

## History.

## HISTORY OF CONTROVERSY.

A few observations may be made on the Polemics of this question: limited to that branch of it which concerns Vocation and Election. It is with the perversion of the Predestination idea that we have mainly to do.

The New  
Testament.

I. Within the New Testament itself there is a remarkable anticipation of the modern controversy. The preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles was resented by the Jewish Christians, by those of a certain party especially, as an invasion of the privileges, or advantages, of the covenant people as the Elect of God. There

Acts xiii.  
46.

was no saying which they more disapproved than St. Paul's *Lo, we turn to the Gentiles*. In his Epistle to the Romans the Apostle of the Gentiles argues against these advocates of an unconditional election, these earliest perverters of the true doctrine of the decretive will of God. It must be always remembered that this was the object for which he wrote the Three Chapters which the Predestinarians have taken refuge in: they were written in fact as a proleptical refutation of such views. The special exegesis on which a vindication of this assertion depends is not necessary here. Suffice that St. Paul admits, as we have already seen, that the ancient election was of a particular line through which the revelation of the preparatory Gospel was to be transmitted, and in which the Author of that Gospel was to appear. Undoubtedly, it is hard for human reason to distinguish between the national and the individual election, and between the active and the permissive will of God in the hardening of evil men; but the distinction must be made. Such passages as *Therefore hath He mercy on whom*

Rom. ix.  
18, 22.

*He will have mercy*, on the one hand, and *the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*, on the other, are not to be understood of absolute predetermination of individuals to be saved or to be lost. The similitude of the Potter and the clay as more fully seen in Jeremiah ends with a direct refutation of the notion: there the decrees of God are said to be changed by the characters of men.

Jer. xviii.  
6—8.

*O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will*

*repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.* The whole argument of St. Paul is to show that the election of Israel as a nation had not come to nought: it was *not of works, but of Him that calleth.* The Three Chapters carefully studied yield conclusions in favour of a national election but not of an individual: especially when they are connected with the intermediate chapter in which we have the Apostle's glorious protest against the perversion of his teaching: *the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved. . . . But to Israel He saith, All day long have I stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

Rom ix.  
11.

Rom. x.  
12, 13,  
21.

II. The entire Christian community down to the time of Augustine knew in its doctrine no other election and predestination than what was conditional or, what is the same thing, of none which do not refer to the ideal Body of Christ as such. The tendency of the Easterns especially was to lay too much rather than too little emphasis on the foreknowledge of human repentance and faith. Chrysostom says: "Not of love alone, but of our virtue also. If it sprang from love alone all would have been saved. If from our virtue alone that would be little and all would be lost. It was from neither alone, but from both: for the Calling was not of necessity or of force." This sentence represents the sentiment of the Greek Church from Origen to Athanasius, and even John of Damascus, the last of the Oriental Fathers proper. There was a decided leaning to an exaggeration of the freedom of the human will: at least their doctrine was not sufficiently protected by any reference to the ever-active influence of the Holy Ghost upon our fallen nature. But, whatever their theoretical notions were of the universality of the Gospel vocation, their Missionary zeal declined after the ninth century, and they have contributed little to the evangelisation of the world.

The Early  
Church.

III. Augustine first laid down the principle that "Predestination is the preparation of grace; grace the bestowment itself."

Augustine.

1. The foundation of his whole system is his doctrine of Original Sin, which regards all mankind as utterly bereft of capacity for good: a "mass of perdition," a "condemned lump." Therefore salvation is absolutely of grace, and without human

Original  
Sin.

co-operation. To this great principle there can be no objection. Nature cannot cast out nature; and the human fall was a fall into utter impotence. But Augustine forgot that the first benefit of redemption was co-extensive with the ruin of man. Perhaps, indeed, he held this; but in a sense of his own. That benefit was in his teaching a wasted and useless influence save to the elect. He taught that the Divine eternal decree determined the exact number of those to whom efficacious grace, which includes an irresistible grace for the beginning and the grace of perseverance for the close, shall be given. For these alone the Redeemer may be said to have died: "Everyone that has been redeemed by the blood of Christ is a man; though not everyone that is a man has been redeemed by the blood of Christ." "The Saviour redeemed the sinners who were to be justified," and "No one perishes for whom the Saviour died."

Predesti-  
nation  
and the  
Call.

2. Some of the difficulties connected with the Gospel Call in this doctrine were summarily disposed of by Augustine, but only through renouncing that principle of an inextinguishable life of regeneration which his followers now hold so firmly. All who hear and receive the Gospel and are baptised receive regenerating grace, and are placed in a state of salvation: this explains the universal offer of the Gospel and the equally universal administration of the sacrament. But to the Elect only is the gift of perseverance imparted, and the objects of the *Donum Perseverantiæ* are known to God alone: this protects the doctrine of the eternal decree. "Those who fall are not to be reckoned in the number of the elect, even as to the time when they lived piously. There are sons of God, not yet such to us but such to God; and there are again some who are called by us sons of God on account of grace temporarily received, but not so by Him." Other difficulties Augustine does not attempt to solve. He has no more to say concerning the hidden decree than that "God divided the light from the darkness; and so ordered the Fall that He might first show what the free will of man could do, and then what His grace could do." Nor has he any solution of the difficulty that the electing grace of God should be connected with sacraments and bound to a system of external ordinances. A thousand years afterwards Calvin arose to confront more boldly these and all

other difficulties : not cramped by the sacramentarian theory which hampered his great predecessor.

IV. During that long interval Predestinarianism, or Augustinianism, passed through many vicissitudes. The Semipelagians asserted an election of believers as foreknown, thus giving a formula which has been ever since found useful ; and the Synod of Orange (A.D. 529) condemned the dogma of predestination to evil or reprobation. In the ninth century Gottschalk carried the doctrine of Augustine to its extreme limits, limits which it was not again to reach until the modern representative of the predestinarian Father arose. His teaching was rejected at Mainz (A.D. 848), but acknowledged at Valence (A.D. 855) : " *Fatemur prædestinationem electorum ad vitam, et prædestinationem impiorum ad mortem,*" a confession, however, in which, rightly understood, all may unite. On the side of Gottschalk was Ratramnus, against him Hinckmar. It may be said that throughout the mediæval discussions of this and kindred subjects the tendency was in a direction opposite to that of predestinarianism. And, moreover, that the ever-growing theory of a kingdom of Christ, under one vicar, predestined to embrace the world, was itself unfavourable to any limitation of the Gospel vocation. The mediæval Church at the worst was in spirit and practice missionary. Universal missions and a partial Call can never rationally co-exist.

V. At the Reformation the doctrine of Election and the Limited Call seemed likely to be in the ascendant everywhere.

1. Zwingli and Calvin united in reviving the Augustinian doctrine of an individual vocation determined by a predestinating decree, but Calvin has given a permanent name to the system, because in fact he gave it a distinguishing character. He laid his foundation deeper than that of his forerunner. Augustine made the Eternal Decree his central point ; Calvin carried it up to the Absolute Being, or Absolute Sovereignty, of God, from which that decree flowed. These are some of his words : *Prædestinationem vocamus æternum Dei decretum, quo apud se constitutum habuit quid de UNOQUOQUE homine fieri vellet. Dico Deum non modo primi hominis casum et in eo posterorum ruinam prævidisse, sed arbitrio quoque suo dispensasse.* " Man falls by the providence of God so ordaining, but he falls through his own

Mediæval

Gottschalk.

Reformation.

Calvin.

wickedness." All is of the absolute, unquestionable, despotic sovereignty of God. If human reason suggests a demur, "Respondendum est: quia voluit!" The decree was Supralapsarian, that is, it included the Fall, which Augustine never asserts formally. It follows from this in the system of Calvin that the external call of the Gospel is an unmeaning ceremonial save as to the elect. The word and the means of grace are to all others "Signa inania:" the manifestations of a "Voluntas signi," which, signifying nothing but "Common Grace," must be distinguished from the hidden "Voluntas beneplaciti" on which the salvation of every man depends. Here is the secret of Predestinarianism, whatever other name it may bear: the secret that links it with Fatalism, with philosophic Determinism, with Pantheism, with the modern notion of Abstract Law or the Absolute Fiat of a Being who is not so much a Person as a Will. Other relations of this creed to theological doctrine, subordinate relations introduced in due course, all find their vanishing point in this Unconditioned and Unconditional Sovereignty, which is the foundation and top-stone of the whole superstructure.

Reformed  
Con-  
fessions.

2. The Reformed Confessions assert this doctrine, though with some variations: variations, however, which introduce qualifying clauses having no real meaning, and may be left to the symbolical Volumes. Some are of a more extreme type, approaching, though not positively expressing, the Supralapsarian theory, that the Fall was included in the decree of God; others are more evidently Infralapsarian, dating the decree as it were this side of the Fall.

Synod of  
Dort.

The Synod of Dort, 1618, in opposition to the Remonstrants, digested the Calvinistic doctrine in a large number of canons, which seem to be based on the latter scheme. It thus speaks concerning the Vocation of the Gospel: "Though all men sinned in Adam and were made guilty of malediction and eternal death, God would have done injury to no one if He had willed to leave the entire human race in sin and the curse, and to condemn it on account of that sin. . . . But that men may be led to faith God mercifully sends the heralds of His most joyful tidings to whom He will and when He will, by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ. . . . That some are gifted with faith in time, and others not, springs from His eternal decree, . . .

according to which He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however hard, and bends them to belief, but in His just judgment leaves the non-elect to the consequences of their own wickedness and obduracy." These Articles, nearly a hundred in number, are generally received by the Predestinarian Churches as a full statement of the Christian Faith. The English version of the same creed is found in the Westminster Confession, drawn up for the purpose of reforming the English Church between 1643 and 1648 : it is a reflection of the Dort Canons, and accepted by the Presbyterians of the British Islands and America. Many of the Reformed Confessions, like that of the English Church, mitigate the dogma of predestination, and use such language as may be without much violence reconciled with Scripture, especially in their reference to the universality and sincerity of the Call. Others of them are more predestinarian than they appear to be : ambiguity of phrase disguising their meaning.

3. Modifications of the Calvinistic creed are as various as the lands which it has penetrated. Calvin himself protested unconsciously against all among his followers who should soften his system of doctrine : "Many so preach election as to deny that any man is reprobated ; but very ignorantly and childishly, since election itself would not stand unless opposed to reprobation." Thus the modern Father of Predestination condemned beforehand the devices of his more generous or less unrelenting successors : rather their device, for all the sophistries of palliation may be regarded as one. In France, towards the middle of the seventeenth century, Amyraldus taught that salvation was provided for all men ; that God elected some to whom was given the necessary grace of repentance and faith ; and that all others are simply left without a special determining influence which none have a right to claim. This useless subterfuge was resorted to in England by Richard Baxter ; and has in more recent times been advocated in Scotland. It is the unacknowledged creed of great numbers who are bound to the general teaching of predestinarianism, but feel constrained to preach the Gospel freely to all : some because the New Testament exhibits that kind of preaching, and they dare not contradict its example ; some because they think that the reprobate are predoomed to reject the Gospel as well as to perish with-

Forms of  
Calvin-  
ism.

Amy-  
raldus.

Baxter.

out atonement; and some because **their ardent charity melts the fetters of their creed.**

Lutheran-  
ism.

VI. The Lutheran doctrine passed through stages of fluctuation.

1. Both Luther and Melancthon were at first predestinarian in their views of the Gospel Call. They taught Determinism or Fatalism almost in the same words as Calvin used; but both gradually modified and finally retracted these views, induced mainly by the impossibility of reconciling them with the serious purpose of God in universally proffering salvation, and with the evangelicalscheme of the means of grace. It may be said generally that the followers of Luther are not of the school of Augustine.

Formu-  
laries.

2. Hence the Lutheran Formularies are not predestinarian. The Formula Concordiæ was the first public document that dealt at large with the subject. The following is a translation of sentences which treat of Election and Vocation: "Predestination or the eternal Divine election pertains only to the good and accepted sons of God, and it is the cause of their salvation. It procures their renewal and disposes of all things which belong to it. . . . This predestination is not to be scrutinised in the secret of the Divine counsel, but is to be sought in the Word of God, which reveals it. The Word of God leads us to Christ. . . . But Christ calls all sinners to Himself, and promises them rest, and seriously wills that all men should come to Him and yield themselves to be aided and saved. . . . The true doctrine of predestination is to be learned from the nature of the Gospel of Christ. There it is plainly taught that God has concluded all under unbelief that He might have mercy on all, and that He wills none to perish, but rather that all should be converted and believe the Gospel. . .

Matt.xxii.  
14.

When it is said that *many are called but few are chosen*, it is not to be understood that God is unwilling that all should be saved; but it indicates the cause of the perdition of the ungodly, which is this, that they either fail altogether to hear the Word of God, rebelliously despising it by closing their ears and hardening their hearts, and in this way hindering the ordinary method of the Holy Spirit, so that He cannot effect His work on them, or that they esteem lightly the word they hear and cast it away from them. Their perishing must be ascribed, not to God and His election, but to their own malignity." Thus the official doctrine

of the Lutheran Church omits the reprobation of the wicked, and makes the predestination of the believer dependent on the foresight of faith and perseverance. The Call of the Gospel it regards as universal, serious, and efficacious: offering sufficient grace to all who hear the Word, whether they accept it or not. As in the Lutheran doctrine of the Eucharist all who partake receive the glorified body of the Lord, some to salvation and others to condemnation, so all who hear the Gospel receive its saving word, some to the saving of their souls, and some to their aggravated doom.

3. The later development of Lutheran teaching has been faithful to these statements, but has expanded them so as to touch some of the pressing difficulties which crowd around the question.

Earlier  
and Later  
Lutheran-  
ism.

(1.) The earlier dogmatic writers laid emphasis on the "*voluntas antecedens*," which is the Divine decree of salvation in Christ expressing His "*voluntas universalis, gratuita et seria*." This counsel when viewed in the light of foreknowledge is translated into a "*voluntas consequens seu specialis*": not as if there were two wills in God; but the one supreme will is determined distributively in regard to the two classes of believers and unbelievers. Hence the universal will may be regarded as rather that of mercy, the special will as rather that of justice. Later Lutheran theologians have preferred to dwell more on the election of a new humanity in Christ into the fellowship of which only those enter who believe: the whole emphasis of election rests on the second race of which the Second Adam is the Head. The special predestination of individuals is only the historical realisation of the eternal purpose of love in Christ.

Earlier  
Distinc-  
tion.

(2.) Again, the first Lutheran doctors explained the absolute universality of the Call by a reference to the three great historical crises when the evangelical appeal went forth without limitation to the nations of the earth: first, when the universal Promise concerning the Seed of the woman, the Serpent-Bruiser, passed out into all the world and down to all posterity; secondly, when the preaching of Noah after the Flood again sent its sound into all the earth to be moulded into universal traditions; and, thirdly, when the worldwide preaching of the Apostles literally went out without restriction: "*quo non venit ἀποστολή εὐαγγελίου*."

Historical  
Calls.

This solution has a fair show of theoretic completeness, and of striking generalisation; but it leaves unsolved the mystery that the posterity of those who rejected this triple testimony are yet without the Gospel, as well as the still profounder mystery that the publication of the world's glad tidings should have been left contingent in any degree whatever on the fidelity of the missionary church. Some more modern speculative theologians have had recourse to other expedients; among which is the notion of a Gospel preached in the intermediate state to those who have either rejected it in this life or insufficiently heard it: a notion which, based on St. Peter's testimony to the Saviour's Missionary Descent into Hades, is capable of almost unlimited expansion and application within the interval down to the Day of Judgment. But this subject belongs rather to Eschatology.

Armi-  
nianism.

VII. The Remonstrants of Holland, or Arminians, endeavoured to introduce into the Reformed Church the Scriptural doctrine. But in vain: the Synod of Dort (1618, 1619) rejected their Remonstrance against a limiting of Divine grace, just as the Council of Trent in the previous century rejected the remonstrance of Protestantism against another and an opposite kind of dishonour done to the grace of God. From that time the doctrine of a Universal Atonement, or of a Saviour provided for the race and for sin universally, with the concomitant doctrine of a free and unreserved offer of grace to all who hear the Word, has been connected with the name of Arminianism. But **this is an injustice** to these doctrines themselves, which have a higher parentage. The Calvinism of modern times was the Augustinianism of the fifth century: it has no higher origin. **It was Augustine who first dared so to interpret Scripture as to attach a limited design to the death of Christ:** the Fathers who preceded him were generally faithful to the catholic Gospel; or, if they erred, it was like Origen, in making the mission of Christ too comprehensive in its benefits. Conversely, Augustinianism may in modern times be called Calvinism; for it has never prevailed outside of the Churches of the Reformed or Calvinistic type: its sporadic existence in the JANSENISM of Rome is hardly an exception. The term Calvinism is however disavowed by some earnest communities which hold its type of doctrine; because they find or

Really  
Primitive  
and  
Catholic.

Jansenism

think they find in Scripture the principles on which Predestinarianism rests. They boldly assume that the teaching of the Word of God is on this subject, as on some others, expressed in opposite and seemingly contradictory terms, which it is not within the range of man's faculties to reconcile. The **antinomy, or paradox, of a determinate decree of election combined with the most universal appeals to human free will,** they regard as the final word of the Bible; and, admitting that the earliest Christians were unconscious of it, they claim for Augustine the distinction of having given it the prominence in his teaching which the Scripture assigns to it. **This is therefore matter of pure exegesis, and the question remains—though it is no question to us—whether or not God has imposed this heavy burden on the human intellect and on Christian faith.** Meanwhile what is unreasonably called Arminianism is the faith of the Eastern and Western Churches representing Ancient Christianity though in its corruption, of Lutheranism, representing the Reformation, of the Church of England throughout the British Empire, and of Methodism in all its branches throughout the world.

The truly  
Catholic  
Doctrine.