

ARTICLE IX.

HAVE THE QUAKERS PREVAILED?

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR CHARLES A. BRIGGS, D.D.,
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

IN the seventeenth century, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, so far as I have been able to determine, were unanimous in the opinion that the heathen and their infants were doomed to everlasting fire. The Baptists pressed the doctrine of the salvation of their unbaptized children as the children of believers; but they did not teach the salvation of the heathen and their babes. It was first the Latitudinarians of the Church of England, and then the so-called Quakers, or Friends, as they called themselves, who are entitled to the credit of opening up the doctrine of the universal salvation of children, and the partial salvation of the heathen. This was made possible by the great stress they laid upon the Light of nature, and "the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John i. 9).

I. CULVERWELL AND TUCKNEY.

Nathaniel Culverwell published his book entitled "Light of Nature," in 1652, in which he advocated the salvation of some of the heathen. He was immediately attacked by Anthony Tuckney, the chairman of the committee that composed the Westminster Shorter Catechism, in a sermon at Cambridge, July 4, 1652. This was published in 1654 under the title "None but Christ," with an Appendix discussing the salvation of "(1) heathen; (2)

those of the Old World; the Jews and others before Christ, and (3) such as die infants and idiots, etc., now under the gospel."

Culverwell states his views cautiously as follows:—

"Yet notwithstanding their censure is too harsh and rigid, who as if they were judges of eternal life and death, damne *Plato* and *Aristotle* without any question, without any delay at all; and do as confidently pronounce that they are in hell, as if they saw them flaming there. Whereas the infinite goodnesse and wisdom of God might for ought we know finde out several ways of saving such by the pleases of his love in Jesus Christ; he *might* make a *Socrates* a branch of the true Vine, and *might* graffe *Plato* and *Aristotle* into the fruitful olive; for it was in his power, if he pleased, to reveal Christ unto them, and to infuse faith into them after an extraordinary manner; though indeed the Scripture does not afford our charity any sufficient ground to believe that he did; nor doth it warrant us peremptorily to conclude the contrary. *Secreta Deo*, it does not much concern us to know what became of them; let us then forbear our censure, and leave them to their competent Judge.

"Yet I am farre from the minde of those patrons of Universal Grace, that make all men in an equal propinquity to salvation, whether Jews, or Pagans, or Christians, which is nothing but dight and gilded Pelagianisme, whilst it makes grace as extensive and Catholick, a principle of as full latitude as nature is, and resolves all the difference into created powers and faculties. This makes the barren places of the world in as good a condition as the Garden of God, as the inclosure of the Church. It puts a Philosopher in as good an estate as an Apostle; for if the *remedium salutiferum* be equally applied to all by God himself, and happiness depends only upon men's regulating and composing of their faculties; how then comes a Christian to be neerer to the Kingdome of Heaven than an Indian? is there no advantage by the light of the Gospel shining among men with healing under its wings? Surely though the free grace of God may possibly pick and choose an heathen sometimes, yet certainly he does there more frequently pour his goodnesse into the soul where he lets it streame out more clearly and conspicuously in external manifestations. 'Tis an evident signe that God intends more salvation there, where he affords more means of salvation; if then God do choose and call an Heathen, 'tis not by universal, but by distinguishing grace."¹

To this argument Tuckney replies as follows:—

"1. It cannot rationally be said, that there was an equall invincibility of ignorance in those *Heathens*, to that which is in *Infants* and *distracted*

¹Light of Nature, by Nathaniel Culverwell (London, 1652), pp. 208-210.

persons, which want the use of reason, which they had; and therefore might have made more use of it than they did; and therefore their sin was more wilful, and so made them more obnoxious to *God's* wrath, which therefore these *Infants*, etc., as less guilty, may in reason better escape.

"2. How God worketh in, or dealeth with elect *Infants*, which dye in their infancy (for anything that I have found) the *Scripture* speaks not so much, or so evidently, as for me (or it may be for any) to make any clear or firm determination of it. But yet so much as that we have thence ground to believe, that they being in the *Covenant*, they have the benefit of it (Acts iii. 25; Gen. xvii. 7).

"Whether God may not work and act faith in them then, (as he made *John Baptist* leap in the womb) which *Beza*, and others of our *Divines* deny, and others are not unwilling to grant, I dare not peremptorily determine. Yet this I may say, that he acteth in the souls of believers *in articulo mortis*, when some of them are as little able to put forth an act of reason, as they were *in articulo natiuitatis*. But the *Scripture* (for anything that I know) speaks not of this, and therefore I forbear to speak anything of it.

"Only (as I said) it giveth us ground to believe, that they being in the *Covenant* may be so wrapt up in it, as also to be wrapt up in the *bundle of life*, and did it give us but as good hopes of the *Heathens* (of whom it rather speaks very sadly) as it doth of such *Infants*, I should be as forward as any to persuade myself and others, that they were in a hopeful condition.

"For such infants, suppose they have not actual faith, so as to exert it, yet they may have it infused in the habit, they are born in the *Church*, and in the *Covenant*, and what the faith of the *Church*, and of their *believing parents* may avail them, I do not now particularly enquire into! . .

"And whereas mention was made of an *anticipating and preventing grace of God*, by which without faith he might be saved; I conceive and believe that it is abundant *anticipating and preventing grace*, when either in *Him* or in *any God* beginneth and worketh faith to lay hold on *Christ*. But such a preventing grace as to accept us for *Christ's sake without faith in Christ*, the *Scripture* mentioneth not, is a new notion of a *young Divine*, which without better proof must not command our belief, or impose upon our credulity."¹

Tuckney represents the unanimous opinion of the divines that constituted the Westminster Assembly in this rejection of the heathen and their infants from the benefits of redemption. The children of believers were the children of the covenant, and were therefore, entitled to

¹None but Christ, pp. 134-137.

baptism as the heirs of the grace of God. But the children of the heathen were with their parents outside the bonds of the covenant, and altogether beyond the realm of grace. Even within the bonds of the covenant, the election of grace must prevail. And therefore it was not certain how many of the infants of believers belonged to the elect. I have recently given extracts¹ from leading Westminster divines showing their unanimous belief in the damnation of the heathen and their babes, I have cited Stephen Marshall,² the great preacher; William Twisse,³ the prolocutor of the Assembly; Cornelius Burgess,⁴ the accessor or vice-president; Robert Baylie⁵ and Samuel Rutherford,⁶ two of the Scottish commissioners; Anthony Burgess⁷ and William Carter,⁸ who expressly teach the damnation of infants and the heathen. No one has ever been able to point to a single Westminster divine who did not teach this doctrine. Dr. Krauth has recently given extracts from representative Calvinistic divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and shown that it was the unusual orthodox position in the Calvinistic churches that the infants not embraced in the covenant were sent to the pains of hell.⁹ Accordingly we find in the Westminster Confession the following statement of doctrine:—

III. "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word."

IV. "Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved :

¹Whither, p. 121 et seq. ²Defence of Infant Baptism (1646), pp. 87, 88.

³Riches of God's Love (1653), p. 135.

⁴Baptismal Regeneration of Elect Infants (1629), pp. 21, 33.

⁵Catechesis Elenctica Errorum (1654), p. 36.

⁶Trial and Triumph of Faith (1645), p. 36. ⁷Vindiciae Legis (1647), pp. 80, 81.

⁸Covenant of God with Abraham (1654), pp. 101, 102.

⁹C. P. Krauth, *Infant Baptism and Infant Salvation* (Phila. 1874).

much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may is very pernicious, and to be detested."¹

The Larger Catechism has nothing to say about elect infants, but teaches that the heathen cannot be saved.

"They who having never heard the gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the laws of that religion which they profess; neither is there salvation in any other, but in Christ alone, who is the Saviour only of his body the church."²

II. DR. SHEDD'S THEORIES.

Dr. Shedd has recently interpreted these sections of the Westminster Confession and Larger Catechism as teaching the universal salvation of infants dying in infancy and the salvation of elect heathen.

1. Dr. Shedd says:—

"That this is the correct understanding of the Westminster Standards is corroborated by the fact that the Calvinism of the time held that God has his elect among the heathen. The Second Helvetic Confession (i. 7), teaches it. Zanchius, whose treatise on 'Predestination' is of the strictest type, asserts it. Witsius and others suggest that the grace of God in election is wide and far reaching. The elder Calvinists held with the strictest rigor that no man is saved outside of the circle of election and regeneration, but they did not make that circle to be the small, narrow, insignificant circumference which their opponents charge upon them. And there is no reason to believe that the Westminster Assembly differed from the Calvinism of the time."³

This statement contains two false premises, and therefore a false conclusion. The chief portion of the major premise is that the Second Helvetic Confession teaches that God has his elect among the heathen. But the Second Helvetic Confession teaches no such doctrine. It simply teaches the common Calvinistic doctrine that the grace of God is free and is not confined to external means.

¹Confession of Faith, Chap. x. sect. 3. 4. ²The Larger Catechism, Q. 60.

³Presbyterian and Reformed Review, p. 22.

Dr. Shedd infers from this statement that this Confession teaches that some heathen are elect. But this inference is not sustained by the language of the Confession, or the history of opinion at the time when that Confession was framed. Dr. Shedd does not give us the passage of Zanchius in which he asserts the doctrine of elect heathen. Witsius was a divine of a later generation. The "others" are not mentioned. Dr. Shedd's interpretation of the Second Helvetic Confession makes us doubt whether he really has any others to produce. His major premise has not the slightest foundation in fact. His minor premise—"There is no reason to believe that the Westminster Assembly differed from the Calvinism of the time," may seem plausible to those who have not studied the Westminster divines, but any one who has studied them knows that there are good reasons for believing that the divines of that Assembly differed in many important respects from the Swiss and Dutch Calvinists of the time. The conclusion drawn from these foreign divines that the Westminster divines believed that there were elect heathen is therefore without foundation. There is no evidence that the Continental divines of the seventeenth century believed in elect heathen. The evidence is all the other way.¹

2. Dr. Shedd presents the following interpretation of the Westminster statement:—

"We contend that the Confession so understands the Word of God, in its declaration that there are some 'elect persons [other than infants] who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.' To refer the 'incapacity' here spoken of to that of idiots and insane persons, is an example of the unnatural exegesis of the Standards to which we have alluded. This explanation is objectionable for two reasons. First, idiots and maniacs are not moral agents, and therefore as such are neither damnable nor salvable. They would be required to be

¹There are at hand more than eight hundred distinct writings of the Westminster divines. It would be more to the purpose if Dr. Shedd could present some evidence from these writings in favor of his interpretation. We are sure that he cannot find any such evidence.

made rational and sane, before they could be classed with the rest of mankind. It is utterly improbable that the Assembly took into account this very small number of individuals respecting whose destiny so little is known. It would be like taking into account abortions and untimely births. Secondly, these 'elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word,' are contrasted in the immediate context with 'others not elected,' who 'although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, never truly come to Christ;' that is to say, they are contrasted with rational and sane adults in evangelized regions. But idiots and maniacs could not be put into such a contrast. The 'incapacity' therefore must be that of circumstances, not of mental faculty. A man in the heart of unevangelized Africa is incapable of hearing the written Word, in the sense that a man in New York is incapable of hearing the roar of London."¹

It is a very strange doctrine of Dr. Shedd that "idiots and maniacs are not moral agents, and therefore as such neither damnable nor salvable." The Calvinism of the seventeenth century held no such doctrine. And it is not common among modern divines. The Westminster divines did not agree with Dr. Shedd that abortions and untimely births should not be taken into account in the work of redemption. It was just these idiots and maniacs that the Westminster divines had in mind in the term "other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word" as we see from the words of Anthony Tuckney quoted above. Tuckney speaks of "*infants and distracted persons* which want the use of reason" and contrasts such elect ones with the heathen. These few words of Tuckney, who had so much to do with the construction of the Westminster Standards, are worth a thousand pages of theorizing and speculation as to what the Westminster divines must have thought and must have designed to say.

3. Dr. Shedd endeavors to prove that the Westminster divines meant that infants dying in infancy were elected as a class.

"We have already seen that the *proposed* omission of preterition, so as

¹Presbyterian and Reformed Review, p. 20.

to leave only election in the case of adults, would make their election universal, and save the whole class without exception. The *actual* omission of it by the Assembly in the case of dying infants has the same effect. It is morally certain that if the Assembly had intended to discriminate between elect and non-elect infants, as they do between elect and non-elect adults, they would have taken pains to do so, and would have inserted a corresponding clause concerning infant preterition to indicate it." ¹

Here again the major premise is at fault. Dr. Shedd has not shown that "the proposed omission of preterition so as to leave only election in the case of adults, would make their election universal, and save the whole class without exception." He admits that the Thirty-nine Articles, the First Helvetic Confession, and the Heidelberg Catechism do not specify preterition, but only imply it in their specification of election (pp. 7, 8). The omission of preterition in these creeds does not therefore make election universal, and if it does not in these creeds, the omission will not make election universal in the Westminster Confession. Election is, and must be, particular and individual. Classical election is now and ever has been an Arminian doctrine, whether we think of classes of babes or classes of adults. Dr. Shedd's minor premise is correct. There is no specification of the reprobation of infants dying in infancy. But this omission of specification of the preterition of infants dying in infancy no more implies the election of such infants as a class, than the omission of specification of the preterition of adults in the Thirty-nine Articles implies the election of adults as a class. The divine election is an election of individuals. And it is just the elaboration of this individual election and preterition by the Westminster divines that makes the third chapter of the Confession distasteful to the men of our times. "Their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished." ² Westminster Confession iii. 4 is a hard

¹Presbyterian and Reformed Review, p. 23. ²Westminster Confession, iii. 4.

doctrine. Such language is not suited to the classical election of infants dying in infancy, making up a very considerable portion of the human race from the beginning of the world.

All these arguments constructed in order to prove that the Westminster Standards teach the modern doctrine of elect heathen and the universal salvation of infants dying in infancy, are arguments that shatter themselves on the hard rocks of the words of the Westminster divines themselves. Not one Westminster divine has been found who teaches that there are elect heathen, or that all infants dying in infancy are saved. The grammatical and historical interpretation prevail over recent dogmatic interpretations which are nothing more than the injection of modern theories into ancient creeds.

III. KEITH AND THE BOSTON MINISTERS.

The Quakers had a great deal to do with the spreading of the doctrine of the salvation of the heathen and their babes. Thus William Penn says :—

“That though God was more beneficent to the Jew (especially to the Christian) than the Gentile, and consequently that as the Jew had those assistances the Gentile had not, so the Christian Dispensation is the Perfection of the Divine Light, Life and Immortality, more weakly seen by Jew and Gentile; yet also, that God did communicate to the Gentiles such a measure of his divine Light and Spirit, as diligently adhered to, and faithfully followed, was sufficient to their salvation, from sin here, and consequently from Wrath to come: And that they themselves did so believe, teach, live and die, in perfect hope and full assurance of eternal recompense, in a state of Immortality.”¹

The views of the Quakers as to the redemption of the heathen and their babes came into conflict with the Presbyterian and Congregational orthodoxy in a controversy between George Keith and the Boston ministers in 1689 and 1690. George Keith was first brought up for the Presbyterian ministry in Scotland, then about 1664 adopted the views of the Friends, and was imprisoned for

¹ *The Christian Quaker* (1674), Vol. i. p. 85.

his faith. He labored in America as a Friend from 1685 to 1690. He was the father of a schism of the Friends, called the Keithites or Christian Quakers. He afterwards united with the Church of England, and became one of the chief instruments in founding the Episcopal Church in America. While still a Friend he entered into controversy with the Presbyterians of Maryland and Virginia and with the Congregationalists of New England. His chief controversial work was published at Philadelphia in 1689, entitled "The Presbyterian and Independent Visible Churches in New England and elsewhere brought to the Test." This was answered by the Boston ministers in a book entitled "The Principles of the Protestant Religion maintained. And Churches of New England in the Profession and Exercise thereof defended against the Calumnies of one George Keith, a Quaker, in a Book lately published at Pennsylvania to undermine them both" (Boston, 1690). This book was signed by James Allen, Joshua Moody, Samuel Willard, and Cotton Mather.¹ This controversy brings into prominence several questions now in hot debate in the Presbyterian and Congregational churches. It is a mirror that will reveal to the disputants on which side they now stand, whether with the Quaker of 1689, or the orthodox Presbyterian and Congregational platform as stated by the Boston ministers in 1690.

(1) THE SALVATION OF INFANTS.

Keith, addressing the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, says:—

"Where now shall these men find any place in Scripture to prove, that there are any reprobate infants? or that any infants dying in infancy go to hell and perish eternally, only for Adam's sin, although that sin was

¹These were all men of fame, the most eminent American ministers of their time. Samuel Willard was pastor of the South Church, Boston, and Vice-Principal of Harvard College, the author of the most important work on Dogmatic Theology in America up to his date. His *body of Divinity* was published in 1726.

forgiven to Adam, and thousands more equally guilty by their own confession?" (P. 84.)

The Boston ministers reply :—

" Here we are challenged to prove that there are reprobate infants, or such as go to hell for Adam's sin only, to which we reply, 1. He himself grants (p. 88) that men generally (and why not universally?) are children of wrath by nature; and he will not deny but that by nature is intended that natural condition they were born into the world in (and then it must needs concern infants as well as others) and this too is by Adam's sin transferred upon them, and his corrupt image communicated to them. 2. That hence children in their natural birth are under a sentence of condemnation to die, is a necessary consequence. 3. That God hath nowhere revealed to us that he hath accepted of the satisfaction of Christ for all that die in their infancy; and where there is no revelation there is no ground for faith. 4. That there is merit enough for damnation in them, else it would be unjust that they should be under condemnation. 5. That this sentence hath been actually executed upon some infants (Rom. v. 14), they never sinned actually, and yet they died, and it was the same death spoken of ver. 12. If therefore the text which some of ours use (1 Cor. vii. 14) should not prove it, it follows not that no other can: and yet we suppose there is thus much in that too, viz., that till parents do openly profess the gospel and submit to it, i. e. as long as they abide in their gentillism, their children were also unclean, and so apparently lying under guilt and liable to eternal death. And then he chargeth some of our church covenant, for glorying that none of their children were reprobates while infants; we declare it to be a slander: we never affixed election to a *visible* relation to the Church of Christ" (p. 78 *et seq.*).

These four representative ministers, the most eminent in America at this time, endeavor to prove that the children of unbelievers that die in infancy are sent to hell. They accept the challenge of the Quaker to produce scriptural evidence, and they strive to present such evidence. It is still more significant that they are unwilling to take the position that all children of believers who die in infancy are saved. They charge Keith with slandering them in his statement that they gloried that none of their children were reprobates. They assert that they never affixed election to a visible relation to the church of Christ. They held that God elects some of

the children of believers as he elects some of the hearers of the gospel. They held to elect infants of believers. As Burgess taught the baptismal regeneration of elect infants and held that the non-elect were not regenerated even if they had been baptized; they held, with the Westminster Confession, that "elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth" (x. 3). The Boston ministers in this argument represented the unanimous opinion of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches of their time. No one has ever produced a Congregational or Presbyterian minister of this period who did not believe in the damnation of infants.

The significance of this discussion is that Keith challenges the Presbyterian and Congregational churches on this point, and that the Boston ministers here reply, in the name of orthodox Protestantism, and claim that only the elect infants of believers who are in the covenant are saved, and that all others dying in infancy are lost in hell. Keith stood well-nigh alone in 1689. The Boston ministers would find themselves alone if they could come forth into our times.

(2) THE SALVATION OF THE HEATHEN.

Keith also endeavors to prove the salvation of some of the heathen :--

"But if these men, who own that said Confession of Faith [The Westminster Confession] enquire, whether all those honest Gentiles who lived in the world or do now live in the world, who have not had Christ crucified, outwardly preached unto them, but were diligent to frame their lives according to the light that was in them, died in a state of salvation? I say yea, they did: and this I may the rather say, according to their own doctrine. For what if they had not the perfect knowledge and faith of Christ crucified, when they lived? Yet they might have it at their death, to wit, in the passing through the valley of the shadow of death, according to Ps. xxiii. 4" (p. 114).

The Boston ministers reply :—

“That there are any elect among pagans who never had the gospel offered them, is not only without scripture warrant, but against its testimony, as hath been again and again made evident” (p. 92).

Keith stands over against the Presbyterian and Congregational churches in maintaining that God has his elect among the heathen. The Boston ministers claim that it has been shown again and again that there are no elect among pagans. Modern Presbyterians have gone over to Keith's position.

The Boston ministers further say :—

“What he saith (p. 86) that all have an opportunity or possibility to be converted and become the children of God, is ambiguous: if the word possibility be exegetical of the former, viz., opportunity, it is nonsense, for these two are *Dispartes*: if he intends them disjunctively we deny not a possibility, for all mankind are salvable; but for an opportunity we renounce that, for where the means of salvation are not, there is no opportunity. But what is all this to the purpose? Or what doth it make against the reprobation of infants?” (P. 80.)

Here the Boston ministers clearly teach that the heathen and their infants are all reprobates. They have had no opportunity of salvation and therefore cannot be saved. The modern church goes with Keith against the church of the seventeenth century.

(3) THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

Keith says :—

“Now this is plainly revealed and declared in the Scriptures, that the condemnation is not simply that Adam sinned, or his posterity in, and with him, but that light is come into the world, and men love darkness more than this light: And as by the offence of one, to wit, the first Adam, judgment is come upon all to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, to wit, Christ, the second Adam, the free gift is come upon all to justification of life. And though men generally are by nature, children of wrath (if it should be granted or allowed, that by nature, signifieth their natural condition as they are born into the world) yet by the great mercy, grace and favor of God; they all have an opportunity or possibility to be converted and become the children of God” (p. 85).

“And therefore none shall finally perish, or be lost, for that first sin, according to Scripture, but for their actual disobedience here in this world, and their final unbelief and impenitency. For as concerning the

judgment and punishment of the first sin, it was immediately inflicted after the fall, to wit, the death of all in Adam. But Christ, the second Adam, by his death, for all that died in Adam, doth freely give unto all his free gift, that cometh upon all unto justification of Life; and thus the plaster is as broad as the sore, and the medicine as universal as the disease; and it is not simply the sin or disease, but the refusing and rejecting the medicine and physic that is the cause of man's final destruction" (p. 89).

Such language was rare in the seventeenth century, but it is familiar to us in these days.

To this, the Boston ministers reply:—

"The case stands plainly thus. In the first covenant we stand condemned for the breach of the law, either as Adam's sin is ours by imputation, or as we have actually broken the law. Where the gospel comes, Christ is offered, a way is discovered to life by Him. Now this is the proper gospel condemnation, that men despise him and will not follow this light; and this is added to the former: they were *before* condemned by the law, and now the *gospel* condemns them too" (p. 80).

"But the knack is, *they died in Adam, and Christ by his death for all that died in Adam hath discharged all of that imputation*, which is a perfectly Arminian principle, and hath been enough confuted by all that have written against them. That therefore he concludes that *none do suffer final destruction but for rejecting the physician*, makes the condition of pagans better than that of Christians for these are certain to escape destruction, being incapable of rejecting the physician who is never offered to them, whereas millions of those as reject him perish for it. The gospel then opens a door to man's undoing, which else he had been out of danger of, if Christ had but died for us and never told us of it" (p. 82).

It is interesting to observe that the Boston ministers not only reject the view of Keith, which is a favorite view at present, as a perfectly Arminian principle; but they also shew that it makes the condition of the heathen safer than the condition of men living in Christian lands; an argument which is equally valid against the universal salvation of dying infants.

IV. PROFESSOR SIMSON AND HIS TIMES.

The controversy between Keith and the Boston ministers shows us what was the state of the question, and what was the orthodox Presbyterian and Congregational

doctrine at the close of the seventeenth century. In the eighteenth century there was a great change in the theological world. After the Revolution had given liberty to the non-conformists in England, had established the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, and had secured religious liberty in the American colonies, it soon became manifest that there were Latitudinarian elements in Presbyterian and Congregational circles as well as among Episcopalians and Quakers. The debate over the Light of nature, and the office of the human Reason in the Christian religion, the extent of the Atonement, the right of subscription to creeds and other like questions, went on in Presbyterian and Congregational circles, and it was not long until great changes took place.

It would be interesting to trace these changes, but we have not the space at present. It will be sufficient for our purpose if we use the case of Professor Simson of Glasgow, as a landmark. Professor Simson was a leading representative of the Broad-churchmen of Scotland. He was charged with heresy, and his case was before the ecclesiastical courts for many years. In 1717 he was warned by the General Assembly. In 1725-26 he was again under trial, and was partially sacrificed for the peace of the church. Some of the charges against him were, his views as to the heathen and infants, as follows:—

“That by the light of nature, and works of Creation and Providence, including Tradition, God hath given an obscure, objective revelation unto all men, of his being reconcilable to sinners, and that the *heathen* may know there is a remedy for sin provided, which may be called an implicate or obscure revelation of the Gospel; that it is probable; that none are excluded from the benefits of the remedy of sin, provided by God, and published twice to the world, except those, who by their actual

used with seriousness, sincerity and faith of being heard, God hath promised to bless with success; and that the going about these means in the foresaid manner, is not above the reach of our natural ability and power. . . . That it is more than probable, that all unbaptized infants dying in infancy are saved, and that it is manifest, if God should deny his grace to all, or any of the children of infidels, he would deal more severely with them, than he did with fallen angels."

Thomas Ridgley, in his "Body of Divinity," consisting of lectures on the Westminster Larger Catechism, published in 1731-33, taught the damnation of infants and the heathen. He was unwilling to go so far as to teach the certainty of the salvation of the infants of believers that died in infancy. He tries, however, to mitigate the sufferings of lost infants. "The condemnation of infants, who have no other guilt but that of original sin, will be more tolerable than that of the heathen, inasmuch as they had no natural capacities of doing good or evil." ²

Isaac Watts in 1740 in his "Ruin and Recovery of Mankind" argued against the universal salvation of infants, and taught that the infants of the wicked were annihilated. ³

Dr. Toplady, a Calvinistic divine of the Church of England, later in the century, makes a very decided advance:—

"If Christ died only for them that believe, or in whom faith is wrought; it follows that faith is an exceeding great and precious gift."

In a note he adds:—

"No objection can hence arise against the salvation of such as die in infancy (all of whom are undoubtedly saved); nor yet against the salvation of God's elect among the heathens, Mahomedans and others. The

But the prevailing view in Presbyterian circles throughout the century was that the children of the wicked dying in infancy were lost. This is the testimony of Dr. Anderson of Glasgow, in his essay introductory to Logan's "Words of Comfort for Parents Bereaved of Little Children." He testifies that in the first decade of the eighteenth century—

"it was with hesitancy and bated breath and amid suspicions of their soundness in the faith, that a few voices were heard suggesting the *possibility* that all who die in infancy are saved."

In the second decade of the century—

"there were found a few lifting up their voices in protest and advocacy that it was not only *possible*, but *probable*, that all who died in infancy, having been guilty of no actual sin—no rejection of Him who was appointed the world's Redeemer, were saved" (pp. xx-xxiv).

He then goes on to speak of a later date when some proclaimed the *certainty* of the salvation of all dying in infancy, and were met by the censure that they were wise above what is written.

V. DICKINSON AND HIS ASSOCIATES.

In the American colonies, Presbyterians and Congregationalists were divided into the Old Side and the New Side. These divisions, however, were more on practical questions than on doctrinal issues. The questions of subscription to creeds, regeneration, and religious experience, were, however, in hot dispute, and churches were divided by the controversies. The leader of the New Side in the Presbyterian Church was Jonathan Dickinson, pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Elizabethtown, N. J., and the first president of the College of New Jersey. In 1741 he published his "True Scripture Doctrine concerning some Important Points of Christian Faith," discussing the five points of Calvinism, according to the Synod of Dort, in five discourses. In these discourses there are some important modifications of the Calvinism of Dort and Westminster. They give us another landmark by which to

test Presbyterian doctrine. Dickinson opens up the doctrine of infant salvation.

“It may be further urged against this proposition ‘That it dooms multitudes of poor infants to hell, who never committed any actual sin, and is therefore a doctrine so cruel and unmerciful, as to be unworthy of God.’

“To this I answer, that greatest modesty becomes us in drawing any conclusions on this subject. We have indeed the highest encouragement to dedicate our children to Christ, since he has told us, *of such is the kingdom of heaven*; and the strongest reason for hope as to the happiness of those deceased infants, who have been thus dedicated to him. But God has not been pleased to reveal to us, how far he will extend his uncovenanted mercy, to others that die in infancy.—As, on the one hand, I do not know that the scripture anywhere assures us, that they shall all be saved. So, on the other hand, we have not (that I know of), any evidence, from scripture or the nature of things, that any of these will eternally perish.—All those that die in infancy, may (for aught we know), belong to the election of grace; and be predestinated to the adoption of children. They may, in methods to us unknown, have the benefits of Christ’s redemption applied to them; and thereby be made heirs of eternal glory. They are (it is true), naturally under the guilt and pollution of original sin. But they may, notwithstanding this, for anything that appears to the contrary, be renewed by the gracious influences of the Spirit of God; and thereby be made meet for eternal life. It therefore concerns us, without any bold and presumptuous conclusions, to leave them in the hands of that God, whose *tender mercies are over all his works.*”¹¹

In this passage Jonathan Dickinson departs from the older Calvinism by teaching that God has his elect even beyond the circle of the children of believers. He is not able to assert that all infants dying in infancy will be saved. But he is unwilling to say, on the other hand, that any of those dying in infancy are lost. He claims that the Scriptures do not decide, and he leaves them “in the hands of that God, *whose tender mercies are over all his works.*”

The theory by which Dickinson is able to look for the

In 1748 a posthumous work appeared entitled "The Second Vindication of God's Sovereign Free Grace." Herein Dickinson, replying to his adversary, Mr. Beach, says:—

"Yet it is certainly true if God never designed and will therefore never permit any but what are of the *elect to die in infancy*. If so (and it may be so for aught I know) then all that die in infancy will undoubtedly be saved, without any prejudice to the doctrine of perseverance."

In the former passage he said: "All those that die in infancy may (for aught we know) belong to the election of grace." Here he puts it in another form, and thinks that it may be, for aught he knows, that God will not permit any but what are of the elect to die in infancy. Dickinson could hold this theory because of the emphasis that he laid upon the doctrine of Regeneration. Regeneration to him takes the place of the Effectual Calling of the Westminster divines. And this he separates from Baptism in a way that would have shocked Burgess and many other Westminster divines, who believed in the baptismal regeneration of elect infants. He even goes so far as to separate regeneration from the word of God in a way that the Westminster divines would have regarded as dangerous. It is this stress upon the doctrine of regeneration as an act of divine efficiency that enabled him to conceive of the regeneration of infants apart from the means of grace.

It is clear from these passages that Dickinson does not go as far as Simson. He thinks that the salvation of infants beyond the bounds of Christian privileges is possible—there are no positive arguments against it, but he is not ready to assert it as a fact.

He does not go so far as this in his view of the heathen world. He says, in reply to Mr. Beach,—

much as believe the Being of a God) with many more such like barbarous savages, have all of them *grace* sufficient for their eternal salvation" (p. 81).

He argues in the strongest terms that the race had its one probation in Adam.

"It has been universally received by the *Protestant* churches that *Adam* was appointed by God, in the great instance of his probation to stand or fall for his *Posterity*, as well as himself: that had he stood, they had stood in him. But he having fallen, they have fallen in him, and his guilt and corruption descend to all his natural posterity. There is a *Harmony* of their confession on this Head: as I think might be easily made appear. Nor is there one Exception that I know of" (p. 69).

He then goes on to argue against the sufficiency of common grace to salvation.

"The question here between you and me, is this: Whether God has universally and indifferently given to all men *Grace sufficient* for their eternal Salvation; or whether we can obtain eternal Life, by virtue of our *Improvement* of those aids of *Divine Grace*, which are given to mankind in *general*, at least under the Gospel, without other *special* and *distinguishing* Influences of the *Spirit* of God?—This you hold in the *Affirmative*; I in the *Negative*.—The question is not about the *sufficiency* of *external* means under the Gospel, consider'd in their place and order; but about *inherent Grace*, or internal Help of the Spirit, whether all men in common have what is *sufficient to Salvation*?" (P. 71.)

Jonathan Dickinson represents the broader Calvinism of the American Presbyterian Church. It would be difficult to find many others at that time who were so generous in their Calvinism as he. Jonathan Edwards is much narrower. In 1758 his treatise on "Original Sin" was published, in which he takes ground for the damnation of infants in the following plain language:—

"It may not be improper here to add something (by way of supplement to this chapter, in which we have had occasion to say so much about the *imputation* of Adam's sin) concerning the opinions of *two divines*, of no inconsiderable note among the dissenters in England, relating to a *partial imputation* of Adam's first sin.

One of them supposes that this sin, though truly *imputed* to infants, so that thereby they are exposed to a proper *punishment*, yet is not imputed to them in such a *degree*, as that upon this account they should be

liable to *eternal* punishment, as Adam himself was, but only to *temporal death, or annihilation*. Adam himself, the immediate actor, being made infinitely *more guilty* by it, than his posterity, on which I would observe, that to suppose, God imputes not *all* the guilt of Adam's sin, but only some *little part* of it, relieves nothing but one's imagination. To think of poor little *infants* bearing such torments for Adam's sin, as they sometimes do in this world, and these torments ending in death and annihilation, may sit easier on the imagination, than to conceive of their suffering eternal misery for it. But it does not at all relieve one's *reason*. There is no rule of reason that can be supposed to lie against imputing a sin in the *whole* of it, which was committed by one, to another who did not personally commit it, but what will also lie against its being so imputed and punished in *part*. For all the reasons (if there are any) lie against the *imputation*; not the *quantity* or *degree* of what is imputed. . . .

The *other* divine thinks there is truly an imputation of Adam's sin, so that *infants* cannot be looked upon as *innocent* creatures; yet seems to think it *not agreeable* to the perfections of God, to make the state of infants in another world *worse* than a state of *non-existence*. But this to me appears plainly a *giving up* that grand point of the *imputation* of Adam's sin, both in whole and in part. For it supposes it to be not right, for God to bring any *evil* on a child of Adam, which is innocent as to personal sin, without *paying for it*, or balancing it with *good*; so that still the state of the child shall be as *good*, as could be demanded in *justice*, in a case of mere *innocence*. Which plainly supposes that the child is not exposed to any proper *punishment* at all, or is not all in *debt* to divine justice, on the account of Adam's sin."¹

Nathaniel Emmons also held to the theory of the damnation of non-elect infants. He says:— "From all the light we can find in Scripture on this subject, it seems to be the most probable opinion that He renews only some of those who die soon after they become morally depraved and guilty." He seems to think that if any died before that time they were annihilated.² The younger Edwards would not admit that there were any elect among the heathen.³

These theologians represent the theology of the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of the eighteenth century in America. I have never seen an extract from an American Calvinistic divine of that century who be-

¹Works of President Edwards, Vol. ii. pp. 494, 495.

²Works (1842), Vol. iv. pp. 510, 511. ³Works (1842), Vol. ii. p. 465.

lieved in the salvation of any of the heathen, or would go any further than Jonathan Dickinson in the doctrine of the salvation of infants.

VI. THE NEW DOCTRINES.

With the beginning of the nineteenth century theology in America began to move rapidly forwards, and great conflicts were the result during the first half of the century between the Old School, so-called, and the New School. But beneath these discussions still greater movements were taking place that are now showing themselves. The intercourse and debates between the several denominations had great influence in modifying the Calvinism of the Congregational and Presbyterian churches.

The divines of the early decades of the century were cautious in their statements, but in the third decade the ministry took bolder positions. One of the earliest statements relating to the salvation of the heathen and infants was by Dr. James P. Wilson of Philadelphia in 1827. He takes the following position with reference to infants dying in infancy:—

“Since indisposition to holiness is a universal character of our nature; and infants inherit disease and death, the wages of sin; there must exist some connection between us and our first parents, whereby we are justly introduced into the world, in his image and lapsed state, without our choice. This doctrine is plainly asserted in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and elsewhere; nevertheless it does not follow, that any dying in infancy are lost; since their salvation by Christ is more than possible.”¹

Dr. Wilson also says with reference to the salvation of the heathen:—

“How far therefore the abominations of the heathen can be excused

served the doctrine of the unceremonious damnation of the heathen; they ought to allow this exception when required, either at licensure or ordination. The difficulty lies in the answer to Question 60 of the larger catechism. The correct answer to be presented to it, must be in the negative, for it is certainly true, that no obedience of ours to any law can save us. The assembly's answer in denying salvation to be in any other, but Christ, is also true. But so far as it does, though indirectly, affirm, that faith is required of those who never have heard the evidence, it is neither supported by the Scriptures, nor by reason" (pp. 101, 102).

"The greater portion of mankind has not yet had the offer of Christ, but they pass through their state of trial, and are to be judged. Must they be all swept off to perdition, for not believing that which it has been impossible for them to believe? Neither revelation, nor reason, unless we are greatly mistaken, affirms this" (p. 106).

Here Dr. Wilson takes exception to the statement of the Larger Catechism in terms that anticipate the discussions of recent times.

Dr. Lyman Beecher in 1828 in the *Spirit of the Pilgrims* wrote a series of articles to show that the future punishment of infants was not a doctrine of Calvinism. He evidently did not know of the writings of his predecessors in Boston in 1690, or of the writings of the Westminster divines on this subject. His article is simply a landmark, showing that it had now become the well-nigh universal belief that all infants dying in infancy were saved.

Dr. Archibald Alexander also seems to have held this same opinion at about the same time. But the earliest published testimony of it so far as we know, is in his letter to Bishop Mead, in which he says:—

"As infants, according to the creed of all reformed churches, are infected with original sin, they cannot, without regeneration, be qualified for the happiness of heaven. Children dying in infancy, must therefore be regenerated without the instrumentality of the Word, and so on."

Dr. Alexander here advances beyond Dickinson and Wilson, and teaches new doctrine that reverses the position of the Boston ministers of 1690. Dickinson thought that the Scriptures left the question undetermined whether God would regenerate all dying in infancy or not. It might be that he would not permit any but the elect to die in infancy. Alexander hopes that infants are saved because "the Holy Scriptures have not informed us that any of the human family dying in infancy will be lost." The Boston ministers, on the other hand, held "that God hath nowhere revealed to us that he hath accepted the Satisfaction of Christ for all that die in infancy and where there is no revelation there is no ground for faith." The old Puritans demanded scriptural authority for an article of faith, but Dr. Alexander follows his hopes and his reason where the Scriptures are not in his way. This shows a total change of attitude.

Dr. Charles Hodge takes a longer step in advance. He says: "If without personal participation in the sin of Adam, all men are subject to death, may we not hope that, without personal acceptance of the righteousness of Christ, all who die in infancy are saved?"¹ This again reverses the argument of the Boston ministers, who say that infants "in their natural birth are under a sentence of condemnation to dye," because of Adam's sin transferred upon them and his corruption communicated to them, and that, "till their parents do openly profess the gospel and submit to it, as long as they abide in their gentilism, their children were also unclean, and so apparently lying under guilt and liable to eternal death." It is just their participation in Adam's sin that involves them

there is either subjection to death without personal participation in Adam's sin, or salvation without personal participation in the righteousness of Christ. Dr. Hodge's new Calvinism as set forth in this and in other kindred statements, as Dr. Landis has clearly shown, subverts the Reformed doctrine of Original Sin and the Protestant doctrine of Justification by Faith.¹

Dr. Charles Hodge in another passage expressly exempts infants from the exercise of faith.

"Faith is the condition of justification. That is, so far as adults are concerned, God does not impute the righteousness of Christ to the sinner, until and unless, he (through grace) receives and rests on Christ alone for salvation."²

This new doctrine reaches its climax in Dr. A. A. Hodge, who teaches that "in the justification, therefore, of that majority of the elect which die in infancy, personal faith does not mediate."³ And thus we have the doctrine of the universal salvation of infants elaborated at the expense of the vital principle of justification by faith only, and the Augustinian doctrine of original sin.

It is interesting to note the various ways of explaining the phrase "elect infants dying in infancy." Dr. Shedd interprets this as a classical election of all infants dying in infancy. Dr. Patton tells us that the —

"Confession teaches that only the elect will be saved; that those of the elect who are capable of faith are saved by faith; that those of the elect, such as elect infants dying in infancy, who are incapable of faith are saved without faith. The antithesis is not between elect and non-elect infants, but between elect infants that die in infancy and elect infants that do not die in infancy."⁴

This is very remarkable exegesis. The Confession nowhere teaches that there is salvation of those incapable of faith without faith. No sound Calvinist has ever taught such doctrine. It subverts the doctrine of Justification by

¹Landis, *Doctrine of Original Sin* (1884), pp. 12 et seq., 254 et seq.

²*Systematic Theology*, Vol. iii. p. 118. ³*Princeton Review* (1878), p. 315.

⁴The Revision of the Confession of Faith, Pf. p. 7.

faith only. It is the doctrine of the Antinomians of the seventeenth century that was expressly repudiated by Westminster divines in many passages of their works. It is one of the Antinomian features of the new Calvinism of the school of Dr. Hodge. There is nothing in the context of the tenth chapter to suggest that there is an antithesis between elect infants dying in infancy and elect infants that do not die in infancy. And even if there were such an antithesis, the implication would still remain that as there are elect infants who do not die in infancy and non-elect infants who do not die in infancy, so the same two classes of elect and non-elect are among those who die in infancy. The so-called "legal principle" that requires us to find our materials for the construction of a document within the four corners of the document is not a sound principle for exegesis of historical documents, and is not recognized by historical critics. But if it were a sound principle, those who remind historians that "a great deal of most valuable historical research becomes useless so far as the question of confessional interpretation is concerned," should also bear in mind that a great deal of valuable dogmatic theorizing and speculation is useless in the interpretation of what is plainly stated between the two covers of the book.

That eminent Baptist theologian, Dr. A. H. Strong, is unable to recognize any salvation of infants without faith, and accordingly he takes the position that, —

"Since there is no evidence that children dying in infancy are regenerated prior to death, either with or without the use of external means, it seems most probable that the work of regeneration may be performed by the Spirit in connection with the infant soul's first view of Christ in the other world."¹

dent that the doctrine of infant salvation will never be settled until we not only explain the regeneration of the infant, but also the infant's appropriation of Christ by faith, and the order of salvation in the infant's conscious experience.

Dr. Shedd teaches a doctrine of grace, in connection with his doctrine of elect heathen, which is novel among Calvinistic divines. He says:—

“There is not a transgressor on earth, in Christendom or heathendom, who is not treated by his Maker *better than he deserves*; who does not experience some degree of the divine compassion..... This is mercy to the souls of men universally, and ought to move them to repent of sin and forsake it..... *Common Grace is great and undeserving mercy to a sinner*, and would save him if he did not resist and frustrate it..... Scripture denies that God is under obligation to follow up His defeated common grace with His irresistible special Grace.”¹

Dr. Shedd says that common grace would save men if they did not resist and frustrate it. The Westminster Confession teaches no such doctrine. There is nothing effectual in common grace. There is no saving power in it according to the older Calvinism, but only preparatory virtue leading up to saving grace. Dr. Dickinson expressly denies that “God has universally and indifferently given to all men grace sufficient for their eternal salvation.”

The statement that God's common grace has been “defeated” is a strange one for a Calvinist to make. Can the sinner defeat God's purpose of redemption? If he can defeat common grace, why not also special grace?

There is in this doctrine of Dr. Shedd a tendency toward the modern doctrine that this life is a probation for all men, which is in remarkable accord with the Quaker Keith, but is far beyond the mild statement of Culverwell in his “Light of Nature.” Dr. Morris, however, attains the height of this departure from the Older Calvinism in his theory that—

“In some way or other, and to some extent or other, God is actually

¹Presbyterian and Reformed Review, pp. 10-12.

trying and testing every human being who has reached moral consciousness as to the great alternatives of right or wrong, duty or pleasure, obedience or disloyalty to Him," and that "the multitudes whom the Great Swiss reformer anticipated seeing in the celestial life may, by the large grace of God bringing them to repentance and obedience during their earthly pilgrimage, possibly attain with us to that beatific home."¹

Dr. Morris is nearer to George Keith at this point than to the great Swiss reformer.

It will be clear from this sketch of the history of opinion that the views of the Boston ministers of 1690 and of the Westminster divines of 1646, on the matters discussed in this paper, have been abandoned by the Presbyterian and Congregational churches of our day, and that the views advocated by the Quakers Penn and Keith have prevailed, and are now the common doctrines in our churches.

¹Is there Salvation after death? pp. 166, 190.