeds all actual transgressions." (O. H. S. 283.) Furthermore, this doctrine is made one of the basic principles of the Evangelical Alliance. In Art. 4 we read: "The utter depravity of human nature in consequence of the fall." (Ency. Brit.) True, it is then, that

according to denominationalism, every conversion is a miracle! The sinner is as passive in conversion as one in a deep sleep, or one dead, and can only be roused and converted by the abstract power of the Holy Spirit. As the "Catechism for young children" puts it: "Who can change a sinner's heart? The Holy Spirit alone." Creedism, having set aside the gospel, "the power of God unto salvation," as a "dead letter," a theory of inspiration, and "the Holy Spirit alone," was substituted, largely for the gospel. A distinguished writer in the Methodist Quarterly, of 1869, says: "The method of Methodism is inspiration, in distinction from logic." (Ph. of G. R., 3.) This, of course, differs from the New Testament method, which is by "teaching all nations;" "preach the gospel to every creature." "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. i. 21.) God's method is logic, for the gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." His words are "spirit and are life;" "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit," etc. All this the apostle most surely believed, and hence wrote: "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?" He also taught that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." It never entered the apostle's mind that the "Word of God was a dead letter," or that "man, in consequence of his natural corruption, is incapable either of thinking or doing any good." (Ency. R. K., 118.) Or that, "without the special agency of the Holy Spirit, all must die in depravity and be eternally lost!" No, it remained for denominationalism to bring all this to light; and, as a moral consequence, to have preached the Holy Spirit instead of Christ, and depended upon his abstract power, instead of the power of the gospel. And the burden of prayer has been to the Holy Spirit to "come down with converting power;" to "baptize us with the Holy Ghost and with fire;" to "pour out a pentecostal baptism upon sinners," etc. And (2) the minds of sinners have been turned away from the teaching and commands of the New Testament, to believe, repent, confess, and be baptized; to wait for some sudden work of the Holy Spirit, shock, conviction, vision or marvelous manifestation of power in the heart. He must wait for the Holy Spirit to convert him, and he must neither exercise will nor effort; such would only be sinful interference with the Spirit's work. "If I'm to be saved, I'll be saved; I can't do anything about it," said the son of a Baptist deacon to me, as I talked with him about becoming a Christian, before I had entered the ministry. Such is the deadening influence and tyrannizing power of Calvinism. Its persistent effort is to keep men from turning away from their sins, and to the Lord. It teaches him to disregard the gospel of God, and makes him an irresponsible human machine!

2. But, besides this, it makes God the author of all sin and evil, and misery! While the Word of God declares its Divine Author, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts;" "for I, the Lord your God, am holy," and that He is, "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity," denominational creeds affirm that "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel, of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass." (Con. of Faith, iii. 1.) And the same is held by the Church of Scotland, as expressed in its large Catechism under questions 12 and 13, thus: "God's decrees are the wise, free and holy acts of the counsels of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men." (T. In. II., 407). The Shorter Catechism teaches the same: "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." (Ans. 7.) Now, it is certain that sin "comes to pass," God hath foreordained sin and is made the author of all evil! Calvin saw this and sought to escape from the blasphemous yet logical conclusion, by saying, "And this is the decree of reprobation, which determines that God is in no wise the author of sin (which to be thought of is blasphemy)." (Syn. of Dort.) And the Confession also shrinks from this only legitimate conclusion, as follows: "Yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures." That is to say, God made man a depraved sinner, by an eternal decree, before man had being at all; yet, he did not so decree! He made him a sinner, yet he did not make him a sinner! "John Smith made a watch, every part of that watch; yet, he did not make that watch!" Such is the argument and consistency of the creeds. If man is a totally depraved being, he is in no wise the author of, or accountable for, sin; and if God foreordained that he should commit sins, he alone is the author of the sins committed. There is no escape from this conclusion, the mere assertions of Calvin and the Confession to the contrary, notwithstanding. But the M. E. Catech. (45) says that the "Wesleys preached," as a "distinguishing doctrine," "the guilt and total depravity of man." But Calvin says, "The more even infants themselves bring their own condemnation into the world with them. . . even their whole nature is, as it were, a seed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God." (C. Ins. II., 15, 27.) Nevertheless, "of such is the kingdom of God!"—so said Jesus. Prof. Crawford (Debate with J. S. Sweeney, 143) simply dropped the question, as the monkey did the live coal, saying, "We shall not spend time at present in arguing how this can be in harmony with the divine perfections, but the fact is there." Yes, according to Calvinism, "the fact is," that God is held up before the universe as the author of all evil! "God is Love," says Divine writ. "He is hatred and cruelty!" teaches creedism. "He decreed that mankind should be born sinners and practice evil, and have no power to do otherwise; then he decreed to damn them for obeying that decree!" Yes, "it is there," and the wonder is that there have not been many thousands of Bob Ingersolls produced by such teaching!

thus become guilty of eternal condemnation," etc.; and 4, "That to those, whom, by his absolute will, God has foreordained to perdition, he also decreed to deny that grace which is necessary and sufficient for salvation. . . . So that they are neither placed in a possible condition, nor in any capacity of believing, or of being saved." (T. In., ii. 391.) How this agrees with the statements of the apostle: "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons;" "For there is no respect of persons with Him;" "But he that hath done wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no respect of persons." And the declaration of God himself: "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye;" (Ezek. xviii. 32), will require but little study. Of course, Calvinism says, "that is all a mistake;" for, "the rest of mankind, God was pleased . . . to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath," etc. (Confession, iii. 7.) But here is Calvinism without varnish, as given by George Rogers, in "Pro and Con of Universalism." He says: "Believe me, reader, it is not possible to avoid the conclusion that all events take place agreeable to the unalterable decrees of Jehovah." "Go then," exclaims the Arminian objector, "the author really seems bent on proving, that, as Jehovah foreknew the existence of sin, he must also have designed it." Yes, such is really my purpose. . . . "I have already considered the most formidable of these (objections), viz., that it makes God the author of sin; and I now ask, how, on any ground, is this to be avoided? I assert, moreover, that it is plainly Scriptural." (U. A. I., 425.) Yes, "the fact is there;" but, it is simply Calvinism gone to seed. Denominationalism proclaims: "God the author of sin!"

Pen Picture of Christ.

The following is a correct translation of an epistle sent by Publius Lentulus to the Roman Senate: "There appeared in these days a man of great virtue named Jesus Christ, who is yet among us; of the Gentiles accepted for a prophet of the truth; but his disciples call him the Son of God. He raiseth the dead and cureth all manner of diseases. A man of stature somewhat tall and comely, with a reverend countenance, such as the beholder must love and fear. His hair is the color of a chestnut full ripe, plain to the ears, whence, downward, it is most orient, curling and waving about his shoulders, in the midst of his forehead a stream or partition of his hair, after the manner of the Nazarites; forehead plain and delicate; his face without spot or wrinkle, beautiful, with a lovely red; his mouth and nose so forked as nothing can be represented; his beard thick, in color like his hair, not over long; his look innocent and mature; his eyes gray, quick and clear. In reproving he is terrible; in admonishing, courteous and fair spoken; pleasant in conversation mixed with gravity. It cannot be remembered that any have seen him laugh; but many have seen him weep; in proportion of body most excellent; his hands and arms delectable to behold; in speaking very temperate, modest and wise; a man of singular beauty surpassing the children of men."

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