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## I. Literary.

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### WILLIAM WALLACE SPENCE.

BY PROF. W. W. MOORE, D. D., LL. D.

NOTWITHSTANDING all that has been said about our age as an era of young men, it is undeniable that much of the world's best work is still done by men who are well advanced in years. The adage, "Old men for counsel, young men for war," while true in general, cannot be taken literally, as many of our most useful men of action are old men. Longfellow, in his *Morituri Salutamus*, recognized this fact in his catalogue of literary achievements by the elderly:

"Cato learned Greek at eighty; Sophocles  
Wrote his grand *Œdipus*, and Simonides  
Bore off the prize of verse from his compeers,  
When each had numbered more than fourscore years,  
And Theophrastus, at fourscore and ten,  
Had but begun his *Characters of Men*;  
Chaucer, at Woodstock with the nightingales,  
At sixty wrote the *Canterbury Tales*;  
Goethe at Weimar, toiling to the last,  
Completed *Faust* when eighty years were past."

Von Moltke, Bismarck, Gladstone, Hannibal Hamlin, Justin Morrill, John Hall, Moses Hoge, William Henry Green, John I. Blair, of New Jersey, and Charles Reid, of Norfolk, are examples of immensely active old age from the recent past, while we still have with us such leaders in public life as Lord Salisbury, such preëminent soldiers as Lord Roberts, such teachers as Pro-

## CALVINISM: A BIBLE STUDY.

BY REV. A. M. FRASER, D. D.

THE majority of Christians are more concerned to know whether a doctrine is taught in the Word of God than they are to know the relations of that doctrine to human philosophy. The object of this article is to produce some of those passages of Scripture which most clearly teach that system of faith known as Calvinism. In order that we may judge satisfactorily whether or not Calvinism is taught in the passages to be cited, we should place before us at the outset a clear statement of what Calvinism is.

The core of Calvinism, considered as a doctrine of grace, is to be found in the historic "five points," namely: total depravity, regeneration, predestination, the perseverance of the saints, and limited atonement.\*

1. It embraces, then, first, *total depravity*. By the expression "total depravity," Calvinists mean to assert their belief that every man is born into the world in a state of sin; that sin affects every part of his being—his body, his intellect, his heart, his will, his conscience and his religious nature; and that sin exists in him to the extent of totally depriving him of the ability of himself to repent of sin, believe in Christ, and love God as he is revealed in the Scriptures. But by total depravity they do not mean to affirm that every man is as bad as he can be. No man on the earth is as bad as he can be. No man is as bad as he will hereafter become if he refuses to accept the salvation which God offers. But every man is born in a condition in which every department of his being is damaged by sin, and so much damaged that he is totally unable of himself to recover. The doctrine of total depravity sets forth that fact.

2. Calvinism embraces also the doctrine of *regeneration*. By the term "regeneration," Calvinists express the conviction that before a sinner who is totally depraved in the sense already defined can repent, believe and obey the gospel, it is necessary that the Holy Spirit shall change his nature and restore to him that power and willingness to do those things which he had lost in the fall.

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\* The five points are mentioned in this order for convenience of treatment here.

3. Calvinism embraces the doctrine of *predestination*. Since none are saved but those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, it must be God alone who selects the subjects of regeneration. The Scriptures declare that such is the case, and, moreover, inform us that the occasion of the making of that selection was before the foundation of the world. This fact is designated *election* and *predestination*.

4. Another of the five cardinal doctrines of Calvinism is known as the "*perseverance of the saints*." When the Holy Spirit has once imparted saving religion to a sinner, that saving religion is so protected by divine grace that it can never again be destroyed or lost. That is what is meant by the expression the "*perseverance of the saints*," and what the Bible calls "*eternal life*." All Christians believe in eternal life. The difference between Calvinists and those who are not Calvinists is that the Calvinists believe in an eternal life which is really eternal, and speak of the perseverance or the preservation of the saints; and those who are not Calvinists believe in an eternal life which is not really eternal, but which may be destroyed by the believer himself in many ways, and so they speak of falling away from a state of grace.

5. The last of the five points is called "*limited atonement*." Inasmuch as the atonement of Christ is not actually applied to all men, but only to some (albeit to an innumerable multitude), and inasmuch as God himself chooses those to whom he does apply it, it is argued that he intended to apply it only to those who are actually saved. This doctrine is known as "*limited atonement*."

Now, it is clearly impracticable in the limits of this article to take each of these five points and trace it separately through the teachings of the Bible. I will endeavor, therefore, to state the points at issue in the form of a single question. When a sinner is converted—when he goes to God in penitence and faith and submission—when he is accepted of God and becomes a child of God, who takes the initiative in all this transaction? Does God make the first approach to the sinner, or does the sinner first approach God? Which one makes the first movement toward the other? Each of the five points is involved in the answer to this question. If the sinner takes the initiative, then he is not totally depraved in the sense in which we use the expression. If the sin-

ner takes the initiative, then it is not necessary for him to be regenerated in order to do that which will result in salvation. On the other hand, if God takes the initiative, then he must select the subjects upon whom he will work these changes, and the particular occasion when he made the selection, whether in time or in eternity, is of small significance, except that God's truth is involved because his word declares that it was before the foundation of the world. Again, if it be God who takes the initiative, imparting spiritual life to those who were devoid of it, then it must be that act to which such passages refer as Phil. i. 6: "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And, once more, if it be God who takes the initiative in the conversion of the sinner, what he does must be the thing he intended to do, and the atonement must have been intended to be limited to those to whom it actually is limited. The question, therefore, which comprehends all the other questions is, Who takes the first step toward the reconciliation between God and the sinner—is it God or is it the sinner? What does the Bible teach as to this question?

Some will be disposed to say in haste, "I do not need to go to the Bible at all to answer that question. I can answer it on the broad principles of justice, and even on the principles which underlie revealed religion. If God be just, surely he will not adopt any such arbitrary method of salvation as that, choosing the subjects of salvation indiscriminately, and without regard to moral character. Of course, he saves the penitent and believing and obedient, and he allows the negligent and profane to be lost." Now, the Calvinist would maintain as stoutly as any one that the people who are saved are the believing and the pious, and that the people who are lost are the careless and the wicked. But the Calvinist goes a little deeper into the question and asks, How came the sinner to have faith and the ability to love and serve God? He believes that the Bible teaches that God's Spirit wrought them. Paul says in the eighth chapter of Romans, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." But he is very careful to tell us to what he was predestinated. He is not predestinated to a life-long security in his sinful practices and then to forgiveness at last. He is predestinated "to be conformed to the image of God's Son." That he shall be a good man, one conformed to the image of Christ, is the thing to which he is

predestinated. The same apostle says to the Thessalonians: "He hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation *through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*" (2 Thess. ii. 13.) He also says to the Ephesians, "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph. i. 4.)

Another will doubtless say of our query, "I do not need to examine the Scriptures to answer that question. I can answer it from my own experience of conversion. I was just as conscious of making a voluntary approach to God as I ever have been of anything. I remember the day and the hour and the place and every circumstance. It is one of the most vivid recollections of my life. I saw my guilt and danger. I saw that Christ was able and willing to save me, and I decided that I would accept the salvation he was offering." No intelligent Calvinist would deny these assertions or question the value of a religious experience like that. None would more earnestly contend for the importance of just the sort of spontaneous choice of Christ, and his salvation and service that has been described. But the Calvinist would go back of that conscious experience and ask, How did it happen that a sinner could come into such a frame of mind? How did that desire and resolution to be a Christian originate in a sinful soul? And he believes that the answer to these questions is that they are the result of operations of the divine Spirit, of which the convert himself was not conscious, and of which, from the nature of the case, he could not be conscious. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." (John iii. 8.)

Now, with these two misconceptions removed, let us go at once to the Scriptures with our question, When a sinner is converted does he make the first movement toward God, or does God make the first movement toward him? The first witness whom I would summon to testify in the case is the Apostle Paul. In 1 Corinthians ii. 14 you will find this language, "The natural man." I pause to call attention to the fact that this is just the subject about which we wish information. It is "the natural man," the man in a state of nature, the man as he is born into the world—man as he is before his nature has been changed or touched by the Spirit of God. What will Paul tell us about the

natural man? What can he do about religion? What can he do with spiritual things? Paul says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Can there be a statement of the Calvinistic position any clearer or stronger than that? There is nothing in the Confession of Faith to surpass it. The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. The things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the natural man. The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, because the things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned; that is, they are discerned through the Spirit. We really might rest the whole case upon this one text. If the teaching of Calvinism were a crime against the laws of the State, and Paul were on trial before a jury for that offence, the prosecuting attorney could claim his conviction upon that one sentence. If Paul were on trial before a Romish inquisition for teaching Calvinism, as many a good man has been tried, he would be sent to the stake on that one quotation from his writings.

If you will turn next to the eighth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and to the seventh, eighth and ninth verses, you will find another passage equally decisive. There Paul says, "The carnal mind." And I pause once more to emphasize the fact that he has designated the very object about which we are seeking information. It is "the carnal mind," the fleshly mind, the natural mind, the natural man. In both this passage and the one last cited there is a sharp contrast between what is spiritual or wrought by the Spirit, and what is carnal or natural or unchanged by the Spirit. Now what does Paul say here of "the carnal mind"? Is the carnal mind in a condition to be affected by the revelation of God's love, to appreciate that love and reciprocate it? He says, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Here let me turn aside to remark that this statement of Paul helps to explain the great hostility to Calvinism which has always existed in the world. Calvinism contends for the sovereignty of God, and the carnal mind is enmity against God. I once heard a splendid address on "Calvinism in History," in which the speaker began by saying that there were two things about Calvinism that always amazed him—one was the hard things said about it,

and the other was the great results it had achieved in history. And when you take these two facts in their connection they are amazing upon any other hypothesis than the one mentioned, namely, that Calvinism enthrones God in the universe and the carnal mind hates God. There is no other institution that has been so beneficent in its effect on the human race, and at the same time so much hated. If the French people arise in indignation and destroy the Bastille, that symbol of tyranny and oppression, when the hundredth anniversary of the event occurs they assemble the nations of the earth to witness the celebration of it by the costliest and most splendid exposition the world has ever seen. On the four hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America the world laid all its resources under contribution to do honor to the discoverer. But this institution called Calvinism has dethroned tyranny, destroyed oppression, broken the shackles of slaves, promoted learning, fostered beneficence, advanced art, created a civilization, sung the song of freedom in the ears of all the world, founded imperial republics, overspread the earth with peace and good-will, established a brotherhood of humanity, fought the battles of faith, led the hosts that extend Messiah's kingdom, and what honor is accorded it in return? Strange as it may seem, the world has exhausted its vocabulary of abuse upon it, and foamed at the mouth because there were no more hard words it could use. Calvinism exalts God, and the carnal mind is enmity against God. Analyze the hostility to the Christian religion in the world, and you will find that it is largely an enmity to Calvinistic Christianity.

But to return to our passage in Romans, passing from the seventh to the eighth verse, we read, "So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Some one will immediately exclaim, "Oh, that puts a new face on the whole passage. All that that means is, that it is impossible for any one, even a Christian, to be perfect in this life, for evidently 'in the flesh' means nothing but 'in this life.'" But if he will only wait patiently till he has read the ninth verse he will see how untenable that position is. He goes on to say, "But ye are *not in the flesh*." Yet they evidently were alive. So that he is not drawing a contrast between living and dead Christians, but between converted and unconverted men. It is of the unconverted that he says they are "enmity against God"; that they cannot be subject to the law of God and cannot please him.

Look at the subject from another point of view. The question before us amounts to this, How do Christians become Christians? Paul answers the question in this form in another place, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but *God gave the increase.*" (1 Cor. iii. 6.) Why is it that you have humbled yourself before the mighty hand of God, and meekly accepted salvation as a free gift at his hands, while your neighbor continues to defy him and outrage his mercy, or to be indifferent to him? Paul answers, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) "No man can say that *Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*" (1 Cor. xii. 3.)

Here is a mighty church, with wonderful organization, splendid gifts, great achievements. It is gradually filling the earth. Whence did it come? Is it simply a phase of human evolution, or is there something supernatural back of it? Paul tells us, "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations; but it is *the same God which worketh all in all.*" (1 Cor. xii. 4, 5, 6.)

Equally clear-cut statements of the germinal truth of Calvinism are to be found in nearly all of Paul's epistles. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.) "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God." (2 Cor. v. 17, 18.) The same general statement is made in Galatians vi. 15. Or take this passage, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are *his workmanship*, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. ii. 4-10.) To the Philippians he uses this language: "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended



of Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 12.) So far from having initiated the transaction which resulted in his salvation, Paul declares that he has never yet been able to understand why he should have been taken hold of ("apprehended") by Christ. To Titus, Paul wrote, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus iii. 5.)

One witness to a fact, if he be entirely satisfactory, and especially if there is no conflicting testimony, is sufficient to convince us of that fact. Paul is satisfactory because his teachings are controlled by the Spirit of God. But while Paul has left us more numerous statements of this truth than the other inspired men, others have taught it just as clearly and forcibly as he. John the Baptist said, "A man can receive nothing, except it be *given him from heaven.*" (John iii. 27.) James said, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." (James i. 18.) Peter, who sometimes found it hard to understand the profound reasoning of Paul, nevertheless declared on the day of Pentecost that the crucifixion of Christ was by a definite predestination, while at the same time he charged the perpetrators of the deed with responsibility for it. (Acts ii. 23.) Through Ezekiel, God says to Israel, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.) It was from the same point of view that David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." (Ps. li. 10.) John, the apostle, said believers are "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John i. 13.)

The Master himself said, "Without me ye can do nothing." (John xv. 5.) He also said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." (John vi. 44.)

Now, I cannot get my consent to close without stating a cardinal truth which Calvinists hold in common with those Christians who are not Calvinists. Some one thus states a precious sentiment, "I love my own part of the church more than I love any other part of it; but I love the whole church more than I love any part." Dear as are the things which distinguish us from other Christians, dearer still are the things we hold in common with them. Great as are the differences between ourselves and

other Christians, vastly greater are the differences between the whole church and those who refuse to have Christ to rule over them. One cardinal truth in which all evangelical Christians concur is that salvation is freely and candidly offered and pledged to every sinner who will repent, believe and obey the gospel, and that he who refuses to do these things is responsible for his failure to do them. If you ask me how I reconcile this statement with the main contention of the Calvinists, I reply that I for one do not attempt to reconcile them. I find both of them revealed in the Bible. I find there no effort to reconcile them. I accept both, and say with reference to all that is incomprehensible, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever." Not only are both of these truths revealed in the Bible; in many instances they are advanced by the same man, and sometimes occur in the same passage. Side by side they stand together without embarrassment or any apparent consciousness of conflict. I have quoted more from Paul than any other sacred writer, yet when an apparently dying man appealed to Paul to know the way of life, and there was but short time to explain that way, Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." When Nicodemus could not understand the doctrine of the new birth as Jesus explained it to him, Jesus readily turned to the other aspect of truth. We feel, as we read the story, that Christ was talking to him with the simplicity and familiarity he would use toward a little child who sat upon his knee, and whose hair he stroked as he spoke. "Great master in Israel, can you not understand these deep things? Then let me tell you the truth in another way. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' You can understand that, Nicodemus."

It is a profound satisfaction to look forward to the time when all mists that enshroud the truth shall be removed and our vision shall be clearer, and all our differences shall disappear. We shall stand side by side with our Arminian friends, and we shall see eye to eye. In our ascriptions of praise to God for his salvation, we shall use the same words and in the same sense:

"Not unto us, O Lord! not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."