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AN

ESSAY

IN WHICH

THE DOCTRINE

OF A

POSITIVE DIVINE EFFICIENCY

EXCITING THE WILL OF MEN TO SIN,

As held by some modern Writers,

IS

CANDIDLY DISCUSSED,

AND SHEWN TO BE

1. UNPHILOSOPHICAL. 2. INCONSISTENT WITH THE PLAIN AND OBVIOUS SENSE OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND OF COURSE A DEPARTURE FROM THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL; AND
3. A NOVEL DOCTRINE, UTTERLY REPUGNANT TO THE FAITH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ALL PAST AGES.

BY THOMAS ANDROS, A. M.

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Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.....ST. PAUL.
Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.....VIRGIL.

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CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

Stating some circumstances, which drew the author reluctantly into the discussion, - - - - -	Page 5
--	-----------

SECTION I.

The question stated, "Does God operate directly on the heart of fallen man, and excite him by an inward positive influence, to yield to the motives and allurements to sin, which, in the course of divine providence, are presented to his view?" -	13
--	----

SECTION II.

The standard by which this, and all other questions in theology and morals, are to be ultimately decided, i. e. the obvious sense of the word of God, as determined by the common laws of exposition, - - - - -	24
---	----

SECTION III.

Two positions, that may be adjudged as the main pillars of the system of direct efficiency, considered: viz. 1. That motive in no possible case can be the cause of volition. 2. That those passages of Scripture which speak of a divine agency in hardening the hearts of men, &c. are to be understood as perfectly parallel to, and as expressive of, a direct influence, as those which ascribe the production of holy exercises to God, - - -	52
---	----

SECTION IV.

In which it is shewn, that the theory under examination is contrary to analogy and sound philosophy, so far as any regard is due to the most sober and cautious reasonings of this kind, -	51
--	----

SECTION V.

Texts of Scripture, which solemnly warn us not to ascribe to God, our being inwardly excited and moved to impiety and wickedness, - - - - -	58
---	----

SECTION VI.

Texts which positively declare, that moral evil does not come from God, - - - - -	65
---	----

SECTION VII.

The language of the Scriptures, in which all holiness in saints is ascribed to the agency of the Holy Spirit, necessarily excludes the idea of a direct inward divine efficiency in the production of sinful exercises, - - - - -	69
---	----

SECTION VIII.

The power and influence which the Scriptures ascribe to Satan in the production of moral evil, utterly irreconcilable, upon just and sober principles of interpretation, to this modern notion of divine efficiency, - - - - -	
--	--

SECTION IX.

What is said in the Scriptures of God's giving up sinners to their own hearts' lusts, and suffering them to walk in their own ways, inconsistent with the idea of divine efficiency, under consideration, - - - - -	90
---	----

SECTION X.

This notion of divine efficiency, a novel doctrine, unknown to the Church of God in all past ages, - - - - -	95
--	----

CONCLUSION, - - - - -	104
-----------------------	-----

APPENDIX.

Containing a Discourse on Col. ii, 8. "Beware lest any man spoil you through Philosophy." - - - - -	115
---	-----

INTRODUCTION.

STATING SOME CIRCUMSTANCES, WHICH DREW THE
AUTHOR, RELUCTANTLY, INTO THE DISCUSSION.

It is well known to the Christian public, that New England, for more than half a century, has been famed for discussing the plainest evangelical subjects, in a deep, abstruse, metaphysical way; so that simple, honest, and well informed christians, have oft been perplexed and confounded with incomprehensible mysteries and difficulties, where none seem to have been apprehended by the sacred writers. In various instances, new philosophical theories have been invented, and attempted to be grafted on the simple and precious truths of the Gospel, as very important, if not essential to the system; and, by elaborate discussions, and excessive refinements, the humble spirit

and life-giving power of these truths, have been, as by a chemical fire, carried off by sublimation. Hence a New England divine, in Europe, had well nigh become a term of reproach. In a sarcastic tone, they have been spoken of as acute divines, with whom, in the metaphysical palestra, few would presume to contend. One, who it seems did not condemn their speculations without examination, and who was willing to allow them credit for every real improvement in elucidating evangelical subjects, thus writes from London:

“The religious people of Old England look upon me as a New England divine, which is to them in general no recommendation.”—Again he says, “I mean not to offend, but it appears to me, that the pride of reasoning and confident speculation is as much the danger of religious people in North America, as antinomian laxity and selfishness, is of those in Old England. Religion came from God in full perfection, and can never be improved, though it may be spoiled by philosophy: and the nearer our sentiments and expressions accord to those of the holy prophets and apostles, the purer will be our religion. The pride of self-wisdom is as congenial to our fallen nature, and as opposite to christianity, as any other kind of selfishness; “for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”*

Far be it from me to deny that respect and honor, which is due to many of the writings of

* Theolog. Mag. for Dec. 1798. p. 421.

New England divines. I have been as much attached to these, as any mere human compositions. I have read them with much delight, and, as I hope, real profit. The nature of original sin; the nature of holiness; the highly important distinction between natural and moral ability; the nature of the atonement; the sinfulness and inefficacy of unregenerate doings, &c. these subjects were never more justly stated, and clearly illustrated, than by American divines. But not satisfied with refining the pure gold, and dissipating some mists that render the rays of eternal truth less effulgent and powerful, some have extended their speculations on various points so far, as to savor of an awful intrusion into the unsearchable depths of the ways of God, and thereby to endanger the spiritual interests of men. Of the truth of this fact, many have had a painful sense, who, still, as to any public testimony against it, have held their peace; hoping that these things would never be attempted to be imposed upon our belief, as important articles of divinity.

Dr. Benedict, of Plainfield, Con. one of the most excellent of men, my preceptor in divinity, and other sciences; to whose friendship I am greatly indebted; a profound scholar and great textuary, assured me, he would not have written some things to be found in the works of a few New England divines, for his right arm; alluding particularly to the point which is the main topic of this Essay.

Dr. Griffin, in the dedication of his Park-Street Lectures, has hinted at some of the speculations of this new divinity.

“In these discourses,” says he, “you will find no reasonings on points foreign to godliness—no theories about the origin of sin,—no challenge for a conditional consent to be damned,—no perplexing speculations about taste and exercise, but the fundamental and practical truths of our holy religion,” &c.—

To those, to which there is here an allusion, we might add many more, quite as foreign to godliness. But among them all, the point to be examined in the following sheets holds a distinguished place. But had even this been suggested only as a mere philosophical problem, and not magnified into an important article of Christianity, it might have been left to rest undisturbed in the works of philosophers, as a mere *lusus* of their speculating temper.—More than twenty years ago, I remember to have discussed this point with that able and judicious divine, the Rev. Samuel Niles, of Abington. The ground that I then attempted to maintain, was, that waving all questions regarding its influence on the character of the Deity or moral agency of man, such an immediate divine efficiency in the excitement of men to sin, was false in fact.—No doubt but his peculiar views of the subject descended with him to the grave. And nothing has yet occurred to shake, but much to confirm my belief. But what I have to remark is, that in this great and good

man, whom all who knew him must venerate and love, I never discovered the least disposition to consider it any way essential to correct views of Christian doctrine and piety. But the views of some in regard to this subject, seem now to be widely different. It may possibly originate from an unhappy jealous sensibility in my own temper, but certainly so it appears to be. This new theory sometimes seems disposed to arrogate to itself the glory of some wonderful improvements in divinity, and to assign those a low place in the church of God, as to wisdom and discernment, who do not apprehend the truth and importance of this novel speculation; for novel it most certainly is. Well do I remember the time, when Dr. E.'s Sermon on Phil. ii, 12, was handed about in manuscript; and it was then said, "the world was not prepared to receive the new divinity it contained; it is not yet time to publish it." But this is not all. Had I not a strong conviction, that this principle, connected with some other speculations equally unfavorable to piety, have had a powerful influence to prejudice multitudes in this country against the Gospel; that it has aided the cause of infidelity, and especially that of Arminianism and Unitarianism, and that of Sectarians in general. Had I never heard candidates perplexed with this question before ordaining councils; had it never been affirmed in my hearing, that this notion of divine agency, had now become the line of demarcation between the friends of sound doctrine, and those who march under

the banner of its foes; that those who question the truth of the sentiment, are pleading the cause of the ungodly, and arming them against the government, universal and particular providence of God; that a denial of it comes but little short of Atheism; at least it can rise but little above Manicheism; that the most distinguished and pious divines, and theological institutions, who do not make it a prominent feature in their instructions, are very lax in their principles,—nay, had it never been suggested, that the silence of great theologians, who do not adopt the theory, is owing to this, that they know it cannot be refuted, whether tested in the light of Philosophy or Scripture; had I never heard any such suggestions, I might have remained silent. And indeed if I had, still I might have deemed it my duty to have held my peace; for neither do any other divines, or divinity-schools, need my poor efforts to vindicate their principles or practice. But I am called to speak in self-defence. A few thoughts on the subject, in a small volume of Sermons lately published under my name, have brought on me the frowns of some I greatly esteem. I ought, if possible, to satisfy them, that I have a Scripture warrant for what I have advanced. Nor is this all: the theological atmosphere in which my lot is cast, is of such a nature, as possibly to generate the thought in a preacher's own charge, that if he shrinks back from this grand point of philosophy, he can hardly be fit to instruct in any other doctrine.

In this state of things, I have, with great reluctance, been induced to obtrude my thoughts on the Christian public; and I appeal to the Church of New England, whether the cause I advocate is that of Christian truth and simplicity, or not. To speak with the independence and confidence of a christian, who has the Bible for his guide, I claim as my right. But if I speak in an angry or disrespectful manner of any man, let me bear the full weight of the censure I may deserve. This is my motto, "But speaking the truth in love." Eph. iv, 15. And this is my comment

"Cursed be the line, how well soe'er it flow,
That tends to make one worthy man my foe."

Being confident I have nothing in view, but the advancement of pure evangelical truth and piety, I commit what I have written to the blessing of that great Being, who is able, and will overrule all things for his own glory.

If there be any, who have so completely surrendered up their understanding, and even the Bible, to human systems, as to deem it, if not a kind of sacrilege, yet proof sufficient, that he, who presumes to question any of the positions of the great and admired authors of them, must be wrong if not impious:—persons of this description may think it refutation enough to recollect the name of a favorite writer; we do not expect they will be our readers. But of all others who may condescend to examine what we have advanced, we

would not only solicit their patience and candor, and an interest in their prayers, but the forgiveness of all they may discover amiss, in matter or manner.

THE AUTHOR.

Berkley, Nov. 23, 1819.

SECTION I.

THE QUESTION STATED.

TIME and labor are utterly lost in any discussion, if we fail of that perspicuity which is necessary to give the reader a clear apprehension of the point in debate. If, through mistake, his eye is fixed upon one position, while our object is to establish another, we may greatly injure him, by seeming to prove, what in fact is false, or to disprove, what in our own judgment is of high importance to be believed; or we may excite his disgust towards us as opposers of a doctrine, which rests on the fullest evidence, and so impair his christian fellowship with us, and put it out of our power to be useful to him in future. Had this been duly attended to,—had persons in their religious conferences clearly perceived each other's meaning, and the point aimed at, a great deal of useless contention, heat and bitterness, would have been avoided.

If any one should condescend to read what follows in these sheets, I beseech him, therefore, here to pause and reflect, till he has obtained a clear idea of the question before us, if such a thing be possible from my manner of expression. It is too common a thing, for persons to connect with one question a

great many others, and to consider a writer as denying all those, if he denies this one.—As a caution against a measure fraught with so much injustice, we would here mention a number of things, which are to be laid out of the present discussion, and which it is not our design to prove or disprove.

The point then to be examined is, not, whether God has, according to his own infinitely wise counsel, predetermined all events, that come to pass; even all the volitions, actions, and characters of his creatures, whether good or evil. This is conceded. It is not whether there be two independent, eternal, beings; the one, the author of all good, the other, the author of all evil. A person must be hardly pressed for matter of cavil, to charge this upon our system.

The question is not, whether, the eternal purpose of God, ensuring the existence of moral evil, reflects any dishonor upon the divine character, or lessens the demerit of sin. Were this the matter in debate we should take the negative.

Nor is it, whether God has power, consistently with the moral freedom of man, and the grounds of praise and blame in regard to his actions, to produce evil volitions in his heart, by an immediate, inward positive efficiency. For here it is conceded, that, if the holy exercises, which God produces in saints be morally good and praiseworthy, we see not why the evil exercises of sinners would not be criminal, though produced in the same way.

Nor is the question about the manner, how moral evil first gained existence in the mind of angels once perfectly pure and blessed; nor how moral corruption, or sinful desires, first entered into the heart of the primitive parents of our race, who were originally formed in a state of perfect moral rectitude.

The question assumes human nature in its state of deep and awful depravity, and may be thus expressed, “Does God operate directly on the heart of fallen man, and excite him by an inward positive

influence, to yield to the motives and allurements to sin, which, in the course of divine Providence, are presented to his view?"

The advocates of this doctrine, affirm with us, (at least in words,) that God does not bring into existence the evil exercises or volitions of men without the use of motives, or means adapted; but, then, if we would not misunderstand them, it must carefully be observed, that in their view, no motives, means, instruments, or second causes, have any power to produce volition, without this inward divine influence. The mind can only look at these motives; it cannot move a step to choose them, until this choice is excited by a positive direct influence on the heart.

The justice of this remark will appear from a few citations. "It hence appeareth, that there is an utter impropriety in saying that the mind is governed and determined by motive." West on Moral Agency. p. 61.

"But God knew that no external means would be sufficient of themselves to form his (Pharaoh's) moral character. He determined to operate on his heart, itself, and cause him to put forth certain evil exercises in the view of certain external motives." Dr. Emmons's Ser. on Exod. ix, 16.

"As these and all other methods to account for the fall of Adam, by the instrumentality of second causes, are insufficient to remove the difficulty, it seems necessary to have recourse to divine agency, and to suppose that God wrought in Adam. Satan placed certain motives before his mind, which by a divine agency took hold of his heart, and led him into sin." Ibid. Ser. on Phil. ii, 12.

"An object presented to the mind is a motive to choose, but it is the immediate agency of God alone that can cause the mind to act when the motive is presented."—"Not that God does not work by means, but that means in themselves have no efficacy." W. R. Weeks's Nine Sermons, pp. 32, 42.

What do these writers intend by "means in themselves?" Is this the idea, that means independently of God have no energy? If so, who will contend with them? Do they suppose that any man, who believes the Bible, would advance such an idea, as that God ever made any creature to exist and act independently of himself? Or do they mean that God has never imparted to created agents, instruments or second causes, an influence, energy, or activity, sufficient, under his upholding and all-controlling Providence, to produce any effect, or at least any moral effect; or that it is impossible he should give or impart any such energy or activity? In this case I would ask them, how they came by this knowledge, and how they prove the truth of such a speculation?

In regard to Adam's choice of the forbidden fruit, according to Dr. Emmons, God knew that no external means would be sufficient. But how did the Dr. discover that God knew this in Adam's or Pharoah's case? In relation to Adam's case it seems by God's own declaration, that he knew the contrary; for he says to Satan, a dependent agent, an Instrument, "Because thou hast done this," and denounces a curse upon him for it, and says not one word about working by his own immediate agency on Adam's heart itself.

Do not the Scriptures undertake to account for the fall of Adam by the instrumentality of second causes?

And does not Dr. Emmons reflect equally upon the inspired writers, as on others, when he says, "These and all other methods to account for it by the instrumentality of second causes are insufficient.—It seems necessary to suppose God wrought in Adam," i. e. by a direct influence on his heart he moved him to his first act of rebellion. But how came the Dr. to discover a thing which none of the inspired writers ever advanced?

To me at least, there is something awfully presumptuous and unbecoming creatures, who are of

yesterday and know nothing, to talk of the divine agency and the inefficacy of means, as these writers do.—Are not the ways of God in this matter an unfathomable deep, a mystery which extends infinitely beyond the reach of our capacities? Do we know exactly what energies God may impart to second causes? How far he works by instruments, or his own immediate agency. Can we comprehend the manner of the dependence of rational agents and other creatures, on the Creator? Do we know how he holds them all under his absolute control, and brings all their energies, passions, and actions, to unite in one grand point, the accomplishment of his own benevolent purposes?

Here I take it God is incomprehensible. Christ says, even in regard to a blade of corn, "It grows up thou knowest not how." And says Solomon, "As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child; even so thou knowest not the works of God, who maketh all." It appears, Mr. Weeks is rather too fast, when he so roundly and confidently asserts, that it is not motive, or any second causes, but the immediate agency of God alone, that can cause the mind to act.

When these writers speak of God's working by means, there is great danger of their readers being misguided. According to their theory, means are absolutely nothing. Motives are no means of moving rational creatures to act, and it is absurd for them to talk of them as means; for a means utterly destitute of efficacy and adaptedness, is no means at all. According to Mr. Weeks, a motive is no more the cause of the mind's choice in any case, than the waving of my hand is the cause of the sun's rising. And who would not say, I talked absurdly, if I were to say that the waving of my hand was a means of the sun's rising this morning? And if it is the immediate agency of God alone that causes the mind to act, then motive is as absurdly said to be a means

here, as the waving my hand in the other case. To understand the scheme aright, we must then conceive of it as affirming, that God uses means to execute his decrees, and yet he uses no means at all. To give you my views as differing from this theory. Suppose God creates an hand of mere lifeless clay. This hand he moves and causes to appear to do many things, but after all, there is absolutely no energy, or efficiency in it, to do any thing. God by an immediate influence or agency does all. This if I can comprehend it, is the notion of means entertained by the theory we oppose. To come up to our views, you have to give life, intelligence, the power of choice, activity to this hand, if it be an accountable agent, or if it be an irrational object, you must give to it its appropriate energy, whatever it be, attraction, magnetism, electricity, instinct, &c. and then though it be equally dependent and under the absolute direction and control of the great-First Cause, yet nothing further is necessary to its producing its proper effects, but the preservation of these energies, and affording them opportunity and excitement to action.

To guard against evasion of the real question, and perplexing the subject with what is quite foreign to it, we add another remark. The advocates of this new theory pretend, that they do not undertake to decide, in what manner it is, God operates in the production of moral evil. The *modus operandi* they concede is incomprehensible.

But is not this really denying, or evading the matter in debate? The manner in which they assert God moves the wills of sinners to choose evil, is the substance of all, about which there is any question.

It is a plain declaration of the Scriptures, that God hardens the heart, blinds the mind, sends strong delusion, &c. But this is to produce moral evil, and this fact we readily admit. This therefore is not the point at issue. But it lies in this. One side affirm that no energy imparted to second causes, no arrangement, or direction and application of mo-

tives or instruments, is sufficient to move the minds of wicked men to choose evil, or to excite in them unholy volitions. Over and above all power and efficiency, that can be given to second causes and instruments, a direct positive divine influence must be applied. The other side believe, that under the infinitely wise and powerful arrangement and disposal of second causes and instruments, the effect is produced without any such positive divine efficiency.

In this view of the question, it is impertinent to say, they do not undertake to decide how God moves the wills of fallen men to sin,—for they have already declared how on one hand he does not do it, by the instrumentality of second causes, and on the other, that he does it, by a direct operation on the heart, causing motives and second causes to take effect.—By not deciding as to the mode of divine operation in the production of moral evil, if any thing after this is meant, it is something utterly foreign to the question, viz. that the manner in which this direct and positive agency is applied to the heart, is what they do not undertake to explain.

In regard to regeneration it is one question, whether the heart be renewed by an immediate divine influence, producing an effect, to which light and all other means are incompetent; and quite another question, how this divine influence applies its power to the heart.

So in regard to the subject in hand. This represents the saint and the sinner as standing precisely on the same ground, as to the necessity of a divine influence to produce the exercises or volitions, which pertain to their different characters.

Accordingly, I have heard the question thus stated by divines, and answered in the affirmative. “Does God as directly move persons to sin, as the Holy Ghost moves saints to holy exercises.” The fact, whether God does thus move sinners, is the question, and not the manner of his thus moving them.

Here then you have a view of the point to be examined. The doctrine we shall aim to establish, is the doctrine of the divine Providence, in regard to the existence of moral evil, as held by the reformers, and expressed in the confessions and creeds of the orthodox protestant churches.

This doctrine utterly denies the existence of any such positive divine agency on the hearts of wicked men, and affirms, that since man comes into the world agreeably to the constitution established with Adam, with an heart fully set in him to do evil, God does no more than uphold him in this nature, and for wise and good purposes, so dispose and manage the affairs of the world, that motives, temptations, and excitements to sin, fall in his way, and that by these he is moved to all the evil he commits. And thus by an infinitely powerful and wise arrangement and direction of second causes, God turns his heart whithersoever he will, and governs all his thoughts, passions and actions.

This is the Calvinistic view of the subject, as it stands opposed to that particular article of New England divinity under consideration; and is thus expressed in the Confession of Faith by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and adopted by the Synod of the Churches of New England.—*Vide chap. v. Of Providence.* “The Almighty power, unsearchable wisdom, and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves, in his Providence, that it extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, and that not by a bare permission, but such as hath joined with it, a most wise and powerful bounding, and otherwise ordering, and governing of them, in a manifold dispensation, to his own holy ends: yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature and not from God, who being most holy and righteous neither is nor can be the author, nor approver of sin.”

Having thus stated the question, the discussion may here be arrested, by what may be deemed a very sage inquiry, and sufficient to render all further remark, quite impertinent and useless.—“Since you grant, that moral evil in every instance is the result of a divine eternal decree, what matter is it how it is brought into existence?

“If it was the will of God it should exist, it amounts to the same thing, whether it be produced by a direct efficiency, or simply by the instrumentality of second causes.” But will the objector abide the consequences of such a principle? May not infinite wisdom and goodness be concerned in the manner of executing a divine decree as well as in the decree itself? Is there no choice in the mode of operation, in carrying into effect a pre-determined event?

God from everlasting determined, that the world should exist. But does it hence follow, that it was a matter of perfect indifference, whether this work should all be executed by one instantaneous fiat, or go on progressively for six days? God pre-determined the deliverance of his chosen people from Egyptian bondage, but did it hence follow, that it was a matter of no moment whether he took them all out of Egypt and set them down in Canaan, in the twinkling of an eye, as he will change the bodies of the living at the last day, or whether he should have proceeded and manifested his glory in their redemption as he actually did? It was doubtless God’s eternal purpose, that Paul should go and preach at Rome, but could it be inferred from this decree that it was a matter of utter indifference, whether he was carried there as a prisoner and experienced a distressing shipwreck, or whether he went by land in the full enjoyment of liberty, experiencing no opposition or sufferings?

It is the eternal purpose of God, that the elect shall be saved, but will you hence insist, that it is no matter how he saves them, whether by an act of

absolute mercy, or by a Redeemer? It is equally his purpose, that all who are saved shall be justified, but dare you affirm, that since he has decreed they shall be justified, it is a matter of trivial consideration how they are justified, whether by works, or the propitiatory death of a Mediator? Such kind of reasoning as this, would reduce the whole system of the marvellous grace of God in providing a Savior, to a thing of no importance.

Here it is not enough to know God has decreed to save, but we must know how he executes this decree and submit to it, or lose eternal life. Is it not then infinite presumption to say, since God has decreed the sinful exercises of men, it is matter of no importance, whether he produces them by a direct efficiency, or simply by the instrumentality of second causes? God may see it to be infinitely unwise and unfit for him to produce moral evil in the former way. If both methods, in your view amount to the same thing, it may appear far otherwise to him, who seeth not as man seeth.

It may be with divine truth as with a divergent line, though its obliquity be at first scarcely perceivable, yet if you pursue such a line, it will at last recede to an immense distance, and produce interesting results. The difference between the Trinitarian and the Unitarian, begins in a distinction absolutely incomprehensible. One affirms, God is absolute unity in his essence. The other affirms, there is a distinction of persons in this essence, though to define it, mocks all the powers of the human intellect. These two lines by some are supposed to be parallel, or if divergent, the obliquity is small indeed; but pursue them and what is the result? By the decision of the most learned, pious, and candid Trinitarian writers, Christianity is essentially corrupted. And who can say but the result of the theory we oppose, would be as fatal, were it as openly, constantly, and zealously preached to all descriptions of people, as the divinity of Christ?

The pride of man is never more manifest than when it thus presumes to pronounce one method of divine procedure as fit and proper for Deity as another.

You may say, it was a matter of perfect indifference, whether the battle of Waterloo should have commenced two seconds earlier or later, but God might see that results of boundless moment depended on its beginning just when it did. So in regard to the question before us, results of infinite moment may depend on sin not being the effect of a direct influence on the heart, but of the operation of instruments and second causes.

“Know thyself, presume not God to scan.”

But if you establish the point at which you aim, can you state any particular in which the interests of real religion will be promoted by it?

This question will be briefly considered in the conclusion, after we have set before the reader the evidence in support of our views.

We will here only add, if the Calvinistic view of this subject, differ in so trifling a degree from the Hopkinsian, why do those, who think differently from us, make so great a matter of it, because we cannot adopt their theory? And why all this zeal to make men Hopkinsians in this point? Why has a new and numerous edition of Mr. Weeks's Nine Sermons been sent forth, as if some vast interest were at stake?

SECTION II.

THE STANDARD, BY WHICH THIS AND ALL OTHER QUESTIONS IN THEOLOGY AND MORALS ARE TO BE ULTIMATELY DECIDED.

ALL rules set up for the trying of such questions may be reduced to two.

One is, the reasoning faculty of man, deducing conclusions, principles, rules, arguments and motives, from the light of nature; or the will, the justice, wisdom, power and goodness of God, as displayed in his works of Creation and Providence. This is denominated the religion of nature, natural theology, moral philosophy, &c.

The other is the volume of revelation. In this God has, by express and clear declarations, exhibited to our view, what we are to believe concerning him, and what duty he requires at our hands.

Now between these two standards, when rightly applied, there never can be any opposition. For no just inference from the works and Providence of God, will ever be found to be inharmonious, with the conclusions of revelation.—But through the weakness of the human understanding, and perverseness of the heart, the reasoning faculty of man may lead him into conclusions utterly incompatible with the doctrines of revelation. In this case, as the latter is unspeakably more clear and intelligible, and contains many important truths, which are not deduc-

cible from the works of nature, it must be resorted to as the supreme Rule, and all the conflicting decisions of the other, however just they may seem, must give way to it.

If the understanding, wisdom and goodness of God be infinite, there can be no appeal from his plain and positive declaration. He can neither deceive, be deceived, or mistaken. "He is light, and in him is no darkness at all." In the nature of things, the revelation he has given us, must be the supreme tribunal, before which every moral question must be decided.

It is the rule, by which all, who possess it, must be tried at the last day. This authority the Holy Scriptures now claim to themselves.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work." 2 Tim. iii, 16. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Eph. ii, 20.

The first of these standards is supreme to all nations and individuals destitute of revelation. But the moment revelation is put into their hands, the light of nature becomes subordinate or is absorbed in it. And all its decisions must be tested by it. The most celebrated and perfect systems of theology and morals, adopted by ancient wise men, could not stand this test. Hence it is said, "God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world."

In regard to revelation, there are but two points, in respect to which the reason of man is called to exercise itself. The first is, to consider the proofs, by which its claim to be from God, is supported. The only remaining question is, what is the meaning of the different words, sentences, and phrases, in which it is delivered. And in deciding this point, the great query is, what sense of any particular word, sentence or phrase, is to be taken as the true

sense. Here is a wide field opened for the wild fancy, distempered taste, and unruly passions of men, to rove abroad in. One may insist, that the inspired writers were all philosophers, and to come at the meaning of their writings, we must with metaphysical acuteness, descend far below the surface. If we would have the true, it must be some far fetched, deep and exquisite, sense! Would men of such extraordinary powers speak in the language of the vulgar, and in a manner level to the capacity of children,—in knowledge and learning. This, to be sure, has not been the glory of philosophers, though it may be of him, who came to die for the vulgar. And as he died for them, it would not be surprising should he speak in a language adapted to their capacities and acquirements, when endeavoring to communicate to them the words of eternal life. Another, like some ancient commentators, may fancy the whole Bible to be an allegory. And having obtained the grand clue to the riddle, every word and sentence must be squared by this. Another looks for a figure or a mystery in every thing, and wanders off, in an endless aphelion from common sense. Another, avows, that there are no figures in the Bible; every thing is to be taken in a literal sense; and becomes as great and foolish a wanderer, though in an opposite direction.

But the only true answer to the question, is this. The plain, most natural, and obvious sense, which considering the nature of language, and the scope of the writer, would most readily offer itself to the mind of a sober, judicious and upright inquirer after truth, is the true sense.

God has spoken to men in their own language. If he had spoken in a dialect perfectly superior and unknown to men, it would have been no revelation at all. It is only in a language that they understand, and in writings subject to the same general rules of interpretation, as other compositions in that language, a revelation can be made. If an entire new

set of rules or principles of interpretation are to be adopted in explaining the terms and phrases in which a revelation is conceived, it can be no revelation to us, till by another revelation we are told what these are. If then it be admitted that the Bible is a revelation of the will of God to men, it must also be admitted, that we are to explain the grammatical sense and real meaning of it, as we do that of any other book written in the same dialect; and the most natural, easy, and obvious sense, considering the nature of human language and the scope of the writer, must be the true. It is by the Scriptures, explained by this rule, the question under consideration is to be decided. If the justice of this rule of interpretation be not admitted, then divine revelation must be given up, as too uncertain, vague and equivocal, to determine any thing. It is well known that by labored criticisms, strained interpretations, and far fetched senses. the most opposite and absurd systems may be supported by the Scriptures.

But the justice of the above rule of interpretation is capable of the most convincing moral demonstration.

This point is handled in a very able and judicious manner, by a writer in the *Panoplist*, to which I would refer the reader, as a piece, which ought always to lie upon the same shelf with his Bible, and to be often reviewed.*

When we assert, that the Scriptures, interpreted agreeably to this grand rule, are the supreme standard to which reason itself is to bow, our meaning is this:—Not, that there is any thing in religion or in the doctrines and principles of the Holy Scriptures. that is in itself absurd, or contrary to the truth and fitness of things, or to the conclusions of the Infinite Reason.—Not, that we are prohibited employing the faculty of reason in studying them, and searching after the great doctrines, duties and discoveries, which

* Pan. Nos. 5 and 6, for 1816.

they contain. We are certainly no farther religious, than our belief and practice are reasonable. The religion of revelation is, in all its parts, a reasonable belief, "a reasonable service."

Our idea is this, that no researches or conclusions of reason, however they may be dignified by the name of philosophy, and struck out by men of the greatest celebrity, for genius and learning; and however seemingly compact and demonstrably just the various intermediate steps of the argument may be; and however clearly and irrefutably they seem to follow from their premises; are to be admitted as true, if they contradict the obvious meaning of Scripture. Though the fallacy of the reasoning cannot be discovered by the most acute human investigation, yet it must be allowed, there is a fallacy somewhere in it, and it must be rejected as falsehood. If the rule be not thus extended, if one single deduction of reason be allowed to stand as true, in opposition to the Scriptures, then human reason is exalted, and the word of God is put down, as the supreme standard or test of truth.

To add weight to our views in regard to this point, permit us to avail ourselves of the statement of Mr. Faber, whose learning and ingenuity are well known, by his writings in the christian world.

"Admit no conclusion in any system," says he, "to be valid, unless the conclusion itself, as well as the thesis from which it is deduced, be sufficiently set forth in Holy Scripture. We must prove all things by Scripture and hold fast that which is good; regardless, of the even opposite conclusions, which might seem by a train of abstract reasonings to be legitimately deduced from our several articles of belief. By adopting such a plan we may forfeit the honor and glory of a systematic concinnity; but if men continue to dispute and draw out fine trains of metaphysical reasonings, even to the very end of the world. it requires not the gift of prophecy, to foretel that they

will be just as wise at the close, as they were at the commencement.”

I am no enemy to reasoning in religion; it is necessary at every step. But when it plainly militates against the obvious sense of Scripture, however much it be gloried in by men, and however infallible they may deem their conclusions, it must without hesitation be rejected on the self-evident principle, that the foolishness of God is wiser than men.

This reasoning pride sticks close to our nature. We are loth to stoop to be told our duty in plain words and like obedient servants go and do it. We wish to have the credit of making ourselves wise. Hence many infidels, incorporate with their writings fine sayings derived from the Scriptures, as their own, while they despise that blessed volume.

So the professed christian preacher, may ascend the desk, to teach and make his people wise by his mighty strength of reasoning, and only quote the Scriptures as a kind of collateral aid. He may not come forward, armed in power and argument, borrowed from the book of God; nor may he think a clear and apposite text of Scripture to be the most overwhelming reasoning.

“What Matthew says or Mark, the proof but small,
What Lock or Clark asserts, good scripture all.”

More fully to explain what we mean, let us now exemplify this great rule of interpretation by applying it to a few plain cases.

According to the reasoning of Dr. Clark in demonstrating the being and attributes of God, one great argument for the unity of his nature is, that the necessity by which he exists, must be infinitely extended and uniformly the same. It is not possible to conceive, there should be any cause either to limit or divide this necessity of nature. He must therefore be one, simple, infinite, absolutely united essence. Now this reasoning seems to exclude all possibility

of a distinction of persons in the Godhead, and no mere human reason can refute the argument.

But this argument contradicts the Scriptures, and is therefore to be rejected as false. Their testimony, that God exists in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must be admitted, in spite of the most plausible deductions of human reason.

It is the opinion of some, that sinful and holy affections cannot co-exist in the human mind. During the prevalence of an holy exercise, there is no possible emotion of the soul towards that, which is evil.

But although the reasoning by which this theory seems to be defended, does not admit of being overthrown by an opposite course of abstract arguments; yet we reduce it to absurdity and falsehood by a very easy process; it is contrary to what is written.

“I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. But I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind,” &c. Rom. vii, 21, 23. “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”

The Aristotelian philosophy strongly maintains the eternal existence of matter, and the absolute impossibility of creation. But one text of Scripture levels all the arguments of its self-confident advocates in the dust.—“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Gen. i, 1.

It is a common thing for the most renowned christian philosophers, and the great Bishop Butler among the rest, to insist upon it, that human nature is not, previous to regeneration, divested of all right affection. But a very few words from St. Paul proves them all to be in a great mistake. “There is none that doeth good, no not one.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” Rom. iii, 12, 18.

If it should be objected that revelation cannot be a standard by which to test abstract philosophical theories, because it is manifest, that it is itself nothing

more than a system of doctrines and rules of a practical nature, founded on some antecedent principles of which the inspired writers give no account, but have left them to the decision of mere human sagacity and penetration, we would reply in words to be found in one of Mr. Foster's Essays.

“If it be said for some parts of these dim speculations, that although Christianity comes forward as the practical dispensation of truth, yet there must be in remote abstraction behind it, some grand ultimate elementary truths, of which this dispensation does not inform us, or which it reduces from that pure recondite into a more palpable and popular form; I answer and what did the poet, or the master of the poet and the song (alluding to Pope and Bollingbroke) know about these truths and how did they come by their information.”

Let the friends of revelation beware of what comes from this remote abstraction behind christianity, or of all theories, which cannot be defended without charging the apostles or other inspired writers, of being ignorant, unlettered men, sometimes speaking not according to sound philosophy or the truth and reality of things, but according to vulgar notions and prejudices.

This section shall be closed in the words of Dr. Chalmers. “Hold up your face my brethren, for the truth and simplicity of the Bible. It is the right instrument to be handled in the great work of calling an human soul out of darkness into marvellous light. Stand firm and secure on the impregnable principle, that this is the word of God, and that all taste, and imagination, and science, must give way before its overwhelming authority.”

SECTION III.

TWO POSITIONS, THAT MAY BE ADJUDGED AS THE MAIN PILLARS OF THE SYSTEM OF DIRECT EFFICIENCY CONSIDERED; VIZ. 1. THAT MOTIVE IN NO POSSIBLE CASE CAN BE THE CAUSE OF VOLITION. 2. THAT THOSE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHICH SPEAK OF A DIVINE AGENCY IN HARDENING THE HEARTS OF MEN, &c. ARE TO BE UNDERSTOOD AS PERFECTLY PARALLEL TO, AND AS EXPRESSIVE OF, A DIRECT INFLUENCE, AS THOSE WHICH ASCRIBE THE PRODUCTION OF HOLY EXERCISES TO GOD.

POSITION I.

IN his Essay on Moral Agency, Dr. Stephen West says, "It hence appeareth that there is an utter impropriety in saying, that the mind is governed or determined by motive." p. 61.

Now although we do not in the present discussion mean to refer any thing ultimately to the decision of mere abstract reason, but to test every thing by the lively oracles of God, as the only authority on which we can fully rely, yet as this position lies so much in our way, and is the vital principle, the heart and life, of the doctrine we oppose, it may not be amiss to canvass it for a moment as a boasted metaphysical dogma. If it was a real fact that motives do never determine, move or excite, the mind to action, then indeed the philosophy we oppose must stand

good. For if these do not determine the will, we shall not surely contend that it is governed by any other second cause; and if not by a second cause, then, without all controversy, it must be by a direct act of the great First Cause. But what ideas do philosophers entertain of the terms cause and effect? As they relate to that succession of operations, events and changes, which we behold in the works of the great Creator, they designate nothing more than an established law, or uniform mode of divine operation: i. e. when God causes frost to exist to a certain degree, he causes water to congeal, and this is all the power philosophers will allow second causes to possess. Now although we believe that God, who could create matter or mind distinct from his own essence, could also create, impart, or cause to exist, energies, activities and efficiencies, equally distinct from his own; and that hence, although there can be no independent created object or energy, yet cause and effect, in relation to the works of God, signify more than these philosophers will allow. But admitting for the sake of argument this notion to be perfectly correct, then nothing can be more just than to affirm, that motives have as much power or efficiency, as the cause of volition, or governing and determining the mind, as it is possible any second causes should have. For no law or mode of divine operation is more constant and certain, than that of volition following the presentation of motives to the mind. And to justify this remark, we need do no more than to cite Dr. Stephen West's own words against himself. In the beginning of the third section he does indeed say, "It hence appeareth that there is an utter impropriety in saying, that the mind is governed or determined by motive." But what does he say before he closes the section? We affirm that he gives to motive all the causality we contend for; yea, all, and more than all the influence some modern philosophers allow any second cause to possess. His words are these, "And so strong and insuperable are these

mutual tendencies of motives and the will of moral beings to each other; and so inseparable the connexion between the influence of the former and the exertions of the latter, that no object suited to the state, temper and disposition of the mind, ever cometh into its view, without being actually chosen; such an object is no sooner apprehended and perceived by the mind than it is relished and chosen; and such was the antecedent state and disposition of the mind, and such the adaptedness of the object with its qualities, to that particular state and temper of mind, as to lay a foundation of choice, and be a ground of the certainty of it, whenever the object shall come within the view of the mind."

1. I would here ask Mr. W. R. Weeks, whether this is compatible with his assertion, that it is the immediate agency of God alone that moves the mind to act?

I would in the next place observe, this is all we ask. We certainly shall not pretend, that motives are the cause of volition or the mind's choice, in any higher sense.

3. If "so strong and insuperable are these mutual tendencies of motives and the will of moral beings to each other; and so inseparable the connexion between the *influence* of the former and the exertions of the latter, that no object suited to the state, temper or the disposition of the mind, ever cometh into its view without being actually chosen;" I would query, with what propriety, after this concession, could this writer affirm, "that there is an utter impropriety in saying, that the mind is governed or determined by motive?" It is hard to see the justice of this remark, unless he meant to deny the existence and operation of all second causes whatever.—For no second cause can have greater power to produce effects, than what he here ascribes to motives.

4. After thus ascribing to motives all the causality that any second cause in nature can be supposed to possess, could it be proper for him to represent it as a

point undecided, what the cause of volition, or of the mind's being excited to choose is? His words are, "What the cause of volition is, may, perhaps, be a subject worthy of attention, and fit to employ the talents of inquisitive, contemplative minds?" There can be no doubt remaining to solve, as to what the first cause of all things, and so of volition, is. All contemplative minds know this to be God. And if we can say of motives and the will, as he does, that "there is an inseparable connexion between the INFLUENCE of the former and the exertions of the latter," neither can there be any doubt, with inquisitive minds, as to the second cause.—Does not this appear to be involving in perplexity, a very plain case, and throwing over it a veil of mystery, and representing the most profound research as necessary to discover what he had already sufficiently explained! It is never worth while to teach men to set aside plain, sound, common, good sense, and to go in quest of something else to be wise. But

5. What is more to our purpose here to remark is, If God can give to mind and motive these mutual tendencies; if the antecedent temper and disposition of the mind may be so constituted, and the qualities of motives so adapted to please the mind, that they will certainly be chosen as soon as they come within its view; then why may not God govern and determine the wills of fallen men, at least as to all their sinful actions, by motives or second causes, without a direct operation on the heart? If the connexion between motive and volition be thus established, nothing further is necessary, than for God in his providence, to order things in such a manner, that motive shall come within the view of the mind. According to the Doctor's concession, it will then certainly be chosen.

This is as full to our purpose as any thing we could adduce from any writer whatever.

The great argument, the sum of all that is advanced, to prove the will is not determined by motive, is

this, "Motives, as being wholly unperceived, have no tendency to move the mind, or engage election. Beauty for instance, so long as it is wholly unperceived, hath no tendency to produce love and engage affection. It doth not, antecedent to its being perceived, exert any influence upon the mind, which exciteth to motion and affection; when it is perceived, it is too late for it to exert influence upon the mind, in order to excite its choice; it being already relished and of course chosen. In the mind's perceiving any thing, which is fitted by the nature and constitution of it, to be an object of its affection, is really all the choice which is ever made of it." West's Essay on Moral Agency.

Here the fallacy of the Dr.'s argument lies very much in changing the concrete for the abstract term, using beauty instead of a beautiful object, and making no distinction between the understanding, apprehending an object; and the will, choosing, or relishing, it.

It must be admitted that tasting and relishing the beauty of an object, and choosing it, are much the same. But the understanding perceiving the existence of such an object, and tracing out those qualities, in which beauty consists, and representing them to the will, as an object of choice, is a very different thing from choice itself; and must not such an act of the understanding precede every rational choice, either of natural or moral beauty? If this distinction between the office of the understanding and the perceptions of the heart or will, be kept properly in view, the justness of the Dr.'s reasoning will vanish.

But not to insist upon this, let us try the force of this reasoning in a case, which, at least to me, appears to be parallel. Fire, for instance, cannot produce the sensation of pain, till it comes sufficiently in contact with the body, but when it actually thus reaches the body, the pain exists, and it is then too late for the fire to act and produce such an effect. This will not surely be admitted as proof, that fire is

not the cause of the sensation of pain. But the reasoning is no better in respect to the denial of the influence of motives. It is conceded by Dr. West, that a motive wholly out of the view of the mind, can produce no effect, excite no desire, affection, or volition, yet the mind may possess an antecedent capacity, to be moved by it, when it shall come into view. And the motive, though out of view, may, in its nature, have a tendency and adaptedness to excite the will, whenever the understanding perceives it. And we can say all this and no more, as to the nature of the body, and of the fire which excites pain in it by contact. Now when this mind and this motive come within the sphere of operation, why does not volition or affection follow, just as naturally, as the pain in case of the application of fire to the body; and that notwithstanding the great difference there may be in respect to the properties of the body and mind, and the different mode, in which fire may operate on one and motives on the other. We can perceive no possible reason why we may not as well say, there is an utter impropriety in asserting, that fire is the cause of the sensation of pain when applied to the body, as to say, motive, when it comes within view of the mind, cannot be the cause of desire or choice. This reasoning against motives being the cause of volition appears to be very fallacious, and contrary to the writer's own concession respecting the mutual tendencies of mind and motive, and contrary to plain common sense. For we do certainly know how men in general will act in any given case, if we can first discover what motives will there be brought to operate on the mind, or be presented to its view. There is no other cause and effect in nature, between which the connexion is more evident and certain, whether we judge as philosophers, or as men of common discernment and prudence. On the whole, it appears that the doctrine of Lock, Edwards and others respecting the will being determined by the strongest

motive is sound philosophy, and has never been demolished by any new theory, and we believe it never will.

POSITION II.

The other position is one, which certainly demands a serious consideration, for it is professedly derived from most express and solemn declarations of Scripture. It is however of the same tenor with the preceding. It affirms that God does not by any arrangement, application or power, given to second causes and instruments, determine the wills of wicked men, and give existence to their moral exercises. If the Scriptures taught any such doctrine as this, the question would be decided, and here we ought to stop and be silent for ever.

It is a most obvious and glorious truth, that the Scriptures represent God as exercising an absolute and most perfect control and moral government over the minds, the wills, the passions, inclinations and designs of men, considered as nations or individuals.

To this purpose are the following texts, and many others that might be adduced:—"Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, and the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain." "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water; he turneth it withersoever he will." Prov. xxi, 1. "He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants." Ps. cv, 25. "Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not unto covetousness." Ps. cxix, 36. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth." Rom. ix, 18. "For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." Rev. xvii, 17. Now these are some of the most plain and forcible texts which ascribe the production of moral evil to a divine agency.

Mr. Weeks has produced a very long list of texts of this description; but what is all this to the purpose? He has still to prove that these texts relate not to the providential government of God, but to an immediate divine agency upon the hearts of sinners. But of this he has not given a shadow of proof from the word of God. That they prove, that the will, the decree, and unalterable counsel of God, are concerned in every instance of the existence of moral evil, we fully believe. But still the question remains to be decided, Does God execute his will or purpose in turning the king's heart, or the heart of other sinners, withersoever he will, by a direct operation on the mind, or by the intervention and agency of second causes?

The opposing doctrine says—God does not, and cannot exercise this absolute government and control, over the wills and passions of men, but by a direct influence on the heart. No direction or application of second causes or motives by his almighty power and wisdom, is sufficient to account for the event. To prove that the texts of the description of those just cited, can mean nothing less than this immediate or direct influence on the heart of wicked men, Dr. Hopkins, on the Divine Decrees, thus argues:—“If the Scriptures, which have been mentioned, where hardening the hearts of men, blinding and shutting their eyes, and inclining and turning their hearts, when they practice moral evil, &c. if these Scriptures are to be understood, as meaning no more than that God orders their situation and external circumstances to be such, that considering their disposition, and the evil bias of their minds, they will without any other influence, be blinded and hardened; then all those Scriptures, which speak of God's changing and softening the heart, taking away the hard heart, and giving an heart of flesh, and causing men to walk in his ways, &c. may and must be understood in the same way, as not intending any special divine influence on the mind, &c.”

* System of Doctrine, vol. i, p. 196.

With all due deference to so great a writer, and one who commonly reasons with so much correctness and power, I must be allowed to say, that his argument here is utterly inconclusive. If there was as much said in one case as in the other, about the necessity and reality of a divine influence, his argument would be good. But is not the very reverse of this true. In regard to saints, it is in the first place declared of them, when considered in themselves, that their hearts are fully set in them to do evil! Here then is a necessity of a divine influence to incline them to good, that does not exist in regard to inclining them to evil. For their whole nature is previously bent this way.—“There is none that seeketh after God, there is none that doeth good; no, not one.”

Is it not expressly declared in regard to the good exercises of saints that the effect is not of themselves. “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” But where is it thus declared, that all the wicked exercises of sinners are not of themselves, but of God? Then is a man tempted, says James, when he is drawn away of his own lust. Christ says of Satan, “When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own.” “Oh, Israel thou hast destroyed thyself.” It is not the language of the Bible, when a man steals, lies, commits adultery, &c. to say it is not of himself, but of God. Therefore to represent, these two classes of texts as equally expressive of a direct, inward, divine agency on the heart, is a perversion of Scripture, and a very gross one. But into this error has Dr. Hopkins and Mr. Weeks both fallen.

3. It is expressly declared in the divine word, that no means, motives, or second causes, are sufficient of themselves, though applied in the course of divine providence, to produce the holy and gracious exercises of the new creature. “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”—“He that loveth, is born of God.” But where do we find it written, that no arguments, no enticements, no

temptations to sin, are sufficient to lead men into evil conduct; where do we read, that Satan may tempt, wicked men allure, the world may fascinate, but all in vain till God moves the heart to do evil? Hence to explain what is found in the Scriptures of the agency of God in the production of moral evil, hardening the hearts and blinding the eyes, &c. of his doing this by the instrumentality of second causes, does by no means intrench upon the doctrine of a direct divine influence in the regeneration of sinners, and moving or exciting them to that, which is good. Nor is this idea more inconsistent, than the Armenian theory, which refers what is said of a divine agency, both in regard to the exercises of sinners and saints, altogether to the power and influence of second causes, as the Doctor asserts. In regard to this point we beg leave to add the following remarks:

1. Are the judgments of God unsearchable and his ways past finding out! Is it not then presumption, in a high degree, to say, the infinitely wise and powerful Jehovah, cannot give any such efficacy to second causes and instruments, as to turn the hearts of men, what way he pleases, without any other influence? He that dares to do this must not expect to be admired for his humility and great reverence for the Deity.

2. Is it not customary in the language of Scripture, to ascribe to an agent the performance of a work, which he executes by the instrumentality of others, merely because it took place according to his counsel and design.—Nathan said to David, “Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite, with the sword.” But would not he be guilty of falsehood, who should say David did it, not by instruments, but by his own immediate agency? So we conceive, that the wickedness which takes place in the world, hardening hearts, &c. is ascribed to God, because it is agreeable to his infinitely wise counsels and designs, to order things in his Providence so that it will come to pass; and he would be equally guilty of misrepresenting his ways,

who should say he brings it to pass by a direct agency, and not by the instrumentality of second causes.

3. That it is by the instrumentality of second causes and instruments, that God works in regard to all, whom he is said to harden and blind, and not by a direct influence on their heart, is plain from this; that the same instances of moral evil which are ascribed to his agency, are in the same divine word explained to take place through the instrumentality of second causes. In 2 Thess. ii, 11, 12, it is said of some, who hated and abused the truth, "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness." But in the verses immediately preceding, the great instrument, by which this was brought about, is expressly named—"Whose coming" (i. e. the man of sin with this strong delusion,) "is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, &c." In like manner, in all instances wherein God is said to harden the hearts of men, deceive and blind them, it is equally easy to point out the instruments by which it is done, and account for it all without any immediate positive influence upon the heart of the wicked. If it should here be objected that the good exercises of the virtuous are sometimes ascribed to instruments and second causes, as we read of saints being born of the word, &c. and therefore there is no immediate divine influence concerned in their production, it must be replied, as stated in a preceding article, that the Bible tells us, that in regard to the good exercises of saints, no second cause is sufficient; but it does not tell us that no second cause, enticement or temptation, is insufficient to lead wicked men into sin; but the contrary, that they are led away of their own lust, and that Satan leads them captive at his will.

4. It seems to be too much overlooked by those, who bring these texts to prove an immediate divine influence, as necessary in all instances to move the will of wicked men to choose and act, that the passages relate not to the ordinary, but special providential dealings of the Most High. Hardening the heart, blinding the eyes, &c. is a judgment inflicted upon men peculiarly wicked for former sins and transgressions. In the instance of strong delusion just referred to, it was for hatred and abuse of the truth, it was sent. Nor was it a procedure that related equally to all men, but specially to those, who had been thus guilty.

Now to apply these passages equally to all men, even, if they did imply an immediate positive divine agency, would be to misinterpret and pervert the Holy Scriptures. Thus we conceive these two difficulties, thrown in the way of our theory, are fairly removed; and if these be removed, the system of direct and positive efficiency as asserted by these writers, is entirely overthrown; for this is all they have to support it. God must move the heart of wicked men to sin, because motives in no case can be the cause of choice, or of the mind's acting. But this, as we have seen, is contrary to the opinion of the most profound researches of preceding philosophers, contrary to the plain dictates of common sense, contrary to the established laws of nature, and what is more, contrary to the constant and plain representations of the Holy Scriptures, which continually speak of created agents, second causes, and instruments, as acting upon and exciting the minds of men. And because, when the Scriptures represent God as hardening the hearts of sinners, and turning them what way he will, it is a mere assumption, to say it must be by an immediate divine influence, yea it is a position of these writers, not only assumed without evidence, but in opposition to the most solemn declarations of the Bible, to the contrary, as we shall soon attempt to shew.

I well know that confidence in any opinion is no proof of its truth, but certain I enjoy as complete rest in the evidence of the falsehood of the theory we oppose, as in the strength of the evidence of the divinity of Christ, or any other Christian doctrine.

Here it may not be amiss, to cite a few examples, to shew how liable, men, even of the most extraordinary mental powers and eminent piety, are, to err in their abstract metaphysical disquisitions, and how little stress is to be laid upon their most confident conclusions, unless we can see them to be the obvious dictates of revelation. George Berkley, bishop of Cloyne, was justly celebrated for his genius, learning, piety and humanity; but he was not only a Christian, but a philosopher, and long rested with a surprising confidence in some of the most absurd and extraordinary results of his abstract reasoning.

In his *Principles of Human Knowledge*, he denies the existence of every kind of matter whatever; nor does he think this conclusion one, which in any degree, need stagger the incredulous; "Some truths there are so near, says he, and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them; such I take this important one to be, that all the choir of heaven, and furniture of earth—in a word, all those bodies, which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind." According to this theory, God never created any material world. All we read of the work of creation, as to sun, moon and stars, earth and seas, beasts, birds and the bodies of men, has no reality in it. God only caused ideas of these things to arise in the minds of men or angels, and out of their minds they have no existence. The whole frame of the material universe is only a creature of imagination, a dream, which has no subsistence out of the mind of the dreamer.

A system more opposed to common sense, and the plain declarations of the divine word, never was, and never could be, devised. Yet the bishop for a long

time had no doubt of its truth. "It is thought, however, that towards the close of his life he began to doubt the solidity of metaphysical speculations." [N. Edinburgh Encyc. vol. 3, p. 452.]

Our next example shall be taken from a writer, no less celebrated for his uncommon powers of mind and eminent piety, than president Edwards.

In his *Treatise on Original Sin*, Part IV, Art. 3, where he is endeavoring to make it appear, that personal identity, or even the identity of material substances depends entirely on the arbitrary appointment or constitution of the Creator, i. e. the body of the moon, which may exist the next moment, cannot be literally the same with that, which now exists; it is the same, only, as God has determined it shall be considered the same,—he has these words; "It will certainly follow from these things, that God's preserving created things in being, is perfectly equivalent to a continued creation, or his creating those things out of nothing at each moment of their existence. Therefore the antecedent existence is nothing, as to any proper influence, or assistance in the affair; and consequently God produced the effect as much from nothing, as if there had been nothing before, so that this effect differs not at all from the first creation, but only circumstantially; as in first creation there had been no such act and effect of God's power before; whereas his giving existence afterwards, follows preceding acts and effects of the same kind in an established order." On this remarkable passage we submit the following reflections:

1. According to this reasoning, this material globe and all the beings that exist upon it, are, to-day, not the same that existed yesterday. They are all a perfectly new creation. They are only the same, as it is the arbitrary will of the Creator to call them the same. But is there no truth in things themselves, so that one thing cannot be called another, if it be not this other, but perfectly distinct from it. Is

it not a plain contradiction and absurdity, to call two things thus distinct, the same. Is it in the power of any will, finite or infinite, to make them the same, while they are thus distinct from each other in nature and reality. The identity of things must have some other foundation, whether we can comprehend it or not.

2. Does it not follow from this mode of reasoning, that, though God may always be creating, yet he cannot form in his own mind the plan of any particular system, bring it into being, and cause that very system to continue in being, through a succession of ages? But is this agreeable to the representations of the Scriptures? Do they not speak of God as having continued the work of creation for six days; at the end of which period, all was finished, and he rested from all his work which he had made? The work of preservation, of government, of superintendence and direction, did indeed remain; but the work of creation being completed, it was not again to be repeated every hour and moment. What a conception is this! that the infinite God should undertake to create a world, but he could not make his work stand; every moment it would slip out of being, and all he could do was to create another, and call it the same, though it was perfectly new and distinct from the former.

This is in effect to say, that God never had, and never could have, any permanent, established creation. How different this metaphysical speculation from the plain common sense of the Psalmist! "For he spake and it was done; he commanded and it stood fast." Ps. xxxiii, 9.

3. How could it happen, that a man, who exceeded most others in intellectual strength and acuteness of investigation, should have adopted it as a very evident principle, that the antecedent existence of a created object, is no evidence, or cause, that it will exist the next moment?

We humbly conceive, that this is so far from being true, that the present existence of it is an infallible

proof, that it will continue to exist. And this certainty of its future existence cannot be destroyed, but by our having proof, that God will exert his omnipotent power to annihilate it. As no object can create itself, so no one can annihilate itself. It might of itself as well begin to be, as to cease to be. It requires as great a power to annihilate as to create; therefore, supposing the globe on which we dwell to have been once created, or caused actually to exist, we may, on this ground, be perfectly sure it will exist to-morrow and even to eternity, unless that same infinite Power which at first gave it being, reduce it back to nothing.

It therefore appears to be impossible, that God should create a new world, and put it into the place of the one which now exists, without first removing, or annihilating this. And no such thing is, or can be necessary, in the work of preservation, as a new creation every successive moment.

“God having once created an object, that very self-same object will ever continue to exist, and be the same till God by an act of his infinite power, changes its nature or form, or causes it not to be. And here we can cite no writer in opposition to this notion of preservation, advocated by Mr. Edwards, more pertinent than Mr. Edwards himself, in his book on the Freedom of the Will.”

“That whatsoever begins to be, which before was not, must have a cause why it then begins to exist, seems to be the first dictate of the common and natural sense, which God hath implanted in the minds of all mankind. And this dictate of common sense equally respects substances and modes, or things and the manner and circumstances of things. Thus if we see a body, which has hitherto been at rest, start out of a state of rest and begin to move, we do as naturally and necessarily suppose, there is some cause or reason of this new mode of existence, as of the existence of a body itself, which had hitherto not existed.”

Now would not this same common sense suppose; that if God had once created a world, it could not cease to be without some adequate cause, and unless it did cease to be, it is absurd to talk of its being actually created anew, every moment, in order to its preservation. It is hence extremely obvious, that neither personal or material identity, is a thing, that depends upon mere arbitrary appointment.

We shall quote but one example more, and that from Dr. Stephen West, on Moral Agency, Part I, Sec. 1, p. 17. "Moral agency, (without any metaphysical subtilty or refinement,) *consists in spontaneous voluntary exertion.*" "If any one therefore inquireth, wherein consisteth that liberty which is essential to moral agency, it must be replied, *In spontaneous voluntary exertion.*" p. 36.

On this definition he builds his whole treatise on moral agency. We shall here submit a few remarks to the consideration of the candid.

1. Are the terms "spontaneous and voluntary" perfectly synonymous; if they are, one of them is quite superfluous. But if spontaneous signifies something more, or different from *voluntary*, then moral agency, consists in something besides *voluntary exertion*.

2. Does not moral agency consist in a power, or capacity, to put forth moral action, or to perform actions worthy of praise or blame? Then it cannot consist in *voluntary exertion*, for this is moral action. And a capability of action is not the same thing with action itself. Is a man's capacity to walk, the same thing as the act itself, of walking? Moral action and moral agency, are two distinct things. *Voluntary exertion* may do for the definition of moral action in a rational creature; but it will not do for the definition of his capability to put forth such action. Moral agency, according to president Edwards and other writers, consists in the powers of understanding, reason, judgment, moral sense, the elective faculty, &c. And here the Scriptures also evidently place it.

“He that knoweth to do good and doeth it not (saith the apostle James,) to him it is sin.”

Short as this inspired description of moral agency is, all the volumes of metaphysical discussion have added nothing to it. It seems then, that Dr. West has entirely mistaken the point. Moral agency does not at all consist in *voluntary exertion*.

3. But even if this definition were true so far as it goes, it seems to be defective; for may not brutes be capable of voluntary exertion? Is not this spontaneous exertion in the hound, when after having taken the scent, he sets off in pursuit of the fox? But if it is, it does not constitute him a moral agent. For something else, some other power, faculty, or principle of nature, is absolutely necessary to this.

4. From what the Doctor says in this same section, it is obvious he does not admit any other power, or principle of the soul, distinct from voluntary exertion, as necessary to moral agency. Nay, it seems to be implied, that the soul itself is not any thing distinct from voluntary exertion. Now upon his theory what a vast signification is given to this phrase.

“The soul of man consists in voluntary exertion; vice and virtue consist in voluntary exertion; moral agency consists in voluntary exertion; the liberty essential to moral agency consists in voluntary exertion.”

When a single word or phrase is made to signify so much, in a deep metaphysical discussion, it cannot fail to create a suspicion, that it means nothing at all, or is not very accurately defined.

We might go on and multiply examples of this kind from different writers without end. But these remarks are not designed to detract from the merit of much that is valuable and excellent in their works. Our object is to shew the danger of relying upon mere human theories in divinity, though struck out by the greatest and best of men. From my first acquaintance with compositions of this kind, I always

found a difficulty in reconciling many of their positions with common sense and the Holy Scriptures; but who was I, that I should dare to suspect the justness of speculations so profound, and sanctioned by the splendor of names so illustrious. But the snare is broken, and no mere human writings have been of more benefit to me, in this respect, than *Müller's Church History*. I have lately reviewed some of these speculations, with which the young student in divinity, is so liable to be charmed, and it has served more completely to destroy all confidence, in the abstract reasoning, even of men of the most astonishing powers of mind, unless I can perceive, what they advance in theology, to be clearly taught in the sacred volume.

These metaphysical deeps now appear to me to be a dangerous snare; the bait is the pride of being wise beyond what is written. They create a distaste for that plain sincere milk of the word, which administers nourishment, vigor, purity, humility and joy to the soul. Christian philosophers as well as pagan, cannot walk without the guidance of the plain word of God. When they forsake this light, when they undertake to explain what the inspired writers were not commissioned to unfold, the greatest efforts of genius, only exhibit proof of the feebleness of the human understanding, and man's utter incapacity in his fallen state, by searching to find out God. In view of their most elaborate performances, they will give us too much occasion to exclaim with Cowper,

"I feel my heart,
Dissolve in pity, and account the learned,
If this be learning, most of all deceived."

SECTION IV.

IN WHICH IT IS SHEWN THAT THE THEORY UNDER EXAMINATION IS CONTRARY TO ANALOGY AND SOUND PHILOSOPHY, SO FAR AS ANY REGARD IS DUE TO THE MOST SOBER AND CAUTIOUS REASONINGS OF THIS KIND.

IT is not every ingenious or profound speculation, that constitutes true philosophy. 'This is not such an absurd, contradictory thing. A vast proportion of the most boasted reasonings of men on divinity are a vain and pernicious philosophism. But to come at truth here, some just standard must be applied. As we have already stated, the infallible rule, from which there is no appeal, is the volume of revelation. The next is the nature of things.

Nothing is false which is agreeable to the attributes, ways and works of God. This standard is less certain and authoritative, only as the imperfect reason of man is more liable to err in the application. In this section, it is proposed to try this new theory by this natural standard. Unless I am deceived it is unphilosophical in the following respects.

1. It is contrary to analogy. In order to turn an heart of enmity and rebellion against God into love and obedience it is easy to admit that a direct and positive divine efficiency is necessary; but to say the same special divine agency is necessarily to excite sinful exercises in an heart previously disposed to nothing but sin, is quite different from the common train of human reasoning in cases, which bear a

strong analogy to this.—Suppose a grave and serious writer, with all the parade of deep discovery and profound wisdom should describe the tyger, with all his ferocious appetites and thirst for blood and dexterity to take his prey, and represent him as thus formed and upheld by the power of God; suppose further, he should describe a lamb as it really is, and place it under the very nose of this tyger; and then should affirm that this ferocious beast could not even hunger for this lamb, nor leap upon him, till his heart was moved by a special divine power to do it? Who would admire him for his wisdom? Would not such a philosopher make himself ridiculous?

Would not every one say, if there had been any special divine power necessary in the case, it must have been the other way, to prevent the tyger from actually devouring the lamb? The additional power, if necessary at all, was not to make him eat it, but to shut up his mouth. Was it not so in the case of Daniel? The divine power was displayed, in restraining the operations of that nature which God had given those furious beasts into whose den he was thrown. And why is it not just so in regard to creatures whose hearts are fully set in them to do evil? If a special divine power be necessary, it is not to move them to choose evil, but to restrain or change their corrupt nature.

2. It annihilates the whole system of second causes in the moral world. If there is any principle of knowledge and certainty in regard to the works and ways of God, it is this. That creatures are formed so mutually related and dependent on each other, and such powers, capacities and energies enter into the very constitution of their nature, that under the all sustaining and governing providence of God, they can exert a very powerful influence upon each other.

This is eminently the case in regard to the moral world. On this principle the whole system of human duty, in regard to fellow beings; and all prudence, foresight and wisdom in the economy of human affairs,

are founded. But does not Mr. W. R. Weeks, in his volume of *Nine Sermons*, pp. 38—42, lay it down as a certainty, that nothing “but the immediate agency of God alone can move the mind to act.” But is not this, by a single stroke, to abolish all idea of any second causality or agency in the moral world? Is it indeed a real fact, that in the nature of things, in reasoning, persuasion, example, promises, threatenings, temptations, &c. there is nothing fitted to influence the human will to the choice of either good or evil? Is there no reality in all that is believed by men and taught in the Bible of second causes and effects, or of one creature’s acting upon, or moving and exciting the will, the affections, the desires, the fears, the hopes and passions of another? Is Satan’s working in the hearts of the children of disobedience and leading them captive at his will, a misrepresentation? Is this all, that can be said in truth of it. “It seems to be so, but is not so in reality?” What is this but in effect to treat the whole system of God’s works as the ancient Docetæ did the incarnation and sufferings of Christ. It was a mere shadow without reality. For in truth according to this theory, neither Satan, or any other created agent in heaven or earth, no motive, no second cause can move the mind of man to the least inclination or choice. Nothing but the immediate agency of God alone can do this. How strong and expressive are the terms of Mr. W. to exclude all creature agency in the business. He not only says, it is the *immediate* agency of God, but that *alone*, i. e. without any instrument or second cause having any efficacy in the affair.

3. This theory is doing violence to the universal opinion of mankind and the dictates of common sense.

To make this appear we will state a case.—Suppose a man in full possession of health and reason accidentally stumbles and falls with one hand into a kettle of boiling lead, and is left entirely to his own choice whether he will take it out or not. Now is it

common sense to say, the pain he will experience, the love of life, a sense of duty, and all other considerations, or motives that can operate upon him, are utterly insufficient to excite in him a wish to withdraw his arm from the burning metal? There he will continue to burn and fry and endure all the agonies he must feel, without a wish for relief, till God by his own immediate agency excites it in his heart? This is certainly true if it is the immediate agency of God alone that can move the mind in any case to choose; but this, if ever any thing did, shocks all common sense.

4. It is unphilosophical as it insists upon more causes, as necessary to produce the effect, than are in reality needed. Suppose a man should see a rock of a ton weight fall upon a fly, and a question should be started, how that insect came by his death, would it be philosophical for him to insist upon some other cause being assigned to produce the effect? Suppose he should say it is not sufficient to account for the phenomenon, that God created and upheld the fly, such a frail being, and gave solidity, extension and gravitation to the rock, and by an earthquake caused its fall; over and above all this, he must have struck the insect with a flash of lightning, or destroyed him by his own immediate agency. Now it is certain this reasoning deserves just as much respect as that of Mr. Weeks in the case of the man's falling into the kettle of lead, that he could not, by all possible motives or second causes that would operate upon him in that situation, be excited to wish for relief. To account for the event, nothing but the immediate agency of God alone could be sufficient. Upon the present constitution of things in this world, this must ever appear a flagrant outrage to the very first principles of human knowledge.

5. Under the notion of exalting the agency of God, the theory under consideration destroys the idea of God's having any real and proper creation at all?

What is creation? It is a system of things not merely ideal but real, in which every creature is endowed with its own peculiar properties, faculties, powers, energies, activity, &c. And the substance and powers and actions of these creatures, are perfectly distinct from the divine essence and attributes.

The work of Providence is God's all wise and powerful preserving and governing this system of creatures with all their actions. But more philosophers than one have in effect destroyed this idea of creation by their absurd theories. Did not Dean Berkley do this by affirming, that creation has no existence but in the internal preceptions or ideas of a rational mind?

Did not Mr. Edwards do it by affirming, that in preservation God is obliged to create a perfectly new world every instant of time, yea as perfectly new as if none had ever existed before?

So does Mr. Weeks in effect destroy it, by abolishing the agency and influence of all second causes in the moral system. A system in which angels, men and devils, have no power in the hand and Providence of God to produce any impressions or moral effects on their own minds, or the minds of others; is a perfectly different system of creation from that, which God has actually brought into being and daily upholds, and governs.

6. It is unphilosophical as it tends to destroy all real and rational philosophy. To trace out the nature of things, their mutual relations and dependence, and the energy or activity they have to produce effects, and to frame rules and systems for the application and direction of these energies to benevolent and useful purposes, is the substance of all philosophy worthy our notice. But if there is no such thing as created objects or agents being endowed and upheld with powers adequate to the production of, not only, no natural, but moral effects; if all is mere divine agency; if in the nature of things the fall of a feather is as much fitted to destroy a man as the fall of a

mountain, all inquiry after second causes is an absurd thing,—for no such thing exists. All we have to say to explain the most wonderful and useful phenomena is,—so God hath wrought. This indeed in connexion with a proper view of the nature and dependence of all things upon the great First Cause, is the just language of piety, but it surely is not the whole of philosophy investigating the nature of the works of God. For God is not only possessed in his own nature, of infinite wisdom and activity, and has his uniform and established modes of operation; but he has given to creatures their proper energies and activity and ordained their modes of influence and operation. Hence it is believed that the laws of nature may be something more than simply a uniform mode of divine operation. It may be the mode of operation assigned to imparted powers and energies, upheld, directed and governed by the infinite wisdom and power of the great First Cause. Our ignorance of what are the laws of nature and the mode of their operation, is no sufficient foundation, on which to deny the reality of their existence.

To this section we will subjoin an extract from the Works of Dr. Dwight, late President of Yale College.

Though nothing like infallibility is to be attributed to the opinions of any mere man, yet I am happy to be able to strengthen my own views by the authority of one, whose name will ever shine with a distinguished lustre in the annals of the literature and religion of my own native State.

“That God, by an immediate agency of his own, creates the sinful volitions of mankind, is a doctrine not warranted, in my view, either by reason or revelation.”

After disclaiming all idea of imputing evil designs to the advocates of the doctrine, and admitting the proofs of their piety, he further observes;

“Still I cannot accord with this doctrine, nor hesitate to believe, that they have in several instances, darkened counsel by words without knowledge.”

“The theology of a part of this country appears to me to be verging, insensibly, perhaps to those who are chiefly concerned, but with no very gradual step towards a Pantheism, differing materially, in one particular only, from that of Spinoza. He held that the universe, which he supposed to be matter, and which he divided into cogitative or intelligent, and incogitative, was God; and that the several parts of it were no other than separate parts of the same great and universal Being. Thus he excluded the existence of all creatures; and of any work of creation, as well as all that, which is usually meant by the Providence and Government of the Creator. The theology, to which I have referred, teaches that God is immaterial, intelligent and infinite; but denies with Spinoza, the existence of finite intelligent beings, as well as of those, which we call bodies; declaring that what men usually call minds, or spirits, are no other than continued chains, or successions of ideas and exercises created immediately by the infinite Mind.” Dr. D.’s Works, vol. i, pp. 245, 246.

This coincidence of Dr. D.’s views with my own, is the more striking to me, as I had made up my mind on the subject, and written this section before I had ever heard or read what he has said upon it. It goes to prove that there is something in this theology, that appears to different minds to deny the real and proper existence of created agents.

SECTION V.

TEXTS WHICH SOLEMNLY WARN US, NOT TO AS-
CRIBE TO GOD, OUR BEING INWARDLY EXCITED
AND MOVED TO IMPIETY AND WICKEDNESS.

JAMES I, 13, 14.

“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted with evil; neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed.”

To tempt, sometimes signifies to try, in order to discover the disposition of a person, or to improve his virtue; and that by calling him to self-denying and painful duties, or subjecting him to privations, dangers and afflictions. In this sense God is said to have tempted Abraham and the Israelites. In the passage under consideration, the term must certainly be intended in a different sense, otherwise the Spirit of inspiration would contradict himself. And what can this sense be but this, God does not outwardly entice, nor inwardly, by a direct operation on the heart, move, incline, or draw away men to sin.

To confirm this exposition, the following arguments seem to be decisive.—1. The sense, in which

the apostle meant to clear God of tempting men to sin, is that, in which it is impossible he himself should be tempted. This is the obvious import of the words, "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." But God is tempted by sinners in every other way possible to his impassible nature, except being actually inclined to sin.—This then is the point asserted. As God cannot be inwardly moved, or inclined to sin, so neither does he inwardly excite or incline any man to it.

2. The apostle expressly states what he here means by tempting: it is being actually inclined or drawn away to sin.—"But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." This actual inclination, or being drawn away to sin, which he ascribes to man's own lust as the cause, is the kind of tempting he solemnly warns every man not to impute to God as the direct efficient cause.

3. The apostle's argument requires this construction of his words. There either then was a class of men, who, to excuse or palliate their iniquities, pretended that God tempted, solicited, inclined, or inwardly moved them to all the wickedness they perpetrated, or it was foreseen that such mistaken and deluded men would arise at some future period. If neither of these is true, then the text is impertinent and useless.—But the very existence of such a warning in sacred writ, implies the existence of such ungodly men.—And the fact is, such men did actually infest the Church at an early period. History records at least one instance of excommunication for this offence. They are mentioned by several writers. Macknight in his view and illustration of the exhortations contained in the first chapter of the Epistle of James, passing from the 12th to the 13th verse, says, "The apostle next directed his discourse to the unbelieving part of the nation, (Jews,) and expressly condemned that impious notion, by which many of them, and even some of the Judaizing teachers among the christians, pretended to vindicate their

worst actions, namely, that God tempts men to sin, and is the author of the sinful actions to which he tempts them."

Now we must suppose the apostle not to reason impertinently. He undoubtedly in saying God tempts no man, supposed he had cut off all ground for such an allegation. But is it possible to suppose he would have thought so, if he had really believed, that God did, by a direct operation on the heart of sinners, move, incline, and draw them away to every abomination with which they defile themselves?—Or had he admitted the reality and truth of such a divine operation, could he justly have hoped to have silenced the objector? Is it possible to suppose he could have imagined this caution would have been saying any thing to the purpose, "Let no man say when he is tempted I am tempted of God," if he had really believed that God, by a direct operation on the heart, did move wicked men to all the evil they commit?

4. The mode of the apostle's reasoning, it must seem, would have been very different, had he ever imbibed the sentiment which we are called to canvass.—Dr. Emmons, in his Sermon on Exod. ix, 16, hath these words respecting the agency of God in hardening the heart of Pharaoh. "He determined to operate on his heart itself.—When Moses called upon him to let the people go, God stood by him, and moved him to refuse. When Moses interceded for him and procured him respite, God stood by him and moved him to exult in his obstinacy. When the people departed from his kingdom, God stood by him, and moved him to pursue after them with increased malice and revenge."—Here I would query, if a person should come to the Doctor, and say, "God tempts, inclines, moves, and draws me away to all the pride, malice, and wickedness, of which I ever was or ever can be chargeable, I am therefore not at all guilty for any crime I ever commit;" would the Doctor think it a sufficient answer, to say to

this objector, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted of evil; neither tempteth he any man?" No; his reasoning would have been of a very different cast.—He would have admitted the fact, that God did stand by him, and by a direct operation on his heart move him to all the sin he ever committed; and he would then have gone about to prove, that this neither constituted any apology for his sin, nor reflected any dishonor upon the divine holiness.—But the apostle undertakes nothing of the kind. The difference between the reasoning of the Doctor and the apostle, seems to be this; The latter utterly denies the fact as an impious falsehood. The former admits it as an unquestionable truth, and is concerned only to vindicate the divine character, and to shut up the mouth of the objector in another way.—This to me amounts at least to a very strong presumption, that the inspired apostle and the Doctor are of very opposite sentiments in regard to this subject. Let us incorporate the sentiment we call in question with the words of the apostle, and then we will leave it to the judgment of any plain man, of sound sense and discretion, to say, whether it is possible to believe it ever made any part of the apostolical creed.—

"Let no man say, when he is tempted or drawn away to sin, I am tempted of God; for although I believe, that neither Satan, nor any external motives, nor instrumentality of second causes, hath any power to raise up in sinners any wicked exercise, unless God operate on the heart itself, to move, incline, and draw it away to sin; yet I know very well, that God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. For then is a man tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts, which lusts, it is true, could have no existence in his heart, if God did not, by an immediate positive efficiency, create them, or produce and bring them into being; and enticed by the allurements of external objects, and the false reasonings suggested by Satan, all

which, however, would never be sufficient, without this positive divine agency, to excite one wicked lust in the sinner's heart."—Had the apostle believed the sentiment we oppose, this paraphrase is perfectly just. And then, as to the solidity of his reasoning, or exhortation, or admonition, there can, I think, be but one opinion.—James i, 16, 17. "Do not err, my beloved Brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

The apostle here directs his discourse more particularly to the really upright and godly; but what is the error against which he cautions them?

No doubt it is the one just mentioned, of imputing to a divine influence, our being enticed and drawn away to sin. This seems sufficiently evident by his immediately adding, what appeared to him the truth, in opposition to this error.—Dr. Macknight's paraphrase is, therefore, very just.—"Be not deceived, my beloved brethren, into the belief, that God is the author of sin. So far is God from seducing men to sin, (i. e. by outward enticements, or an inward operation on the heart,) that every good gift, whether it be our reasonable faculties, or virtuous dispositions, or outward happy circumstances, and every perfect gift, pardon of sin, the favor of God, and eternal life, is from above, descending from God, the author of all virtue and happiness, with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning."

James iii, 14—17. "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy." Here is two

kinds of wisdom mentioned, one is holiness, the other is sin.—One of these, the Spirit of God by the apostle, declares is from above; and the other is not. Now the principal question is, what is meant by the phrase, “from above.”

I do not remember of ever hearing, among pious and godly christians, any doubt suggested as to its import. It seems to be as plain and easy to be understood, as any expression in language. If any man has a doubt, he must have stumbled upon it, through the influence of some favorite system. In chap. i, 16, the apostle says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above,” and explains what he means by these words, by adding, “and cometh down from the Father of lights.” And is not the meaning precisely the same in the words before us? And might not the same exegetical clause be here added, “This wisdom descendeth not from above, it cometh not down from the Father of lights.” Is not this then the declaration of the Holy Ghost, that holiness cometh from God, but sin does not? Is not this the natural unconstrained sense? Has the church of God ever viewed the matter in a different light?—Now who can possibly believe, that while the apostle discoursed in this manner to his brethren, he confidently believed, at the same time, that sin and wickedness did as much proceed from an inward divine operation on the heart, as holiness? By saying that the wisdom that descendeth from above is first pure, &c. what does he mean but that God is the author, the producer by an inward operation on the heart, of all holy exercises? And when he uses the same phrase in a negative sense, in regard to sin and wickedness, what reasonable ground of doubt can there be, but that his object is, to teach men, that their evil exercises and wicked lusts, are not produced in them by the same agency?

With plain sensible men, this will, no doubt, stand as the obvious meaning of the apostle to the end of the world; and that, in spite of all labored criticism.

and strained comments to the contrary.—But what is the glorying and lying against the truth, here forbidden? “But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not and lie not against the truth.”—Glory not, as though ye were the real followers of Christ. Glory not, as though any apology or excuse for such a perverse temper and conduct could be framed.—And least of all, do not so belie the truth, as to say, God inwardly moves, or outwardly entices you, to these abominable impieties and crimes. For this wisdom descendeth not from above, cometh not down from the Father of lights. It is not to be considered as God working in you.

SECTION VI.

TEXTS, WHICH POSITIVELY DECLARE, THAT MORAL
EVIL DOES NOT COME FROM GOD.

HERE we might repeat James iii, 14, where it is most solemnly declared of bitter envyings and strifes in the heart, that this wisdom descendeth not from above. If this text does not deny the theory in question, I know not how any language can be sufficiently definite to do it.

1 John ii, 16, is another text, the plain obvious sense of which must be rejected, or the doctrine under consideration must be relinquished. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." In these words, the whole body of sin, every corrupt affection, every sinful desire and practice, is comprehended. In what sense did the apostle mean to assert, these were not of the Father?

Our opponents will say, he did not intend to assert, that God did not directly by an inward and positive influence move the heart of sinners to all these impious propensities and lusts? What then does he

mean? They will not say, he meant to deny that God from everlasting, purposed their existence, that he did not order things in such manner in his holy Providence, as that men would be defiled by these lusts? Nor will any one pretend all the apostle had in view was to assert, that God did not command them. For if this exposition were true, it would seem to follow, that when holy exercises are said to be of God, all that is intended, is that he requires such exercises in his law.

Nor can we imagine any one would say, all that is meant by these sinful propensities, not being of God, is, that he does not approve of them, as excellent and good. For certainly something more is intended, than mere approbation of their gracious exercises, when saints are said to be of God, and to be born of God, and their wisdom to be from above.

According to the plain sense of the passage, it is to be taken as the perfect opposite of Phil. ii, 13. "For it is God, who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," i. e. "It is not the Father who worketh in you the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." This is a plain and important sense. To put a different construction on the passage will require such an effort, such refinement, such a strained or imperfect sense as will make it evident, the expositor finds the text hostile to a favorite system.

According to the theory we oppose, this passage in John should be thus expounded. Brethren, it is a plain truth, that whatever be the power and influence of the devil upon the hearts of men, or of motives, or other instrumental causes, they cannot go so far as to excite in the most depraved hearts a single unholy volition. Such a volition never can exist unless produced in the hearts of men by a positive divine efficiency, so that wicked men are moved to all the evil they commit, as directly by the power of God as saints are to the exercise of faith, love, hope, meekness, &c.

Nevertheless I inculcate upon you this as a doctrine of high importance to be believed, that all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. Now, whatever others may think, I can no more believe, that these two ideas ever existed together in the mind of this apostle, than I can believe he was an infidel. If there is a contradiction in terms and ideas this seems to be one; "No criminal lust of man is of the Father." "No lust of man ever yet existed, but God by a direct operation on his heart, excited it in him."

1 Cor. xiv, 33. "For God is not the author of confusion," or as it is rendered in the margin, tumult or inquietness, "but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints."

Here by confusion, tumult, or inquietude, moral evil and disorder is intended. The apostle is not surely speaking of such external disorder and informality in christian assemblies as implies nothing wrong in the heart. But of these wrong feelings, these corrupt exercises, he utterly denies God to be the author.* Even zealous advocates for the doctrine of a positive efficiency, if for a moment they should consider these two texts, free from the influence and entanglements of system, would, it should seem, naturally and unavoidably run into the sense we have given of them. We are led to this remark by the following fact.

Mr. Seth Williston, a respectable and pious divine, in a Sermon on the Divine Decrees, hath this remark. "The Holy One of Israel is at an infinite remove from being a sinner; neither would I say that he is the author of sin. For the apostle says, "God is not the author of confusion." But having gone thus far, the idea of a favorite theory came into view, and the credit of his orthodoxy with some might be challenged. To ease his mind in this respect, he im-

* "Non enim est exagitationis auctor Deus." (Beza.)

mediately adds this note at the bottom of the page. "What is here said against calling God the author of sin, is not designed to oppose the sentiment advanced by Dr. Hopkins and others, that God is the efficient cause of sin."* So then, Brother, you would not presume to say, God is the author of sin, but you can say he is the efficient cause of it. How a man would quiet his feelings to say the latter and not the former, I know not. And wherein lies so great a distinction between author and efficient cause, I have yet to learn.

* Williston's Doctrines and Expositions, page 23.

SECTION VII.

THE LANGUAGE OF THE SCRIPTURES, IN WHICH ALL HOLINESS IN SAINTS, IS ASCRIBED TO THE AGENCY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, NECESSARILY EXCLUDES THE IDEA OF A DIRECT INWARD DIVINE EFFICIENCY, IN THE PRODUCTION OF SINFUL EXERCISES.

THIS argument, which seems to be perfectly decisive of the question, will be presented to view in four particulars.

1. A number of texts, in which the causes of sin and holiness are placed in such contrast, as utterly forbids their being considered as coming alike from a direct divine influence.

2. The positive declaration of the Bible, that the Spirit of God does not dwell in, and produce evil exercises, in the hearts of the wicked.

3. If the Holy Spirit does not produce sinful exercises in the minds of the wicked, then it follows as an unavoidable consequence, that it is done by no other person in the Holy Trinity.

4. The theory under consideration appears to be a great corruption of the Gospel, as it confounds the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit, in the production of holy exercises, with the physical, or general agency of God.

The contrasts, to which we allude are such as these:

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like. Gal. v, 18—23.

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom;

When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.

Lo this only have I found, that God made man upright;

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory, and honor. Psalm viii, 5.

Oh Israel thou hast destroyed thyself;

But to as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John i, 12, 13.

If we love one another, God dwelleth in us. 1 John iv, 12.

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 1 John iii, 9.

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is he, that is in you, than he that is in the world. 1 John iv, 4.

But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

But the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil. Matt. xiii, 38.

But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted and divideth his spoils. Luke xi, 21, 22.

But they have sought out many inventions. Eccl. 7.

Wherefore as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin. Rom. v, 12.

But in me is thy help! Hosea ix, 13.

But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. 2 Cor. iv, 3, 4.

He that committeth sin, is of the devil. 1 John iii, 8.

In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God; neither he that loveth not his brother. 1 John iii, 10.

They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 1 John iv, 5.

But we forbear; it would be next to endless to produce all the contrasts of this kind, which abound in the Bible.

Here permit me to ask a few plain questions. How can an upright honest man, that believes the plain obvious sense of the Scriptures to be the true, suffer himself to be so seduced by metaphysical subtilities, as to imagine, that the meaning intended to be conveyed in all these contrasts by the Holy Ghost is this: "All holiness and all the wickedness of men, comes alike from an immediate, inward divine influence."

If God works in one as directly and really as in the other, how is he greater, who is in saints, than he that is in the world? And if God as really and directly blinds the minds of those who are lost, as he gives power to believers to become the sons of God, why is one effect so particularly ascribed to God, and the other to the devil?

And if holiness and sin come alike from God, why might not Hosea ix, 13, be inverted and thus read. "Oh Israel, I have destroyed thee; but in thyself is thy help!" Indeed I have heard it asserted that, read it either way, and it is equally true. So long as we make the Bible our guide, we are bound to believe that philosophy to be an idle invention of man, which so strongly militates against the plain meaning of the inspired writers.

2. The next branch of the argument is, the positive declarations of the Bible, that the Spirit of God does not dwell in, and produce evil exercises in the hearts of the wicked.

And can any passage be more to this purpose than Gal. v, 18—23. "But if ye be led by the Spirit ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, &c.—But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith," &c.

Perhaps a doubt never yet arose in the mind of any intelligent Christian, unless it has lately been

excited by the theory under examination, whether Paul, by this statement, meant to lay it down as an unquestionable fact, that no sinful, or perverse emotion, is the effect of the Spirit of God.—That he produces nothing in the mind of man, by his inward operations, except the holy and virtuous affections here ascribed to him.—Nay, instead of producing any moral effects of a sinful nature in the minds of wicked men, Paul and other apostles, do not admit that they have the Spirit of God in them at all. In Rom. viii, 9, it is said, ‘Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.’

The Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit are the same. And does not this language imply, that none but real saints have the Spirit of God working in them. Jude also, verse 19, expressly declares, that wicked men have not the spirit. ‘These be they, which separate themselves, sensual, not having the spirit.’ The words ‘not having the spirit,’ are equivalent to this assertion. ‘The Spirit of God does not produce in them any of their sinful and abominable exercises.’ Now,

3. This plain Scripture doctrine, that the Spirit is the author of no volitions or exercises, but such as are holy, ought in our view to be perfectly decisive as to the question.

The most zealous advocates for this new theory have not yet become bold enough to assert, in unqualified terms, that the Holy Ghost is equally the author of sin in God’s enemies, as of holiness in his friends. But if the Holy Ghost does not by an inward operation, produce wickedness in them, then no other person in the divine Trinity does.—For whenever we speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as purely divine persons, it is impossible to deny any thing, as to counsels or operations in relation to one person, without denying it of the others.—Nor can we ascribe to one any operation or effect, without ascribing it at the same time to the other.

Thus if you affirm, that God the Father works in sinners to will and to do evil, you necessarily affirm the same thing of the Holy Ghost. Or if you deny, that the Holy Ghost produces this effect, you necessarily deny that the Father produces it. For although one person in the Trinity may be represented as acting a more official and prominent part, in some particular operations, than the others; yet they cannot be represented as acting separately and independently of each other. This would be to resolve the high mystery of three persons in the Godhead into three distinct Gods.

Christ lays it down as an infallible maxim, that the Son cannot act independently of the Father; nor does the Father perform any operation, which the Son does not also perform.

His words are these; "I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." And is not this equally true of the Holy Spirit?

May it not be affirmed of him, He doeth nothing but what he seeth the Father do; and whatsoever the Father doeth, he doeth likewise. This remark is confirmed by the fact, that holy exercises, to produce which is the peculiar work of the Spirit, are ascribed indifferently to the other divine persons.

Paul says, "Now the fruits of the Spirit are these, love, joy, peace, &c." But John uses the name of God as equally proper and says, "If we love one another God dwelleth in us." If then you make the Father the inward author of all wickedness, you make the Holy Ghost equally the author of it. There is, I imagine, but one way to evade this argument; and that is to make a distinction, between the Spirit acting in his appropriate office, and acting as God in a more general sense. This seems to be the idea of Mr. Williston, who, in a Sermon already quoted, remarking on Jude 19, "These are they who separate themselves, sensual, not having the

spirit," says, "This means that they are destitute of holy influences." The spirit in his office as sanctifier dwells not with them. Do not these words imply that as God, the spirit might dwell with them and move them to all evil? I suppose he meant to be so understood.—But here I would reply, that the term appropriate office, in such a wide sense, is a mere invention of man. No one person in the Trinity can act in such a manner, under any name or in any office, as to render what he does not imputable to him as God. Nor can he do any thing in conjunction with the other persons, under the general name God, which is not imputable to him, when spoken of as a distinct person. Whatever be the views of others, to me it appears trifling, to say, the third person in the Trinity, under the name Holy Ghost, produces in men nothing but holiness; but laying down this name and taking up that of God, he moves them to all wickedness.

When Paul says to the Galatians, "The spirit lusteth against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit, &c." is this his plain obvious meaning; that Jehovah under the name spirit, excites you to all goodness, but under the name God, he at the same time moves you to all the sin you perceive working in your members? or the Holy Ghost moves you to all that is good under this title, but the same Holy Ghost, under the title God, moves you to all wickedness. Such kind of interpretations of Scripture are to me monstrous, and blasphemous.

Dr. Hopkins appears to have foreseen that his theory would involve the Holy Spirit, in the charge, of not only producing in men, virtue and goodness, but impiety and wickedness.

His words are these; "Though it be as expressly asserted in the Scriptures, that God has determined the existence of all moral evil, and does by his own operation and agency, cause it to take place, as it is, that true virtue and holiness, is the effect of divine operation; yet it does not follow from this, that the manner and mode of divine operation, in these differ-

ent and opposite effects, is in all respects the same."—But this observation of the Doctor is a mere palliative to the imagination, of such as he might conceive would be startled at his theory.—For after having asserted that no second causes or motives excite the wills of men to choose evil, but the positive and direct agency of God, to what can it amount? He has made the two cases of producing sin and holiness perfectly the same, so far as we can have any ideas respecting the subject. This palliative is not worth a straw.—It relates to something, with which our present discussion has no concern. It is not the mode of such a direct operation, but the operation itself we deny.

4. The theory under consideration, appears to be a great corruption of the Gospel, as it confounds the work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of saints with the physical or general agency of God. By this agency all things were originally created, organized and constituted, what they are in all their vast variety, and by it, they are now upheld or preserved in their different natures, properties, powers, faculties, relations, order and succession; and are constantly held under the absolute dominion and government of Jehovah, and in his Providence, so directed and managed, as that they never move or act, but in conformity to his infinitely wise and benevolent designs. To this physical agency, the apostle alludes in these words. "For in him we live, move, (or are moved,) and have our being." And it is in respect to the same agency, God thus speaks in the prophet. "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." In regard to this kind of agency, all objects in the universe are equally dependent. The largest globe, and the smallest atom, the highest seraph, and the meanest insect, the most perfect saint, and the vilest sinner, the brightest angel, and the blackest devil, all here stand upon a level."

But can the Gospel be understood, by those, who have no idea of any other divine agency but this? Is it not the peculiar glory of this system of Grace and Salvation, that it reveals an agency or influence, by which sinners are converted, sanctified, and prepared for endless felicity?—The object of this agency is not to create or uphold creatures in being, but purely to operate upon their moral and active powers, and excite them to will and to do that which is just and good.

If, over and above the general agency of God, the Gospel did not bring into view the Holy Ghost, as exerting this agency upon men dead in trespasses and sin, it would be devoid of one essential glory as the words of eternal life.

Now this latter kind of agency, must, therefore, be kept distinct from the former, in some very interesting and important respects. This remark is strongly confirmed by various considerations.

1. The business of the Holy Spirit is to produce in men nothing but virtuous and holy exercises.—I conceive no one will, in an unqualified manner, assert, that pride, blasphemy, malice and spite, are the effect of the direct operation of the Holy Ghost on the hearts of men.

2. It is expressly asserted in the Scriptures, that the world, or men, who remain impenitent and unbelieving, have not this Spirit dwelling in them. “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever. Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John xiv, 16, 17: Now is it not obvious that this agency of the Spirit is here distinguished from that general agency of God, which extends alike to all created objects, and of which we may say with Mr. Pope. It

“Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent.”

An influence, which is confined to God's little flock, or extends only to comparatively a very few objects in the création, cannot be the same with that which “extends through all extent.”

5. If the agency of the Holy Ghost is not distinguished from the physical or general agency of God, then it will follow that both beasts, sinners of mankind, and devils, have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them:—For it is declared that he shall dwell in saints forever.—And if this is the same as that general agency, by which he works all things according to the counsel of his own will,” it must apply to all created objects, both good and evil; for in God they all live, move, and have their being. But who will presume to say that the Holy Ghost dwells in wild beasts, wicked men and devils, just as much as in saints?

Thus we see the Gospel revelation cannot be understood, unless the agency of the Holy Ghost be distinguished from the general agency of God.—But in what respects is the former to be considered as distinct from the latter? if the Scriptures make a distinction it is a real one; it is not merely imaginary. Upon the truth of this we must presume, even though we were utterly unable by our reason to trace out this difference. For it may be like ten thousand other subjects above the reach of our faculties, at least in the present state of our existence.

But we conceive it is a subject, which the Scriptures have not left utterly in the dark.

1. The distinction between the influence of the Divine Spirit and the general agency of God, does not relate merely to the effect produced.

To explain Jude 19; “These be they, who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit.” Mr. Williston says, “They are not the subjects of holy influence. The spirit does not dwell in them, in his

office as sanctifier. His theory and his language imply that he might dwell in them as an agent, and be the efficient cause or direct mover of their hearts to all the abominations with which they were defiled.—But here I would submit it to the judgment of every candid and serious student of the Bible, whether he can believe that this is the sense in which Jude intended to be understood, viz. “The Holy Ghost does not dwell in these sensual, debauched separatists, to sanctify them, or to excite them to holy desires and actions, yet as God, he does dwell in them, and work directly on their hearts to move them to all ungodliness?” His meaning must be, that the Holy Ghost did not dwell in them as an agent to produce any exercises by an immediate operation on the heart.

2. The distinction does not lie in this, that God the Father may act so independently of the Holy Spirit, as that he could produce in sinners all their evil exercises, and yet the Holy Spirit have no agency in it.—So that it could with truth be said, that although God works all wickedness in men, yet the Spirit works no evil in them, but good only.

For as we have already stated, the several persons in the Trinity do not act independently of each other.—What one does the others do.—If God excites sinners to wickedness by a direct operation on the heart, then the Holy Spirit does the same.

3. In order to leave to the Holy Spirit any thing to be his peculiar work, there must be something to which the general physical agency of God does not extend. For in this general agency by which all things were originally created, and are now upheld, directed and governed, the Holy Spirit operates as one God with the Father. As to this agency, beasts, and birds, and men, and devils, live, and move, and have their being, as much in God the Spirit, as in God the Father or Son. But the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit is confined, as we have already seen, to saints. If, therefore, there is not a sense in which

divine agency extends to saints and not to sinners and devils in general, then there neither is, nor can be any sense in which the Spirit dwells with them and not with other objects, or with impenitent sinners. Now

4. What is this peculiar work, which God performs in saints, which he does not perform in carnal, worldly and impenitent minds?—If he performs any thing in the former, which he does not in the latter, then the work of the spirit in saints may be a peculiar divine work, but if not, it is not a divine work restricted to saints, and lays no foundation for it to be said in truth, that he dwells with them, and not with impenitent sinners.—To produce in some way moral exercises in saints, is not this peculiar divine work.—For it is said, God hardens the heart and blinds the minds of sinners.—But the peculiar appropriate work of the Holy Spirit is to produce virtuous and holy moral exercises in saints by a direct operation on the heart. To produce an effect, to which no means or second causes in the universe are competent, and which God never makes competent to this purpose. But in operating to harden the hearts of men, God works by means or second causes, and gives to these means a power competent to the effect, without any such direct operation on the heart of sinners.—Here then we find a peculiar divine work to be performed by the Holy Spirit, and though the other persons of the divine Trinity are included in the operation with the spirit, yet it is a peculiar work, a work which God performs on no other object in creation. And here we also see how the spirit dwells with saints, as he does not dwell in any irrational object or unholy and reprobate beings. For no heart does God by a direct operation on it, move to any moral exercises, except that of saints.—If he superintends, restrains, moves and governs, wicked men or fallen spirits, turning their hearts what way he pleases as the rivers of water are turned, yet it is not in the same way.—Now this dis-

inction is entirely confounded and done away by the theory we oppose.

Mr. W. R. Weeks in p. 39, of his *Nine Sermons, on the Decrees and Agency of God*, explodes it as a great error, that any should have thought it "necessary, that God should put forth an immediate agency to cause all the good actions of his creatures, but not their wicked actions."

This is equal to a positive assertion that God by his immediate agency causes not only, all the virtuous exercises of saints, but all the impious exercises of sinners and devils.

Here then in this theory all rational creatures in the universe, both good and evil, are placed on one common level, and there is no room to assert that God operates in one more than another.

It is nothing peculiar to saints that God should dwell in them and produce their exercises. For he does the same as to sinners.—As God, and as an agent, sinners have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them as much as real Christians.

A little further on in the book he produces a numerous train of texts, to prove that God by his immediate agency, works all things in the natural world, and then all things in the moral world; and considers all that is said of a divine agency in the production of moral evil, as intending an inward direct influence on the heart, as really as when the good exercises of saints are ascribed to a divine influence. And thus resolves all the influences spoken of in the Gospel into this general physical agency of God. Now if this be the case, how is it any more a peculiar work of God to produce holiness in good men, than sin in wicked men?

The christian world have hitherto supposed God dwelt in a peculiar manner in saints, but Mr. Weeks has found them all to be in a mistake, for he works in sinners, just as really and directly as in saints. And there is not the least possible ground for James to affirm that true wisdom cometh from above, while

the impious wisdom of sinners cometh not from above. Nor is there the least possible ground for the distinction that Paul makes, when he ascribes all virtuous and good exercises to the spirit as the fruit of his operation, and places the works of the flesh in contrast to those, as what are not to be considered as the effect of his operation on the hearts of men. See James iii 14—17. Gal. v, 19—23.

SECTION VIII.

THE POWER AND INFLUENCE, WHICH THE SCRIPTURES ASCRIBE TO SATAN IN THE PRODUCTION OF MORAL EVIL, UTTERLY IRRECONCILABLE UPON JUST AND SOBER PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION, TO THIS MODERN NOTION OF DIVINE EFFICIENCY.

SOME have supposed, there was no such real intellectual spiritual agent, as Satan. All that is said of him is in conformity to Jewish prejudices, or a mere personification of the wicked passions or lusts of men. Others admit there is such an intelligent agent but seem almost to deny his influence upon the moral state and character of man.

But the following texts settle this point, and abundantly prove, that there is such a being, or personal agent.

“Again the Devil taketh him up into the Holy City, and setteth him on the pinnacle of the temple, and saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for, &c.” “Again the Devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and saith unto him, All these things will I give unto thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

“Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do; he was a murderer from the

beginning, and abode not in the truth; because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it.”—“And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them; and forthwith Jesus gave them leave; and the unclean spirits went out and entered into the swine, and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand,) and were choaked in the sea.” Mark v, 12.

Now what is the plain obvious sense of these passages? Certainly, that there is really such a being, agent, or person, as the Devil. If this is all mere allegory, and not plain history; if there never was any real tempter, who spake to Christ as here represented; if there never was any such being as the Devil, who abode not in the truth; if there was no reality in the devils entering into the swine, and then running them down violently into the sea, &c. then nothing can be known by the Scriptures. We may as well say, every thing that is said of the sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, is all mere figure, or allegory.

With respect to the extent of Satan's power to produce evil of any kind, the following limitations of it, are most plainly taught in the divine word.

1. Satan, together with all his angels, is a created being, and is no less dependent on the power of God, for the continuation of his being, his powers and faculties, than the minutest object of all God's works.

Here all creatures, great and small, stand upon a level.

2. Satan, however great and powerful, is absolutely under the all-wise government and control of Jehovah.—He is bounded and limited, by the infinite power and goodness of God, and can no more go beyond these limits, than the feeblest insect that inhabits the dust. We read that God raised up Pharaoh, that he might declare his glory in or by him.

In like manner, in his providential government, he hath raised up the Devil and all his angels, that he might make them the means of declaring his glory, his power, wisdom, justice, and goodness.

But notwithstanding the Devil is thus dependent and under divine control, he may still be a great being, and have a great and powerful agency in the production of evil in this world.—We know not how great a person Satan is. For aught we know, he may be as great a creature as the Arians make Christ to be. No bounds can be set to the power of God, as to the degree of essence and capacity he may give to a created dependent being. We would by no means ascribe to so malignant an agent, more power than he really possesses. But certain I am, it is no mark of a deep understanding of the word of God, or of sound wisdom, to treat the idea of Satan's power to do evil with contempt. He has power to bring natural evil upon men, and is sometimes permitted to do it, to a great extent; as Job was given into his hand, and was dreadfully afflicted by his power and malice.

But it is the reality and extent of his power to produce moral evil, that we are here concerned to state. And here the Scriptures furnish us with the following conclusions.—

1. The introduction of sin and wickedness into this world, is ascribed to his agency.—The Scriptures mention no other agent or cause, in this lamentable affair.—The woman herself said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." God himself charged the mischief upon the Devil, and cursed him for it.

Upon what is said of the agency of the Serpent, or Devil, in the 3d chap. of Gen. effecting the fall of man, we take the words of Christ and St. Paul to be the most proper comment. Matt. xiii, 38. "The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the

Devil." 2 Cor. xi, 3. But I fear lest by any means, as the Serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."—But this account of the fall of man, does not satisfy the curious research of many. They seem to think there is a difficulty here, which ought to be solved, and which all that Moses, Christ, and Paul, have said about it, does not reach. They have not said enough.—No agency is here brought into view, sufficient to account for the rise of sinful exercises in an heart previously perfectly pure and holy. I conceive, it is a conclusion warranted by the Scriptures, that means, motives, instruments, second causes, &c. without a positive, immediate, divine efficiency, are sufficient to the temptation and seduction of a creature perfectly holy, or hitherto sinless; although they are insufficient to restore again the image of God to one who has become an apostate, a rebel, a slave to sin. If I am not able to defend this thought on the ground of revelation, I apprehend no one can disprove it on that ground. When Christ says of the Devil, "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar and the father of it." Does he mean no more by "his own and the father of it," than, that such an exercise was his own exercise, and not that of another creature?—Does it not appear, that it was our Lord's design to caution his disciples against looking beyond the agency of second causes, to account for the existence of falsehood and wickedness? Is it possible any candid sober man on earth, can think that the Son of God would have us to believe, that, notwithstanding what he has here said, God works immediately in the heart of the Devil, every lie, and is the real father or author of it? Regardless of all that philosophy may suggest respecting the absurdity of a self-determining power, and the impossibility of motives being efficient causes, &c. I imagine we are bound by what our Lord here says, not to go beyond the power of second causes, as

swayed by the Infinite First Cause, to account for the apostasy of creatures once sinless, or perfectly holy.—But with some it seems a plain principle of philosophy, to which even the Scriptures must yield, that it requires as extraordinary and direct a power to make an holy being sinful, as to make a sinful being holy.—Many theories have been invented to explain this difficult subject,—difficult, because man will be meddling with what is absolutely above his comprehension, and what God has not thought fit to reveal. Most of these theories, have aimed to account for the origin of moral evil, without introducing a positive divine efficiency, or even admitting that it was comprehended in the eternal purposes of Jehovah. But have any of their different schemes afforded relief to the inquiring mind? If they have seemed to remove one difficulty, they have plunged us into many more still greater?—And after all, I would inquire, what right any man has to add any thing to the account of this matter given by the sacred writers? Was it not adding to the scripture account, for Milton and others to pretend, God could not have prevented the fall of Adam, without destroying his moral freedom? And is it not equally to add to the Scripture account, to say, as Dr. Emmons does, that Satan presented motives to the view of Adam to sin, which motives could indeed have no possible power to move his will, or to excite a wrong choice; that the agency that produced the effect, was God himself, directly moving the heart of Adam to choose evil. Do the Scriptures in accounting for this event, give us the least hint of this kind? Is this the plain obvious sense of what they say upon the subject? Because the philosopher can see no other way to account for the event, does this prove this solution to be correct? There may be another, though we be not able to perceive it.

This is the source of numberless errors among philosophers. “There is no other way to account for the phenomena.” The Manichean says, there is

no other way to account for the existence of moral evil, except upon the principle of the existence of a benevolent and an evil God.—Because, we cannot account for the fall of Adam, or of the once sinless angels, without introducing a divine direct efficiency, to move their wills to sin, are we warranted to set up this principle as truth?—I trow not.

2. All sinners of mankind, since the apostasy, are in the Scriptures represented as under the power and influence of the Devil.—And such language is used, as cannot be reconciled to this modern notion of divine efficiency in the production of the evil exercises of men. “But if I cast out devils by the spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man.” Matt. xii, 28. Here Satan is a strong man, holding possession of the heart as his residence. “And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.” 2 Tim. ii, 26. “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” Ep. ii, 2.

Now is this the obvious sense of these texts, that Satan cannot move the wills of sinners by motives, nor any other influence, to evil; but when it is said, he is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, we are to understand, that God is that spirit, which directly moves and excites every sinner to impiety and mischief? The Bible is truly written in a strange style, if this is the obvious sense.

3. Satan is represented as the agent, who moves sinners to outward gross crimes and abominations. An evil spirit from the Lord, i. e. the Devil by divine permission, instigated Saul to attempt the murder of David. Calvin says, it would be blasphemy to say this was the spirit of God. When David committed the great sin of numbering the people, the Devil is

said to provoke him to it. As it was God's purpose to punish him and the people, he is also said to move David; but it was by suffering him in a degree to fall under the power and influence of the Devil.—When Judas betrayed the Lord of life and glory, it is said, Satan entered into him. Peter says to Ananias, “Why hath Satan put it into thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?” But is it the obvious meaning of this declaration of Peter, that God stood by Ananias, and moved him, by a direct operation on his heart, as Dr. Emmons says, in respect to God's hardening the heart of Pharaoh.—When the Bible says, Satan puts it into the heart of a wicked man, are we always to understand, that God is meant instead of Satan?—For the doctrine we oppose, asserts, that neither Satan, nor any other second cause, can incline the heart of even the greatest sinner to do evil?

4. The Devil in the word of God, is represented as the grand agent in effecting the great apostasy from Christianity, under the man of sin, the Bishop of Rome. “Whose coming,” says Paul, “is after the working of Satan, with all signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish.” 2 Thess. ii, 9.

This apostasy was an engine of Hell to oppose Christ, and to destroy mankind. It is compared to a fierce and cruel wild beast, and the Devil was the Spirit who lived and acted in this beast. “And there appeared another wonder in heaven, and behold a great red dragon; having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels, and the great dragon, that old serpent the Devil, and Satan was cast out.” And this same dragon is said to give power unto the beast. He is also said to deceive the whole world.

5. The Devil is so eminently the cause of all wickedness that prevails in the world, that in order

to the introduction of the peace, order, religion, and felicity of the millennial state, he must be confined in the bottomless pit, and suffered no more to go out. Rev. xx, 3.

6. Nay, such is his power to produce wickedness in the world, that he is no sooner released out of this pit, than he again succeeds to deceive the nations, and to draw them into war among themselves, and against God; and to repeat all the abominations which prevailed for thousands of years previous to the millennium. Rev. xx, 7, 8.

Finally, so great is the power of Satan represented in the Scripture, to produce sin and destroy mankind, that the grand object of Christ's incarnation was to destroy his works.—“For this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the Devil.” 1 John iii, 8.

From all these considerations, it is exceedingly evident, that the Devil, though not an independent, is a very great being, and has a real and tremendous power to excite, seduce, and draw men into sin.—To say, that neither he nor any other second causes, have any power to draw away men into wickedness; that after the Devil, motives, temptations, and second causes, have spent all the power God ever gave them, they cannot excite the will of man, in a single instance, to choose evil. This is never done, and never can be done, but by a direct, inward, divine efficiency upon the heart. This, in our humble opinion, is one of the most plain and obvious perversions of the word of God, that the arrogance of human philosophy has ever yet dared to broach. It is utterly irreconcilable with what is said in the sacred volume, of the power of Satan to produce moral evil, unless it be by some strained interpretation, and philosophical refinement, that sets aside the plain and sober sense of Scripture.

SECTION IX.

WHAT IS SAID IN THE SCRIPTURES OF GOD'S GIVING UP SINNERS TO THEIR OWN HEARTS' LUSTS, AND SUFFERING THEM TO WALK IN THEIR OWN WAYS, INCONSISTENT WITH THE IDEA OF DIVINE EFFICIENCY UNDER CONSIDERATION.

IT has been usual with the most eminent divines and pious Christians, to speak of the sins and crimes of men as taking place by divine permission.—But the terms to permit, to suffer, or not to hinder, are now by some considered as pretty little palliating terms, invented to keep the agency and counsel of God in the government of the world, out of sight.—But in regard to the use of such language, I have three things to observe.

1. It is well adapted to that modesty, diffidence, and reverence, which becomes frail children of the dust, when they speak of the awful mysteries, of the counsels, ways, and providence of the Most High.—Which is most becoming, to say, that, for some wise purpose, God permitted the rebellious angels to fall into sin and guilt, and to bring eternal ruin on themselves; or to say, that, by a direct positive efficiency, he moved their hearts to hate him and trample down his authority?—I should think that the former mode of expression savors much more of piety and sound wisdom than the latter.

David's exclamation is, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me." Psal. cxxxii, 1.

On this point, the judicious and candid Dr. Smalley, exactly coincides with us in sentiment.

"I see no occasion for the supposition of God's being thus the author of all evil, nor any good ends it can answer. Could it be seen how evils might be accounted for, without supposing them any part of the creation of God; and how God might have an absolute dominion over all events, without being the immediate cause of bad things; no good man, I conclude, would wish to conceive of him as being thus the proper source of darkness and evil.

"And indeed, were it so that our weak minds were unable to comprehend how God can work all things after the counsel of his own will, or how natural and moral evil could ever have been, without believing that God is as much, and as immediately, the cause of evil as of good; yet it might be more modest, and more wise, to leave these among other incomprehensibles, than to have recourse to so bold an hypothesis for the solution."—Smalley, Ser. 6. p. 95.

I shall not undertake to say, because I do not know, what that is in a good man's mind, which causes him to delight to speak of God as the efficient cause, that moves the hearts of men to all wickedness. Dr. Smalley, you see, concludes no good man would wish, if he could avoid it, to hold such kind of language.

2. This language is agreeable to sound reason and philosophy.—It does by no means imply, that moral agents, or physical causes, ever act independently of the preserving power, and allwise controlling agency of the Providence of God.—When a thing is said to be permitted, all that is meant, is, that from preceding acts of creating power, and providential direction, an event will take place, except it be prevented by another divine act, put forth for that purpose.

God having created the lions, into whose den Daniel was thrown, and preserved them with their natural appetite for blood, they would have devoured the prophet, had not God, by another act, interposed to prevent it. And this may take place continually, in the ordinary course of divine Providence, without any appearance of a miracle. Thus, had not the Duke of York, in the retreat out of Holland, been jostled aside, and a soldier stepped into the boat before him, that ball which killed the soldier, would have killed the Duke, the commander in chief. But here God permitted the soldier to be killed, but would not permit the life of the general to be taken. All other things being formed, preserved, and directed as they were, the ball would inevitably come in that line; but by another omnipotent providential disposal, God took him out of the way, and so would not permit, but hindered his being killed. When Satan entered paradise, and all the circumstances of the temptation were brought about, if God did not interpose by another act, Adam would be seduced; but God did not interpose, and so he permitted him to fall.

3. This language is conformable to the style and manner in which the Scriptures oft speak of the ways of God. "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts; and they walked in their own counsels." Psal. lxxxi, 11, 12. "He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reprov'd kings for their sakes." 1 Chron. xvi, 21. The Hebrew term, which in this passage our translators have rendered "suffered," Junius and Tremellius render "permisit," or permitted. "He suffered not the devils to speak," Mark i, 34. "Who in time past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways." Acts xiv, 16. The Greek term in this last passage answering to suffered, is *εἰσατε* which is an inflexion of the verb *εἰσω*, and rendered by Schrevelius, "Sino," permit. "And God said unto him in a dream, yea I

know thou didst this in the integrity of thine heart; for I also withheld thee from sinning against me; therefore suffered I thee not to touch her." Gen. xx, 6.

Here, according to Junius and Tremellius, the proper rendering of the Hebrew word answering to "suffered," is "sivi," I permitted. Rom. ix, 22, 23, is a remarkable passage, and ought not to pass unnoticed in the present argument. "What if God, willing to shew his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory."

Let it here be remarked, that in regard to the vessels of mercy, God is said to prepare them; a word importing positive agency (*προηλοισμωσεν*) is used; but with respect to the vessels of wrath, a term of a passive signification is applied, *ηνεγκεν*, he endured, he suffered. Now what is meant by this different phraseology? If God in both cases is equally the direct efficient cause, why in the preparation of the just for glory, should he be represented as eminently active; but in the fitting of the wicked for destruction, enduring, or suffering, rather than action, should be ascribed to him?

Much more to this purpose might be adduced, but these passages will suffice such as have a due respect for the authority of the inspired writers. It surely ought not to alarm us to have it suggested, that the terms permit, suffer, restrain, leave, &c. are only a soft and cautious way to keep the truth respecting the divine agency out of sight, because the censure falls with equal force and justice upon the word of God itself. There is surely no need of going any further than the Scriptures do, in speaking of the greatness of the power of God, or the extent of his agency.—It is also here to be remarked, that the natural and obvious import and meaning of such expressions, giving men up to their own hearts' lusts,

giving them over to a reprobate mind, leaving or permitting them to walk in their own counsels, is irreconcilable to the idea, that all their exercises are the effect of a direct divine influence on their heart, or that no second causes, instruments, or motives, can call forth any volition or choice in their minds.—It implies, that they naturally possess powerful propensities to that which is evil, and that God has only to forbear, to renew, or restrain them, and they will run into all manner of wickedness.

This is not the manner in which the Scriptures speak of a direct divine agency, in exciting men to holy and virtuous dispositions and actions.—Though saints love God supremely, and habitually, live soberly, righteously, and godly; yet they are never said to be given up to walk in their new hearts' desires, or to be suffered to walk in their own holy ways.—This is not the language in which a direct divine influence is represented, when applied to move and influence the heart to what is good.—A different language being used in regard to the wickedness of men shews, that it is not produced by a similar divine influence.—The Scriptures speak of saints being led by the Spirit, and of the taking away of the Spirit of God from men.—But if the exercises of wicked men are the effect of a constant inward divine operation, then sinners are led by God, and so by the Spirit, as much as saints. And there can be no such thing as the Spirit of God being grieved, or taken away.—Instead of being taken away, the more men run into the most bold impieties and strong and deadly delusions, the more evidence there is, that God has come and taken up his abode in their hearts, and the more powerfully he works in them, and the more they are moved and led by him.—These are shocking representations, it is true,—at which some pious minds must shudder,—but we must aver, that they are the genuine results and consequences of the doctrine we oppose.

SECTION X.

THIS IDEA OF DIVINE EFFICIENCY, A NOVEL DOCTRINE,
UNKNOWN TO THE CHURCH OF GOD IN ALL PAST
AGES.

WE know indeed that the antiquity of a religious opinion is no certain evidence of its truth; yet the voice of the most enlightened and virtuous part of the Church of God in all past ages is not lightly to be contemned. This voice is entirely against the doctrine of positive efficiency in the production of moral evil. The texts which are now applied to support this theory, they have ever understood as implying no more than an all wise and powerful providential disposal and application of second causes.—To this point in particular, the reasoning of Dr. Dwight in his Sermon on the Death of Gov. Trumbull, in relation to the truth of the doctrines of grace in general, seems to be applicable.

“That they are substantially the genuine doctrines of the Gospel is satisfactorily evinced by two very interesting considerations.

“They have been the doctrines of those, who in every age have claimed the character of orthodox; and, who by their adversaries have been acknowledged to possess it in the public estimation.

“By this I intend, that from the age of the apostles, they were those in whom the apostolic church was regularly continued from period to period.

“That this body of men has judged justly concerning the doctrines of the Gospel, and received them, at least in substance, as they are there revealed, cannot, I think, be questioned even with plausibility or decency.—That they have mistaken them regularly, and through such a succession of ages, and yet brought forth their proper fruits in an evangelical life, is to me incredible. The fact would certainly establish this remarkable conclusion, that error has been productive of incomparably more piety and virtue in the world, than the truth of God.”

The advocates for the doctrine under consideration, may attempt to sanction their belief by the authority of the ancient fathers, or at least by that of the most noted reformers. I will not say this would be an attempt to impose upon the uninformed, but I will venture to affirm that no such opinion was ever held by the fathers or reformers.—Some of the latter may have used strong expressions respecting the divine decrees, and the providence of God as directing all events, yet it never entered into their hearts to adopt it as their system, that God was the inward efficient cause of all moral evil—To confirm this statement we shall here adduce a few authorities;

Augustine, cited by Calvin. Inst. b. 2, ch. 4, s. 3. “In one place, Augustine compareth man’s will to a horse, which is ready to be ruled by the will of his rider; and God and the Devil he compareth to riders. If God, saith he, sit upon it, he like a sober and cunning rider governeth its will, turneth the stubbornness of it, and guideth it into the right way. But if the devil have possessed it, he like a foolish and wanton rider, violently carrieth it through places where no way is, driveth it into ditches, &c. And which similitude we will for this time be contented with, since there cometh not a better in place.”

Calvin. He was careful not to ascribe the origin of moral evil in devils to a divine efficiency. Inst. b. 1, ch. 14, s. 16. "But forasmuch as the devil was created by God, let us remember that this malice, which we ascribe to his nature, is not by creation, but by depravation. For whatsoever damnable thing he hath, he hath gotten to himself by his own apostasy and fall; which the Scripture therefore giveth us warning of, lest thinking he came out such a one from God, we should ascribe that to God himself, which is farthest from him."

Again, b. 4, ch. 4, s. 5. "It is oftentimes said, that God blindeth and hardeneth the reprobate, that he turneth, boweth and moveth their hearts, &c. Therefore we answer, that it is done after two manners. For first, whereas when his light is taken away, there remaineth nothing but darkness, and blindness, &c. whereas when his spirit is taken away, our hearts wax hard, and become stones. The second manner, which cometh nearer to the property of the words, is, that for the executing of his judgments by *Satan* the minister of his wrath, he both appointeth their purposes to what end it pleaseth him, and stirreth up their wills," &c.

Thus Calvin, whatever strong language he useth in giving us his ideas of the power and extent of the providence of God, is very careful not to ascribe sin, even in the reprobate, to a direct positive divine influence; but their wills are stirred up by Satan.

Jerome Zanchius, translated by Toplady, Pos. v. "God is the Creator of the wicked, but not of their wickedness; he is the author of their being, but not the infuser of their sin."

"Sin, says the apostle, entered into the world by one man, meaning Adam. Though without the permission of his will and the concurrence of his providence, its introduction had been impossible; yet is he not hereby the author of sin so introduced."

Luther. Philip Melancthon inquiring of Luther, how we are to understand this word hardened,

among other things in reply, he says, "God is not the cause of evil," i. e. moral evil or sin. Again; "We say flatly, No, God is not the cause of evil, but a Creator of all things," &c. Luther's Div. Dis. at his table. Quoted by Zanchius on Predestination, he says, "Although God doth not make sin, nevertheless he ceases not to create and multiply individuals in the human nature, which through the withholding of his Spirit is corrupted by sin." In quoting Luther, Mr. Weeks says, here is one sentence worthy of particular attention, "God worketh all things in men, even wickedness in the wicked; for this is one branch of his own omnipotence."

But why is this any more worthy of particular attention than the sentence before cited. "We say flatly, No, God is not the cause of evil, &c." If Luther in these words, so worthy of attention, was of the opinion of Mr. Weeks, he flatly contradicts himself.—But he is not thus inconsistent. He means that God worketh all things in men, even wickedness in the wicked, as in the kingdom of providence he directs and controls all means, motives and second causes.

It doubtless never entered into his heart, that it was the immediate agency of God alone that wrought all wickedness in men and devils. And in quoting Luther to this purpose, Mr. W. falls into a mistake precisely like that of Mr. Merrill, who adduced the authority of Calvin, to shew that immersion was the only valid mode of Baptism.

Herman Witsius. Mr. Weeks introduces Herman Witsius, D. D. as an authority to support the idea, that an immediate divine influence is not a novel doctrine. He speaks of him in terms of high respect as a very able divine, and seems to think his name must do honor to his cause.* But who would imagine that this same Witsius, reprobates in the strongest terms the doctrine he is quoted to support?—In a work entitled the "Economy of the Gov-

* Nine Sermons, pp. 177

enants," translated from the latin by W. Crookshank, D. D. vol. i, b. 1, chap. 8, sec. 28, p. 183, he says "To make God the author of sin is such dreadful blasphemy, that the thought cannot without horror be entertained by any Christian."—"God neither is, nor in any respect can be the author of sin." After attempting to remove a difficulty that might seem to arise from the purposes and universal agency of God, he concedes that it is impossible for man in his present state of blindness to do it; and adds, "This is not the alone, nor single difficulty, whose solution the sober divine will ever reserve for the world to come."

Is this the way to treat authors, to cite them as defending what they view with horror and reject as blasphemy?

In Dr. Witsius's philosophical remarks, Mr. Weeks finds an advocate for his own theory. But would not this able divine, have rejected his own philosophy as utterly fallacious, if he had foreseen he should one day be quoted to recommend, what to him was evidently blasphemy? This may fairly be presumed from the strong terms in which he spurns at the doctrine, which he is arraigned to defend.

But what shall we say of the many and very respectable authorities Mr. W. has introduced to establish the reputation of Witsius as an eminent theological writer?

If Witsius never believed, nor wrote a syllable to defend the novel conception of Mr. W. concerning the divine agency in the production of moral evil, and if the distinguished names he has adduced never understood him to do so, I do not see how all this helps his cause. His readers however are liable to be misguided.—It will not be unnatural for them to think, that Mr. Hervey, Dr. Livingston, &c. &c. were fully in sentiment with Mr. W. on the point under discussion. It would have been no offence to honor and integrity, had a note been inserted to let the reader know, that as to this particular notion

of divine agency, that few or none of these great names were on the side of Mr. W.

President Edwards. It will not be pretended, that this great and excellent man did not most thoroughly understand the Doctrines of the reformers and of Calvinistic divines in general, in regard to the decrees and efficiency of God, as they respect the existence of moral evil.—But this writer in his treatise on original sin, denies, not only for himself, but in behalf of other divines who hold the same doctrine, that they believe in a positive divine agency in the production of moral evil in any case. See part 4. ch. 2.

Dr. Taylor had insisted, that the doctrine of native corruption, made him, who is the author of our nature, the author of our sinfulness. “But with respect to this, Mr. Edwards replies, I would observe in the first place, that this writer, in his handling this grand objection, supposes something to belong to the doctrine objected against, as maintained by the divines, whom he is opposing, which does not belong to it, nor does follow from it, as particularly he supposes the doctrine of original sin to imply that nature must be corrupted, by some positive influence,” &c.

In his treatise on the Will, to which he in this chapter refers, he has clearly stated how far he supposes a divine efficiency is concerned in the production of moral evil. And farther than this the Church of God did never go, till this new theory was introduced into New England.—

“If by the author of sin, is meant the permitter, or not a hinderer of sin; and at the same time a disposer of the state of events, in such a manner, for wise and holy and most excellent ends and purposes, that sin, if it be permitted, or not hindered, will most certainly and infallibly follow. I say, if this be all that is meant by being the author of sin. I do not deny that God is the author of it.” “There is a great difference between God’s being concerned thus by his permission; or between his being the orderer of

its certain existence, by not hindering it, under certain circumstances, and his being the proper actor or author of it, by a positive agency or efficiency.”—And as in ages past, so the views of the Christian world continue to be the same on this subject to the present day, if we except those, who have adopted a different theory on this side of the Atlantic.

Dr. Thomas Scott, in his Family Bible, a work highly esteemed by the Christian public, in his notes on Exod. iv, 21, hath these words.—“Harden. God never communicates hardness, or wickedness to the heart of man by a positive act. For he cannot be tempted of evil; neither tempteth he any man. But when provoked by atrocious crimes, he gives up a man to his own heart’s lusts; he permits Satan to deceive, entice, and blind him; and he takes off his providential restraints, by which many are kept from wickedness, because they have not opportunity or power to commit it, or dare not through fear or shame. When a man is thus left, commands, warnings, judgments, deliverances, every truth in Scripture, and every dispensation in Providence, prove the occasion of increasing obstinacy and insensibility, pride and presumption.”

In the Christian Observer, a work published in England, and celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic for its piety, learning, candor and excellent Spirit, the doctrine of ascribing the wickedness of the heart of men, to a positive divine influence is considered as going an awful length.—See vol. 16, p. 395.—“This suspicion will be heightened, if we push each train of reasoning to its utmost limits. For as Mr. Faber proves, we may even go on the one side to the awful length of concluding, that God is effectively the author of sin, and that virtue and vice are mere names,” &c.

To this section we may subjoin a few remarks.

1. The consent of all great and good men in all ages of the Church, that God does not by a positive efficiency, move the hearts of men to sin, is a strong

presumption, that this is not the doctrine of the Bible, and that there is something in this sacred volume that cannot be easily reconciled to this idea. And what is this but such solemn declarations of the Holy Ghost as these, "Let no man when he is tempted, say, I am tempted of God," &c. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father." "This wisdom cometh not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish."

2. The failure of the attempts of Divines in past ages, to account for the introduction of moral evil upon philosophical principles, does by no means prove the truth of this new theory.—The speculations of Calvin, President Edwards and others, on this subject, it will not be pretended, ought to satisfy the philosopher.—But it is believed, that the Christian ought to be satisfied with such light as the Scriptures impart, and not to attempt to explain on principles of mere abstract reasoning, what is not revealed and is above our comprehension. Here the reasonings of men may do much hurt; good they never do.

3. As in all past ages, the Church of God has understood these texts, which speak of God's hardening the heart and blinding the minds of sinners, &c. as relating to his providential disposal of events, so it is in an high degree certain that this will be the doctrine of the Church in general in all future ages.—As to the pious and godly, who are not seduced by attachment to some favorite philosophical theory, they will always find enough in their Bible to keep them right in this point. And as to such as make no pretensions to vital godliness, and even deists, they, in general, are kept aloof from this mistake by a kind of natural horror, at the idea of God's working directly on their hearts, and moving them to all the crimes they commit.

Mon. Denon, in his account of Buonaparte's expedition in Egypt, relates the following anecdote.—An Arab boy about fourteen years of age, was detected in theft in the French camp, and brought im-

mediately to General Desaix for trial. "Who excited you to this criminal deed," says the General. The instant reply of the lad, was, "God moved me to do it?" The general for a moment seemed to be struck dumb, with a kind of pity and horror; but presently exclaims, "Wretch! let him go," as if one, who could utter such a sentiment, was too ignorant or infatuated to be made an object of criminal justice. I do not offer this as an argument, but as an instance of the fact, that there generally is, even in wicked men, something that is shocked at the idea, that the one true God does move men, by a direct operation on the heart, to sin, and that this will operate to prevent their falling into the mistake.

CONCLUSION.

IF all that has been stated in this Essay in refutation of the new principle examined, did no way concern the interests of vital piety, evangelical truth, sound or healing doctrine, our time, we concede, must have been poorly applied. If the vehemence of my zeal in any point exceeds due bounds, it is in disgust against that spirit of controversy, which would sacrifice the peace and unity of the church of God, to what is of no more importance to the salvation of sinners, than the breadth of a Jewish philactery. But by the view of the subject which we have attempted to defend, we conceive the following interesting advantages are gained.

1. The purity and simplicity of the Gospel of Christ is hereby preserved.

This simplicity consists essentially in two things. First, in preserving unmixed and unsophisticated, those ideas and views of divine things, which are revealed in the holy scriptures. If these undergo any shade of addition or alteration, so far the gospel is corrupted. In preaching the gospel, its truths ought to be held up to view, and caused to flow forth, pure as the waters of life from the throne of God and the lamb. In this case they become a tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. But alas! though the visage of eternal truth, when first she descended from on high, was

clothed in perfect radiant light, yet how is it deformed by the disgusting embraces of fanaticism, sectarianism, or the dogmas of a proud, self-sufficient philosophy. Nor is it one of the least distortions of her fair form, to speak of God as the direct efficient cause, working in ungodly men all their abominable lusts,—teaching that neither the devil, nor any motives or second causes, can possess a power under the providence of God to do this.

2. But not only does the simplicity of the gospel consist, in preserving unmixed its infinitely precious and holy truths, but in the language and style in which we speak of these things. We are indeed not to cherish any superstitious attachment to mere words and phrases, as though there was a wisdom and sanctity in them, entirely independent of those ideas, of which they are the symbols; yet that there is a choice of words and expressions even in the transaction of secular affairs, no considerate man will deny. May not principles and plain facts, be discoursed of in language obscure, uninteresting, and unconciliating? Nay, is not the nature of language such, as that by a little variation, men may breathe into it their own unhallowed feelings and passions? So dark is the mind of fallen man, and opposed is his nature to what is perfectly holy, pure, and divine, that the doctrines of Christ cannot well pass through his lips in a new dress, without contracting defilement, as the most limpid stream will assume a tincture of those strata, over which it flows.—But from all these defects, the language of the inspired volume is in the highest degree exempted.—For holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And he taught them all as he did Solomon, to seek out acceptable words,—words of truth and soberness,—words in the best manner adapted to promote the great end of a divine revelation.—A material departure from the language of inspiration in speaking of divine things, tends to introduce incorrect views of those things.

And if any one has any thoughts on religion, which will not bear a scripture dress, they are to be suspected as fallacious.—Now in preserving the simplicity of the gospel, its style and manner of expression is to be preserved as far as can be.—St. Paul inveighs against all mere words of man's wisdom, and declares he spake and taught in the words which the spirit of God dictated. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth: comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Now to speak of God as the spirit which worketh all wickedness in men,—to represent him as standing by them and moving them to rebel, to blaspheme, to oppress, persecute, and murder,—to declare that the Devil has no power in any way to stir up, or put wickedness into the hearts of sinners,—that even the most powerful second causes, or temptations, or allurements to pride and wickedness, can avail nothing. For man can no more work wickedness than holiness, except he be inwardly and directly moved by the power of God. If this is not a departure from the style of scripture, I know not what could be.—And to hold up these sentiments to view, a great part of what is said of the power of the Devil and other tempters and temptations, is a very inconvenient style.

2. We avoid one great occasion of stirring up the hearts of men to speak reproachfully of the ways of God and the ministry of his word.—The native enmity of the human heart against God and divine truth is sufficiently great. We need take no unnecessary methods to awaken it into impious and blas-

phemous activity.—But this appears to be the case with some, who I would not say, seem to have a greater zeal to make God the author of all wickedness, than all piety and holiness.—If a man will publicly teach,—that when the scriptures speak of God's hardening the heart of sinners, and blinding their minds, &c.—that this is not a special, judicial act, punishing them for former sins; that it does not commonly relate to some peculiarly guilty and obstinate persons, or cities, or nations; but that these expressions are to be equally applied to God's dealing with all sinners, of all ages and descriptions,—that he does not harden and blind them by giving them up to the power of their own lusts, the dominion of Satan, &c. but stands by them, and working directly on their hearts, moves them to every crime they commit.—A man that teaches in this manner, must expect that censure and opposition should follow him wherever he goes.—He may deem it persecution, but among his persecutors and such as would have been so, had they lived in his day, he must reckon the mass of good men in christendom now on the stage, and the pious and godly of all past ages. A great deal of the opposition and outrage against some preachers in New England, has been excited by exhibiting for the pure gospel, a series of unprofitable human speculations. I have no idea that the great and soul saving doctrines of repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, will ever be enforced by pressing on sinners this new idea of divine efficiency.—This, and various other refinements, are more calculated to excite in men a suspicion of their accountability, extinguish a sense of remorse for sin, and to induce a state of incurable moral torpor and insensibility, than to arouse them to a sense of guilt and danger, and cause them to flee from the wrath to come.—Least of all can I conceive, that this view of divine agency is a good qualification in one, who goes to proclaim the word of life to the benighted heathen.

What judicious and sober christian, would be willing to contribute his money to support a missionary, to go and testify to the pagan world that the God of christians has, for wise reasons, not only permitted the fall of man and all his consequent wickedness, which is true; but more than this, that he works in men, by a direct influence on the heart, all the abominations which have, heretofore, been attributed to the Devil? Who can imagine, that pagans are to be converted by such ministrations as these?

The Rev. James Trail, in an address to the Carlisle Auxiliary Missionary Society, speaking of the awfully degraded moral state of the Hindoos, observed, "It is a common practice with them, to rid themselves of all present remorse and future responsibility, by directly referring their profligate practices to the suggestions of the Deity himself.—Repeatedly have I observed the operation of their deadly principles. "What could I do?—How could I help it?—God put it into my mind,"—I have again and again heard urged, by these benighted people, as an excuse for their delinquences."—What could a missionary of these modern notions of divine efficiency do with such a people? Would they be able to follow him through the whole system of wire drawn metaphysics, to prove, that though God be the immediate author of all our most abominable lusts, yet this does not at all militate against responsibility, or the criminality of such exercises? I fear such a missionary would be a miserable witness for God.

3. Another important point gained is, we avoid running the Scriptures into a plain and irreconcilable contradiction.

One passage introduces the Spirit of Inspiration as saying, "I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things." Isai. xlv, 7. Another passage affirms, "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is

not of the Father." Another queries, "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" Again another, speaking of the corrupt passions and abominable lusts of men, avers, "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." Jam. iii, 15. Here is a most palpable contradiction among the inspired writers, if moral good and evil are both alike the effect of an inward divine operation on the heart. But by the views of the subject which we recommend, this difficulty is easily avoided.

The first text, and all of a similar complexion, are to be understood of an outward providential disposal. The last, of a direct positive operation on the heart. In the first of these ways, moral evil comes from God; but never in the latter.—We conceive this seeming contradiction in the Scriptures can in no other way fairly be disposed of. If so, a point of great interest is gained.

4. We reserve to ourselves a method of explaining this awful dispensation of Jehovah, hardening the hearts of men, sending them strong delusion, &c. by which the judgment and conscience of the sinner is most easily gained and his objections silenced.

The native opposition of the human heart, ever has been, and ever will be, active and ingenious in its reasoning against the most pure and sin-humbling truths of the Gospel. And it ever will be the duty of the friend of Jesus to repel and refute these objections. But there is a right way, and a wrong way, to answer objections, as well as to prove and illustrate evangelical truth.—In regard to those, who admit the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, all their cavils are to be met with arguments deducible from this infallible guide.

To quit this ground and to aim to subdue our antagonist by the power of mere abstract reasoning, is as great a folly as for a general of an army unneces-

sarily to quit a strong redoubt, and to meet a powerful enemy in the open field.

There is nothing in the divine conduct, that more commonly provokes the cavils of wicked men, than God's being said to harden the heart, to blind the eyes, &c. But if we adhere closely to such Scriptural views of the subject as we contend for, it is comparatively an easy matter to deal with the objector.

This, as we have already observed, is a special dispensation of God. It is, as the Scriptures represent it, a punishment for former disobedience. In this light Calvin, and all the most distinguished protestant divines have considered it.—Calvin, and according to him Augustine considered, the original depravity of all men, as a penal evil. It was the punishment of Adam, for his first act of disobedience. And there is nothing in this more difficult to reconcile to the justice and goodness of God, than that children should now suffer in their moral character, and be exposed to divine judgments for their parent's sins; an event which every moment happens in the Providence of the most High.—It is certain, the children of pagans inherit all their father's ignorance, superstition and impiety. This is as difficult for me to explain, as that the posterity of Adam should be cursed with depraved hearts for his disobedience.

Now that God should harden the heart of those who have hated knowledge and would none of his reproof; that he should give them up to the delusions they have chosen; is so plain an act of justice, that even bold transgressors cannot well object against it. Besides, what according to Scripture and plain fact are the ordinary means by which sinners in the Providence of God are hardened? Are they not such as these:—His great love and bounty, in bestowing on men worldly prosperity, riches and honors; deferring the punishment of their sins, and with much long-suffering giving them space to repent. Frequently laying aside the rod, and removing the judgments, with which he had begun to correct them, as

in the case of Pharoah, who when he saw there was respite, he hardened his heart yet more.—Sending his prophets and ministers to tell them their errors and mistakes in religion, and solemnly and affectionately to call them to repentance, by which their enmity and rage are provoked, as was the case in regard to the leaders of Israel, when Christ preached to them.

But are not all these acts of great mercy and kindness? Shall the sinner's eye be evil, because God is thus good, even to him. If the sinner is hardened by such means, it is perfectly evident he can have no pretence to find fault with his Maker?

He must admit he is under infinite obligation to praise God for those very means by which he is hardened. For they are not only acts of mercy in themselves, but they present the divine character to view in an amiable light, and are powerful arguments to produce repentance. It is true indeed that God hardens men's hearts by giving them up to the enticements of wicked companions, the sophistry of false teachers, and the influence of the devil.—But if this be a judgment upon them for their refusing to be guided by the word and Spirit of God, their love of the company of sinners, and their predilection for error and falsehood, who can with any shadow of reason impeach the justice of it?—But does not he despoil himself of all this armor to silence the caviller and vindicate the ways of God, who lays out of the question the idea of hardening being a special act of providence, and denies the power of all second causes and instruments to excite the wills of men to evil?—This man we conceive quits plain Scripture ground, and goes to meet the enemy in the strength of his own metaphysical armor. All he can do is to talk of the abstract nature of moral agency, human liberty, virtue and vice consisting in mere exercise and not in its cause, &c. The great leader of the darkness of this world was never yet much terrified and driven out of the field by such a mode of attack.

But says one, who is fascinated by the fine polish of this metaphysical panoply, you have not yet done with the objector. If you have, he has not done with you, and you may yet need the aid of the weapons you so lightly esteem? By no means, the cause which cannot be defended on plain Scripture ground, we believe God never intended should be defended.—We know very well, the sinner, though foiled by the blow just now given, may rise again and with vehemence urge, Why did God originally give me an heart that should be capable of being hardened in the way you have stated; or why did he not exert his omnipotent power and grace to soften my heart into repentance under these dispensations of love? But do the Scriptures here abandon us, and suggest no reply.—If they suggest a reply, it is certainly a true one, and it is the best that can be given, and we can have no occasion to go for help to the most illustrious champion of philosophical warfare. And happily for the Christian, St. Paul was assailed by this very objection, and I conceive I am bound to believe he took the best method to repel it. And what was it? It was indeed a summary one, but none more pungent and powerful could be devised; he pointed the objector to the infinite Jehovah as an absolute and holy sovereign, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth! And suggests whether the sovereign Lord and owner of all things, has not as much right to dispose of the objects of his creation, as the potter has to form his clay into such vessels as pleases him! “Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor?”

If the caviller is tempted to take the last step of audacious impiety, and impeach the justice of his Maker in the awful retributions of sin, and say, “Why doth he yet find fault, who hath resisted his will,” still the Scriptures stand by us and tell us what to say. “Nay, but who art thou, O man, that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him

that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus." If this plain, solemn, appeal to the understanding and conscience does not silence the voice of objection, nothing will do it? He who imagines he can do better by his abstract reasoning than Paul has done, will find himself miserably deceived. It would flatter the pride of a presumptuous opposer of the sovereignty of God, to suggest that Paul treats him with too little ceremony, and to deign to take him on his own ground in a train of labored deduction, but it would probably only confirm him in his impiety.

He that knows that God does a certain thing, and is not satisfied that it is just, is not to be reasoned with any further.—For God's doing it is the highest possible proof of its wisdom and rectitude. So thought the Psalmist, when he exclaimed, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou, Lord, didst it." Thus we see that there is nothing which any boasted philosophical theory can do, but the Scriptures can do it a great deal better.

We shall now put a period to our labors in a few words. We cannot pretend that any thing like complete justice is done to the subject. A consciousness of the want of ability, a pressure of family afflictions and cares, and professional duties, forbid every anticipation of that kind.

We are conscious of having aimed at nothing but a correct statement and illucidation of evangelical truth, and to free it from the embraces of a beguiling and injurious philosophy. If any thing we have said, shall tend to produce this effect, and to exalt and magnify the authority of the Holy Scriptures, and to persuade men that the best philosophy, the most precious wisdom, is the sincere milk of the word of God received into a good and honest heart, we shall be amply rewarded.

Should any one object to the metaphysical discussions contained in this volume and attempt by abstract reasonings to prove them incorrect, I shall take no notice of it. I have not introduced them to

establish any point, except this, that by them no point in divinity can be established, so as to command any high degree of confidence. But should any one prove by plain arguments, drawn from the word of God, that when James says of vicious and impious exercises, "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish;" and of good exercises, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, &c." he means that sin and holiness come both alike from a direct divine influence on the heart of men, I shall be bound to reply or confess my error. But nothing but proving this to be the meaning of the apostle shall ever be considered as worthy of any notice.

APPENDIX.

(Containing the Sermon alluded to on p. 10.)

MODERN PHILOSOPHICAL MIXTURES, DEGRADING
THE CHARACTER, AND DEFEATING THE MORAL
INFLUENCE OF THE GOSPEL, DETECTED.

COL. ii, 8.

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy.

IN these words the Apostle has nothing to do with natural philosophy, any farther than it overleaps its proper bounds, and purposely deviates from its own path, to arm itself against true theology. It is moral philosophers whose systems are so pernicious.—Of these there are three general classes; pagan philosophers, who in the midst of universal darkness sought in vain to find out God; infidel philosophers, whose great endeavor is to extinguish the light of revelation, and restore the ancient empire of spiritual ignorance and wickedness; and christian philosophers, who labor with vast ingenuity and mighty zeal, so to pare down and fashion the Gospel of Christ, as that it shall harmonize with their self-invented systems. In this discourse, our principal business will not be with philosophy, considered as an open enemy, but as a treacherous friend.—For since the christian era, this splendid form has not only arrayed itself in open hostility against evangelical truth, but it has endeavored to incorporate itself with it, and extend its triumphs under a name so truly glorious. In this way immense injury has been done to the cause of Christ, by some of his professed followers. For ages the church languished under the evils brought upon it by the philosophical spirit of Origen.—Of the celebrated Dr. Cudworth it is said, “his attachment to the platonic philosophy has thrown an air of mysticism over some of his metaphysical opinions; and his doctrine of the plastic nature is supposed by Bayle to have given great advantage to the

atheists,"* Philosophy consisting of theological and moral opinions, which depraved men have struck out for themselves, independent of the teachings of the word and spirit of God, is no less to be dreaded whether it come in the character of a friend or foe. Though it usurp the name of christian truth, still it retains its destructive nature. The nature of things does not change with mere names. It is philosophy in the hands of christians, by which we are most likely to be seduced. Against an open enemy we should be more on our guard.

There is no reason to question the fact, that in all christian countries, the philosophical notions of multitudes constitute one of the chief obstacles to their belief of some of the most important principles of revealed religion.

Our first duty will therefore be to exhibit marks by which this spirit may be detected among the professed friends of the gospel.—Our second will be to state reasons why we should avoid it. The following are all the indications of it, we shall have time now to notice:

1. It grounds its belief, even of what it admits to be revealed truth, rather upon the presumption that it is demonstrable by mere human reason, than upon simple divine testimony.

The doctrines of the gospel are to be received as true, because God has declared them to be so.—This is the highest possible evidence we can have of the truth of any proposition. God can neither lie nor deceive; nor can he be mistaken. His word, therefore, taken in its plain, obvious sense, is to be admitted as infallible truth, though it overthrow all human systems, and confound the boasted wisdom of man. But how many are there, who have a spirit within them revolting against God's testimony.

Hence so much cavil against the mysteries of revelation; so much hesitancy and doubt on the ground that the doctrine is above our comprehension; or we do not see how its harmony with other acknowledged truths can be made out; or wherein its real adaptedness to the purposes of piety and virtue consists. He that receives the Bible as the word of God, receives every truth it contains, not because he can prove it by an appeal to reason, or comprehend it in all its extent and bearings,

* N. Eden. Ency. vol. vii. p. 523.

but because God has proclaimed it to be truth. With this ground of belief he is perfectly satisfied. Nothing short of this can constitute a believer in revelation.

He that will believe nothing contained in the Scriptures to be true, but upon the principle that it agrees with his own antecedent notions of the character, counsels and ways of God, and the nature of virtue, does not believe in revelation at all. The Bible is not his guide, God is not his teacher. He may be a philosopher, but he cannot be a christian.

2. Another indication of this philosophical spirit, is its attempts to explain christian doctrine in such a manner that a world lying in wickedness shall no longer pretend to discover inconsistency and absurdity in the system. To a truly enlightened mind, an upright and holy taste, the gospel appears to be not only the power but the wisdom of God to salvation, and it will, when rightly explained, always command the approbation of such a taste. If it appears in a different light to any person, the error is in his own mind. To set things right, he must experience a great change in his own views and temper. But the wisdom of this philosophy is to bring the Gospel down to the ideas and dispositions of men, untaught by the Divine Spirit. Thus a strong plea is set up for expunging the doctrine of the Trinity from our faith, because unbelievers pronounce it absurd and incredible, and so it becomes in their view a mighty obstacle in the way of propagating among the nations a religion of perfect wisdom and beneficence. But to succeed in this attempt, we must not stop at this doctrine. We must proceed in the work of expunging till not one essential principle of the gospel is left. It must be made what it is not, before a world lying in wickedness would cease to object to it as unreasonable. By natural men, men unrenewed in the spirit and temper of their minds, no view of religion can be admitted as correct, which does not flatter the mistaken notions, which they have imbibed of their own native goodness, wisdom, and self-sufficiency. They have no idea of Paul's meaning when he says, "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise."—Those of all men most effectually counteract the design of the christian revelation, who undertake to reform the Gospel, instead

of reforming the corrupt taste and errors of the world. If the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, then to reduce the Gospel to their view is to turn it into a system of folly.

By those very doctrines which the natural man receiveth not, and to which an unconverted world has, and always will most object, all the triumphs of the Gospel over the Pagan nations have been achieved. Has the Arminian, the Arian, or Socinian system, any thing to boast of, compared to the wonders produced by the Gospel in the three first centuries, before any considerable attempts were made by heretics to obliterate from the christian creed the doctrine of man's utter depravity and moral impotence and of a triune God?

3. Another very decisive mark of this spirit, is its attempt to incorporate with the christian system such notions of human liberty and moral agency, as flatter the native pride and self-sufficiency of the human heart, and exclude the necessity of the influence of the Divine Spirit, in the production of holy exercises. Who can entertain a doubt, whether it be christianity or philosophy, that pleads for a self-determining power in the will of man, as essential to the existence of virtue or vice; and insists that an act of choice, to possess a moral nature, must arise in our minds independent of all previous bias to such a choice; yea, independent of the influence of motives, or any external cause whatever; that such a choice must be contingent, or absolutely disconnected with all grounds of a previous certainty of its existence.

Than these, no speculations ever could be more subversive of the whole doctrine of the scriptures. Such a thing is a denial of the absolute dominion of Jehovah over the exercises and actions of his creatures. It gives to man an entire moral independence of his Maker, so that nothing as to his present character and conduct, or future destination can be decided by the Divine will and counsel. At one stroke it annihilates all the predictions of the Holy Scriptures; for these relate chiefly to the future volitions, actions, designs and enterprises of men: but if they were utterly contingent: if there could be no previous ground of their certain futurity, how would it be possible they should be fore-known, or fore-told, even by the highest possible wisdom.

It tends also directly to atheism; for, if those important events, the volitions and actions of men, may come into existence, without any cause, ground or necessity of existence, why may not other things do so? Why might not the whole creation exist thus uncaused? Then what proof have we, that there is a God?

It turns man in upon himself as self-sufficient and having no resources or aids to virtue, but what are comprised in his own free will. It rejects the operations of the Divine Spirit in the production of human virtue, as unnecessary and impossible; for according to this theory, if we were moved by any extrinsic cause whatever, to will or to do, our best actions could not partake of the nature of virtue.

4. This philosophic spirit is also to be detected, by a disposition to introduce into the creed of christians, useless refinements, as important articles of theology.

There is no science, which is not capable of being carried, by ingenious and speculative minds, to a refinement of knowledge utterly beyond the bounds of utility. It is so in regard to Divinity. Set out from what point you will, and you may proceed in drawing consequences, first from some important truth, and then from consequences themselves, till you arrive at principles and maxims, as inapplicable to the purposes of human life, duty, and happiness, as the ancient doctrine of substantial forms. The objection against these refinements, is not that they are impossible; they may be true; (for it is a matter of no importance how you esteem them, whether realities or fictions,) but that they cannot be applied to any practical purpose, in relation to our duty or happiness. Suppose all to be true, which Mr. Stewart and other metaphysical writers tell us of the inconceivable velocity of thought, and of the vibrations of the human will. Let it be conceded that it is impossible that there should exist at the same instant of time, in the mind, an holy and a sinful exercise or desire; yet this is a refinement of knowledge, that can be of no practical use to a christian.

Let philosophers talk, and write, preach, and say what they will; the christian will ever think, and feel, and pray, and act, as though the flesh and spirit did actually co-exist in his soul, and war against each other. So I have no doubt Paul thought and felt, when he

said to the Galatians, "The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would;" and when he said of himself, "I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." The doctrine that the will is a pendulum, that swings with infinite rapidity, and that as oft as it vibrates, the christian changes into a perfect saint, or perfect sinner, is a discovery, with which I presume this great apostle was never honored.

5. Another indication of this philosophical spirit, is its presumptuous attempts to explain what God has seen fit to leave covered with a veil of impenetrable darkness. Of this kind there are subjects innumerable; for there is nothing that exists, but what in some respects is a mystery; some question, relative to it may be started, that none can solve. Indeed, there are none of the counsels, works, or dispensations of God, that we can trace but a little way, before we are lost in the unsearchable depths of his wisdom and power.—Though this sentiment be universally admitted in words, yet such is the pride and inconsistency of man, that he is amazingly loath to make it a practical principle. There are some points as untraceable, as any thing pertaining to God, in regard to which he seems to say, "I will not stoop to worship a being I cannot comprehend." Among these, the origin and cause of the continuation of moral evil, holds a conspicuous place. It is beyond all question, difficult to explain, how the first sinful exercise should gain existence in a creature, whose previous state of mind was that of perfect holiness. Here philosophy has of late begun to soar with untrembling pinions. It comes to its conclusion by a short course, where it fancies no deception can be concealed.—"In such a mind itself, there could be nothing predisposing it to sin. The effect must be produced by some external cause. But previous to the existence of all moral evil, such an agency must be an holy agency, and who should this be but God himself." And thus, this hitherto unrevealed and unsearchable mystery in the works and ways of God, is boldly resolved into the immediate positive Divine efficiency, working inwardly upon the moral powers of creatures, and moving them to sin. To be sure this is a summary mode of adjusting this

awful question; but before we subscribe to it as an article of pure, humble, evangelical piety, we beg leave to pause and inquire, what saith the Scripture? If it accord with this infallible rule, it must be admitted:—if it be philosophy, we must beware of it.

In regard to the agency or influence, by which all effects in the natural and moral world are produced, the following statement seems to comprehend the substance of the light which the Scriptures afford.

1. They abound in declarations of the physical agency of God. By this agency all things were originally created, organized, and constituted what they are, in all their vast variety; and by it they are now upheld, or preserved in their different natures, properties, powers, faculties, relations, order and succession; and by it they are constantly held under the absolute dominion and government of Jehovah, and in His Providence so directed and managed as that they never move or act, but in conformity to his infinitely wise and benevolent designs.—To this physical agency, the apostle alludes in these words, “For in Him we live, move, (or are moved,) and have our being.”

It is in allusion to the same kind of agency, God is said to have raised up Pharaoh and determined and governed all his designs and actions, in the fulfilment of his own wise counsels. In the following passages where the expressions are very strong, and in all similar passages, no other kind of agency seems to be attributed to God. “I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things.” “And if the Prophet be deceived, when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that Prophet.” “Why hast thou hardened our heart from thy fear?” “He turned their hearts to hate his people.”—In regard to this kind of agency, all objects in the universe are equally dependent. The largest globe and the smallest atom, the highest seraph and the meanest insect, the most perfect saint and the vilest sinner, the brightest angel and the blackest devil, all here stand upon a level.—In God, as they had their origin, so they have the continuation of their being.

2. In the same Divine volume there is much said respecting a moral influence or agency. The object of this is not to create or uphold creatures in being, but purely to operate upon their moral and active powers,

and to impel them to think, feel and act, agreeably to the will and pleasure of the agent, who exerts this kind of influence.

But of this influence there are two grand sources mentioned in the Bible.

The first is the agency of the Holy Spirit in the production of holy affections, volitions and actions. It is to His operations the apostle alludes, when he says to saints, "For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

The second is the agency of Satan. He is represented in the Divine word as possessing a mighty power over the mind of sinners. He is said to work in the heart of the children of disobedience, and to lead them captive at his will. He is styled the god of this world, the tempter, &c. Neither the personal greatness of the devil, nor the extent and limits of his power over the minds of men, can be precisely ascertained.—We may rest assured, as the Holy Spirit himself exercises no influence inconsistent with the moral freedom and accountability of man, so neither is Satan permitted to do it. Nor has he ability to search the heart; for, this is God's prerogative. But notwithstanding all necessary limitations, his power is unquestionably great, as he holds the whole world of ungodly men under his influence. By these three kinds of influence, all effects are produced, and all operations are carried on, that transpire either in the natural or moral world. It is a matter of immense importance in religion, that we should not confound one with another; that we should not attribute to the physical agency of God those holy exercises, which are produced by the moral influence of the Divine Spirit; nor ascribe to our Maker those evil exercises in sinners, which the Scriptures place to the account of the god of this world. The Gospel scheme of light and wisdom must necessarily be obscured and perverted by such a step. We may be led not only to speak falsely but irreverently of God; yea, to ascribe to his internal moral influence on the minds of men those very wicked and abominable suggestions and exercises, which the whole christian world for ages, (if we except a few bold and daring philosophic spirits,) have been in the habit of ascribing to the devil. As to the production of millions of events, effects and actions, no other agency is

necessary to account for their existence, but the physical agency of God.

You choose to take and eat the orange, that is placed within your reach; to this action what influence is necessary more than the natural agency of God in upholding you in the possession of the different powers and properties of your nature, and by a providential disposal bringing about all the circumstances necessary to the action. Considering what your taste is, the nature of the fruit, and your knowledge of its agreeable qualities, and other things leading to the action, it naturally follows in this conjuncture of circumstances. What occasion is there to superinduce a Divine moral influence, and to say you could not touch the fruit, till over and above all this natural agency, the faculty of your will was moved by the immediate finger of God. It is neither sound philosophy nor Divinity, to have recourse to more causes than are necessary to explain the phenomena. This remark is applicable to an endless train of human actions.

In all that God is in the Bible said to do, in the production of moral evil, we conceive no other Divine agency is necessary, or is intended, than the natural agency before described. In proof of this statement we have two arguments from the word of God to produce.

First, inspiration positively denies that sin, error and wickedness proceed from a Divine moral influence. What else can be the natural construction, the plain import of such passages as these, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace as in all the churches." "This persuasion cometh not of Him that calleth you." "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man." "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

There is then, notwithstanding all that is said of God's hardening the heart, creating evil, blinding the eyes, &c. a sense in which no moral evil is from him. Here is a distinction between good and evil as coming from God, and doubtless an important one. Every thing both good and evil is from God, as by his natural agency he upholds and governs the world with absolute sway. But, nothing morally evil is from him, as working by an inward moral influence on the minds of men,

and disposing them to work wickedness. This sense of the passages will be confirmed when it is considered, that these evil exercises are ascribed to quite another cause. And secondly, is it not a plain fact that when sinners are spoken of as about to do, or having committed any flagrant acts of sin, they are said to be moved to it by Satanic influence. When Judas formed the resolution to betray the Lord of life, it is said Satan entered into him. To Ananias, Peter says, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?"

It is true, it was in the Divine counsel, that all things respecting Judas and Ananias should come to pass as they did. But between purposing that a thing shall have existence, and doing that thing, there is in respect to God an infinitely important difference. Did God purpose the existence of sin? But there is some difference between this and his executing this purpose by committing sin himself. There is also a wide difference between doing a thing and the manner of doing it. If you say God, as a providential event, led Ananias to lie to the Holy Ghost, still there will be a wide difference between permitting Satan to stir up in him a disposition to lie, and doing this himself by an inward moral influence. To say this influence was from God, is to assert what was false in fact, and to confound the agency of God with that of the devil.

As a providential event God determined that the heart of Pharaoh should be hardened; but does this warrant us to say God stood by Pharaoh, and moved him by an inward moral influence on his mind to disobey his order? By no means; to me the inference appears as unjust as it seems bold and irreverent. I presume, my hearers, with you it will not admit of a question, but that, if St. Peter had undertaken to inform us, by what inward moral influence Pharaoh was moved in his rebellion against the command of God, he would have said, it was the same malignant spirit by which Ananias was moved.

I am sensible that on the principles of influence we have stated, philosophers say we cannot account for the introduction of sin into the moral world.—Be it so: which is most becoming, a confession of ignorance in regard to this point; or to say when the angels first sinned, God stood by them and moved them to hatred and rebellion?

Does the word of God thus explain it; or does it leave the question unanswered? If the latter, why not leave the subject where the Bible leaves it? David says, I meddle not with things too high for me;—what if this should be a matter too high for us; what if it should be among those secret things that belong to God and not to us? Does philosophy put on a self-sufficient smile, as though there was nothing here to puzzle a wise man? “It is the remark of an eminent person that Divinity consists in speaking with the Scriptures and going no further.”

Or to come down to our world; when Adam first sinned, how do the Scriptures account for it? Do they say that God by an internal influence moved him to revolt? We hear nothing of this. The awful event is ascribed to Satanic influence, subtilty, craft and malice; and there the Scriptures leave the matter. Shall we say this affair was never understood by any of the inspired writers? That the Holy Ghost left the honor of bringing truth here to light to the genius of modern metaphysics? Even the great St. Paul seems to have had no idea that God stood by Eve and moved her to lust after the forbidden fruit. To the Corinthians, he says, “But I fear lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” If the notion which we oppose be correct, it seems as though the Scriptures were afraid or ashamed to own the truth in relation to the subject; for they ascribe the fall of man to Satanic influence, and there they stop. The same charge seems also to lie against the Almighty himself. In the prophet, He says, “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thy help.” But if it was by sinful exercises they were destroyed, as all must admit, and by holy exercises they would be helped, and God was just as much the immediate cause of one as the other; what ground for this distinction? He was as much the author of their destruction as their help. Nor was their ruin a whit more from themselves than their recovery. Help and destruction were both alike from God, and both alike from themselves. But do the Scriptures thus tittle and make a difference where none exists?

But will it be said, it is expressly declared that God moved David to number Israel and Judah. As in

event in Providence, He, no doubt, determined and brought it about. But did he stand by him and work inwardly upon his heart and incline him to this sin. No, the devil did this; for in another place we read "And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel."—David was then carried away by the remains of his own pride and the temptations of the devil. If God works inwardly on the minds of sinners to will and to do evil, then why does he not do the same in regard to the devil himself.

But what man without an inward horror at his own temerity could come forward in a public assembly and say that God stands by Satan and moves him to all his lies and murders. This would be infinitely more than Jesus himself presumed to say. For speaking of Satan he goes no farther than this, "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it." The devil in all he does is never represented as being under any moral influence out of himself. To represent him, or wicked men, his children, to be inwardly moved to all their iniquities and abominations by an inward Divine influence; if this is gratifying to the pride of philosophy, it must be grating to the ear of piety.

There is a kind of natural horror in all men, who believe in the existence of God (excepting a few bold and adventurous philosophic spirits) at the idea of God's standing by sinners and moving them to sin. If a murderer were arraigned before the tribunal of justice, and it were there declared in the indictment, that he was inwardly moved and instigated by God to imbrue his hands in his neighbor's blood, how would the audience be surprised and shocked!—Nor will it ever be otherwise while the fear of God remains on earth.

It is to be hoped the advocates of the doctrine we oppose, will not charge us with denying the government and providence of God, because we do not hold that God stands by devils and sinners, and inwardly moves them to all the crimes they commit. We hope they will not arrogate to themselves the honors of being persecuted for Christ's sake, because their doctrine may meet with some opposition. Nor let there be too confident, that it is either the will of God, or the will of souls that leads them to advance their doctrines and to tell us in their discourses and prayers, that they believe

God himself to be that spirit, which works in the hearts of the children of disobedience.

It deserves their serious consideration, whether they are not hereby arming sinners with still greater prejudices against religion, and destroying their own usefulness. It is to no purpose to say, it is no more inconsistent with the moral freedom of men for God to work in sinners unholy exercises, than to produce in saints such as are truly virtuous. The question is not what God can do, but what he actually does perform. I am strongly persuaded the view of scriptural influences, we have exhibited is correct, and shall add no more under this article, than my solemn protest against that philosophy, which declares it is God, who works in sinners to will and to do all the abominations with which they are ever defiled.

2. In the next place, we are to suggest a few reasons, why we should beware of philosophy. The first is, christians have no need of it. They are blessed with a perfect fulness of divine wisdom and knowledge in the Scriptures; a light able to make them wise unto salvation, and to fit them for every good work; and what more do they need?

This is Paul's argument, "In whom (Christ) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and this I say lest any man should beguile you with enticing words." Surely, christians may apply to the light of revelation, these memorable words of the more than half infidel Rousseau; "That philosophy has not been able to do any thing, which religion could not have done better; and religion has done much, which philosophy could not have done at all."

Can we expect any philosopher to arise, who by wisdom shall furnish us with more just and sublime conceptions of the nature, attributes and government of the Most High; a more perfect system of moral virtue, or with motives and sanctions more weighty to enforce the practice of it; or with a new and better way to obtain the pardon of sin, peace of conscience, and eternal life! It will not be pretended. What need then have christians of any principles rules or systems, the product of mere abstract reason, and not the plain dictate of the word of God? But are there not some questions of immense importance, which revelation has left untouched? Does it any where discover to us

the harmony between the fore-knowledge of God and human liberty? Does it clearly define the nature of moral agency and the grounds of moral obligation? It may be replied without fear of just contradiction, that no man was ever yet more persuaded of his being a moral agent and accountable to God for all the volumes of philosophy, designed to explain the subject. God in the Holy Scriptures and in the dispensations of his providence treats man as being accountable. He himself is conscious of his own liberty, and feels responsible. And as to every thing relating to the subject more than this, ages of abstract discussion have left it just where they found it. Let a man plunge in and wade through the whole ocean of learned and ingenious speculations in relation to the question, and he may come out a skeptic, deny all accountability, or with Lord Kaimes maintain that our consciousness of liberty is altogether delusive. But he will not obtain any greater sense of the certainty, the propriety and justice of a judgment to come.—Just, when you see a young man begin to assume the airs of a philosopher, you have reason to tremble for his faith. Not that faith is unreasonable, but that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

We have so much boasted of our reason, and been so much in the habit of deciding every thing in religion by philosophy, that the authority of the Bible is in a great measure lost. If we do not return to this light, as the sole standard, the peculiar and essential doctrines of Christianity can no longer be defended. In our controversy with Unitarians, we are compelled to take this ground and declare we can stand on no other. We treat their opposition of science, falsely so called, with just disdain. Let us carry this principle through. Let us act in the same manner in regard to every other theological discussion; then we shall be consistent; then Christianity will triumph. It was by an appeal to what is written that the Lord of life in his temptation, foiled the devil. He was too great a philosopher to have been confounded by any other weapon.

When the christian is convinced it is God who speaks in the word, and he understands what he says, there is an end to inquiry.—The next thing is action. If philosophy here interferes, it is only to draw a veil over the meridian sun, to perplex, puzzle and delay.

We cannot with absolute precision fix the point, where light ends and darkness begins; but of nothing can we be more sure, than, that there is an essential distinction between them. The same may be said of evangelical and philosophical preaching. In the first the business of the preacher is to

“Negotiate between God and man”
 “—————the high concerns,
 “—————of judgment and of mercy.”

But the latter indicates a mind too much disposed to exalt and amuse itself by the acuteness and beauty of its own self-devised theories and systems. And as all preaching carries in it a spirit peculiar to itself, so like a dry and scorching wind, it evaporates the living power of religion. It is a stranger to the sublime and vigorous impulses of that charity whose only luxury is to do good. It mourns not over the moral desolations of the world; nor can it admit the sublime conception, that the pious Watts in composing a hymn for an infant, exhibited a greatness that outshines all the glory of the proudest mere metaphysician.

2. If any thing could induce a truly wise man to be jealous of these speculations of human reason on divine subjects, one would think the shocking absurdities and abominable errors, into which those have run, who have boasted most of philosophy, must do it;— who have asserted that the works of creation in all their glory do not evince that the hand that made them is divine! or that they originated from an Almighty designing cause!

Who have asserted that the distinction between right and wrong, virtue and vice is a mere fancy! Who have maintained that death is an eternal sleep! Who have asserted that self-murder, fornication, vain-glory revenge, &c. are no crimes? Infidel philosophers. Who have denied the existence of the material world, and affirmed that it had no being, except in our internal perceptions and feelings! Who, agreeably to this theory, have implicitly maintained that man had no body; nay, that he had no soul, excepting in idea and volition! Who have asserted the divine benignity was so great as to render it impossible for the Deity to inflict the punishment, denounced in revelation against incorrigible offenders! Who have maintained that it is God himself, that worketh immediately in the hearts of the children

of disobedience, and moveth them to all the blasphemy, treachery, cruelty, war and murder, that ever disgraced and afflicted the world? Christian philosophers. Let us then beware of both.

3. Let it also be considered that no important point in Divinity has ever been discovered, determined and enforced by men unenlightened by the word and spirit of God. What did all the philosophers do, antecedent to the coming of Christ? The world by wisdom knew not God. In the benign splendors of christian light, their most perfect systems were turned into folly. Nothing respecting the moral character of God and true holiness was right as taught by them. And are the speculations of modern infidel wise men, more congenial with the doctrines and spirit of the Gospel? And what valuable discoveries have christian philosophers to boast of, that were not derived from the Bible? What more has the whole tribe of philosophers done, from age to age, than to prove each other's systems false, as they have arisen in succession?

Some seem disposed, so to mould and explain christian doctrine, as that it shall correspond with their abstract theories of the human mind. But were any speculations ever more uncertain? How many volumes have been written to explain the manner in which the mind conceives of external objects? This subject has been a matter of controversy from the earliest periods of literature.

But Dr. Reid has lately proved the whole train of philosophers and metaphysicians, for four thousand years or more, including, even Clarke, Locke and Newton, to be in an error;—yea, to have employed themselves all this time to explain a subject, that lies beyond the limits of human knowledge, and about which a Locke can know no more than an untutored peasant.* In respect to so important a power as that of conscience, how discordant and uncertain are the opinions of the most acute writers? Some have considered it as an original, distinct faculty of the mind, and have given it the appellation of the moral sense. Among these are Shaftsbury, Hutcheson, Reid, &c. Others have asserted it is not a distinct faculty, but that the operation of

* Stewart's Elem. Phil. Hum. Mind, pp. 85—88.

various powers of understanding and will were concerned in every moral conclusion, and that the sense of right and wrong which we experience is the effect of the joint influence of these powers upon the general principle of self-love. In regard to the ground of praise and blame there is the same discrepancy of opinion. One predicates it altogether of taste or propensity, and affirms that the exercises of our will have neither virtue nor vice in them, any more than the motions of our body. Others again affirm that nothing is capable of deserving praise or blame but these very same exercises of the will. Some have considered all the emotions of the mind, love and hatred, hope and despair, joy and sorrow, as nothing but exercises of the will; (though the absurdity of this be somewhat apparent) while others have considered the affections and will as very distinct powers.

But if they can decide nothing by their abstract reasoning, respecting such important principles of the human mind, to what does all their wisdom amount? What reliance is to be placed upon it? They find man in the Holy Scriptures assumed as an accountable agent; that his present conduct will decide his future and eternal destination; and happy if their philosophy does not enfeeble the power of these essential doctrines; add any thing to their energy it cannot.

4. The speculations of men on divine subjects, whose light is derived from themselves, and not from the Scriptures, can never be incorporated with the Gospel and become one system with it. Here the pantheon of pagan deities and the pantheon of philosophy stand upon a level; as before the coming of Christ, philosophers never did any thing towards introducing the light of the Gospel, so they can now do nothing to improve it. Graft their speculations upon it and you corrupt it. It is of such a peculiar heavenly nature and spirit, that it must ever stand by itself. The tints of the rose of Sharon, like that which adorns the fields of nature must be hurt by the most exquisite touches of a mere human pencil.

To open, explain, prove and apply christian doctrine in St. Paul's way, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," and to trace the analogy of nature and revelation, may afford ample scope to the christian, poet, orator, critic and divine; but for them to attempt to

improve the light actually contained in the sacred volume by theories of their own devising—this is for night to offer its aid to increase the splendors of the day.

5. We shall only add that mere philosophy never yet produced a single truly amiable and virtuous character. There is in all ages, a pride in its nature which renders it incompatible with the production of such fruit. It is an observation of Dr. Johnson, that no such thing can be found in all the history and poetry of the ancient Gentile world. This is also true of the writings of mere philosophers of modern times.

They are all of one spirit; they approximate no nearer to God and true holiness, while they follow any other but christian light. The christian philosopher may indeed be both holy and humble, if he hath not suffered his philosophy to eat out the bowels of evangelical truth;—but no part of his holiness or humility is to be ascribed to his philosophy. The less he philosophizes, and the more he sits at the feet of Jesus, with an entire dependence, and learns of him, the better. Take heed then and beware of philosophy, even in its most specious form. Satan will tell you, as he did Eve, it is good to make one wise; but his object is the same, by pride to lead you to revolt from divine teachings. Let the Bible then be to your understanding what the sun is to the day, all its light. As the stars are utterly lost in his superior splendors, so should we consider all mere philosophy as lost in the effulgence of revelation. Let this be a lamp unto your feet, and a light unto your path, and you will go right where philosophers and metaphysicians may mistake and die.

This revelation needs no other commentator to make it a savor of life unto life, but the inward teachings of the Divine Spirit, and the light which one part reflects upon another. May we all be blessed with that discernment, which he gives. Then as to our hearts the darkness will be passed, and the true light will shine.

And now unto the King, Eternal, Immortal and Invisible, the only wise God; be glory and honor, power and empire, world without end. Amen.

THE END.

B. D. OCT. 21 1912

