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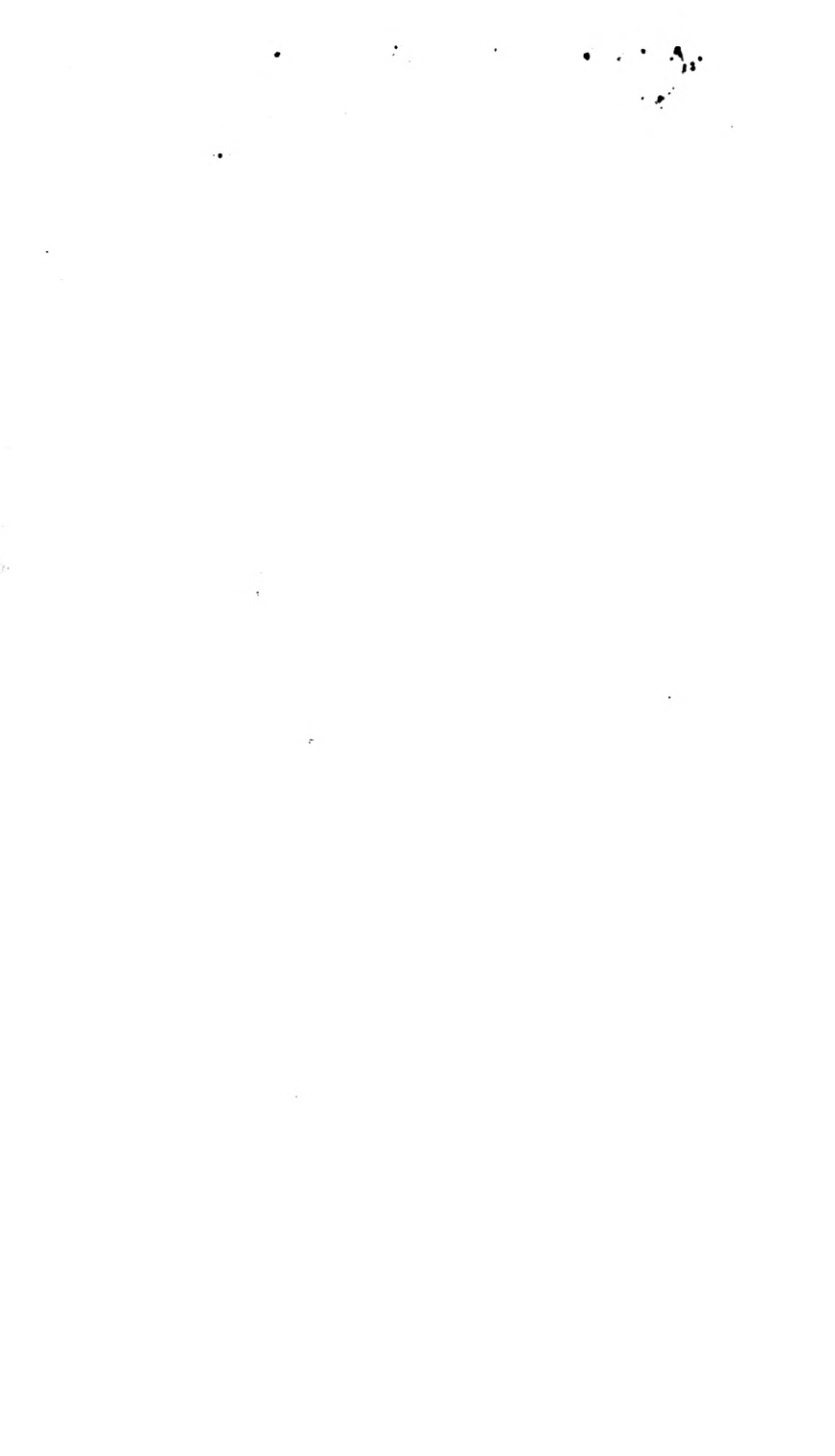
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W. E. Channing
LETTERS

TO

UNITARIANS

OCCASIONED BY THE SERMON

OF THE REVEREND WILLIAM E. CHANNING

AT THE ORDINATION OF THE

REV. J. SPARKS.

BY LEONARD WOODS, D.D.

ABBOT PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY IN THE THEOL.
SEMINARY, ANDOVER

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1820

DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, TO WIT :

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JNO. W. DAVIS, } *Clerk of the District*
 } *of Massachusetts.*

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ERRATA.

- Page 12, line 2 from bottom, read *conduct*.
 15, 1, *Mathers*.
 25, 13, *could*, for *would*.
 36, 15, *whatsoever*.
 106, read, Letter *X*. P. 120, Letter *XI*
 132, Letter *XII*

LETTER I.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

It has been the general sentiment of those, who are denominated *Unitarians* in this country, that *religious controversy* is undesirable, and of dangerous tendency; and that it is the duty of Christians of different parties to look with candor on each other's opinions, and not to magnify, beyond necessity, the points of difference. To this sentiment of yours respecting the danger of controversy, and the importance of candor and forbearance. I cordially agree. I regard it, as one of the great ends, which remains to be achieved by the influence of the christian religion, that all bitterness and strife should be banished from the world, and the spirit of love and peace universally prevail. With a view to this momentous end, I have made it my care, to guard, as far as possible, against introducing any thing disputatious into the pulpit,—especially on an occasion of so much interest, and so much tender emotion, as that of ordaining a Christian Minister. By these views I have actually governed myself for many years. I admit, indeed, the lawfulness, and, in some cases, the expedience and necessity of religious controversy; and I have endeavored to form some definite views of the principles, on which it ought to be conducted. But I will frankly express my apprehension, that it may require more caution, meekness, and self control, than I possess, to secure

an exact observance of those rules of controversy, which I should prescribe for others. At the present time, and in my present undertaking, I cannot be insensible of special danger, as the controversy between the two parties has, for several years, been carried on in various forms, and with no inconsiderable warmth, and there are, I am sorry to say, on both sides, and even among the more moderate, too many symptoms of strong excitement. But whatever may be the circumstances of the present time, or the nature of the business I have undertaken, I wish here to declare my utter abhorrence of the practice, which has been too common, of applying reproachful epithets to an opponent, and of misrepresenting his real opinions, or endeavoring, by painting them in the most glaring colors, to expose them to contempt;—especially, of any disposition to sully his reputation, to inflict a wound on his feelings, or to triumph at the discovery of his imperfections. Such things are totally repugnant to the legitimate ends of controversy, and ought to be reprobated by all Christians, just as we reprobate the ferocities and cruelties of savage war.

The sermon, which occasions these Letters to you, is entitled to particular attention, on account of the talents and public character of the author, and, most of all, because he feels himself authorised to speak in *your name*. The sermon comes forth, as the voice of your denomination, and is extensively circulated, as an instrument of promoting your cause. On such an occasion, it is unquestionably proper, that our attention should be turned afresh to the question, whether the cause, which this sermon advocates, is indeed *the cause of God*.

To men, who are friends to unfettered inquiry, I shall think it unnecessary to offer any apology for the freedom of my remarks on the various subjects, which

will be brought into view in these Letters. And I hope you will not deem it improper, that my remarks should be addressed to *you*,—inasmuch as the subjects of the discussion, on which I am entering, have been introduced by one, who appears before the public, as *your representative*;—especially, as the manner, in which he treats these subjects is, in most respects, not unlike the manner, in which they have generally been treated by those, who have embraced the Arian or Socinian faith. This sermon is a fair specimen of the mode, in which we have been accustomed to see our religious opinions opposed in the writings of Unitarians. Now it must be allowed to be a sufficient justification of this attempt of mine, if I am fully convinced, that my opinions, and those of the Orthodox generally, are misunderstood, and essentially misrepresented by *Unitarians*, and particularly by the author of this sermon. I am convinced of this. And I think too, that the mistaken views, exhibited in the sermon, are exhibited in a manner, which, after cool and sober examination, neither the writer, nor his readers, will be much disposed to justify.

It seems there has, for some time, been a general expectation in this vicinity of some publication from me relative to the sermon which has occasioned these Letters; and inquiries have not unfrequently been made, as to the reasons of such a delay. Those reasons I will now frankly suggest. First. The regular duties of my office are sufficient to occupy my whole time; and I found it would require some effort in me, to be able to devote only a few hours in a week to such an employment as this. Another reason was, that I wished not to interrupt the attention, which the public were inclined to give to what had already been written, on one of the principal subjects of discussion between the two par-

ties. Besides ; I hoped that by taking a longer time, I should keep myself at a greater distance from the agitation and heat of controversy, and more perfectly avoid every appearance of wishing to make a personal attack upon any man ; and that I should be better able to fix your attention, as well as my own, upon the subjects themselves, which were to be investigated, without regard to any considerations whatever, not conducive to a fair and thorough investigation.

The favor which I now ask of you is, not that you would treat my opinions and arguments with lenity and forbearance, but that you would give me a patient and candid hearing, while I attempt, on several important points, to explain and defend the religious sentiments of the Orthodox in New-England ; and while I attempt to show, in what respects the writings of Unitarians essentially misrepresent our faith, and go into a manner of reasoning which is liable to just exceptions. I wish, particularly, to state the objections I feel, to several representations and modes of argumentation, contained in this Sermon, and to suggest some reasons, why the Author himself, and those who have implicitly relied upon the correctness of his positions, should allow themselves time for a serious review of the ground of this controversy. I wish, in short, as far as the limits which I must prescribe for myself will allow, to embrace the present opportunity, to do justice to myself and my brethren, and to satisfy those, who differ from us, as to the character and the evidence of that system of religion, which we believe.

The subjects, which have been discussed by my beloved Colleague, the **REV. MOSES STUART**, will here be omitted. I regret, with many others, that his health and professional labors did not permit him to employ his tal-

ents and erudition on all the remaining topics of the Sermon. It is at his suggestion, and by his request, that I have turned aside from my common labors, and, let me say too, from my prevailing determination, so much as to take a part publicly in the controversy, which unhappily divides this region of our country. But, though I am urged to this undertaking by the request of those, in whom I am accustomed to repose entire confidence, and though I am fully persuaded that the opinions of the Orthodox have been treated unjustly; I am almost ready to withdraw my hand from this work, from a painful apprehension, that my efforts may serve but to increase or perpetuate the spirit of prejudice and animosity, which has shown itself among us in so many forms, and which, so far as it prevails, does really cut off all prospect of attaining the ends of free investigation. But I indulge the hope, that a different spirit is gaining ground. And I could wish, that the Reverend Author, who has undertaken to speak in your behalf, might have enjoyed the happiness of a more unruffled mind, and the honor of doing something more for that cause, which he is so well able to promote,—*the cause of love, candor, and gentleness.* I think that he, and many others will acknowledge the benefit they have, in this respect, derived from the example of my worthy Colleague. It is from the hope, that I may be guided by the same motive with him, and that, whatever else I may fail of accomplishing, I may help, in some measure, to diffuse a spirit of unprejudiced inquiry and christian kindness, that I am encouraged to proceed.

LETTER II.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

THE Author, who speaks in your name, has at length, it seems, obtained satisfaction, as to the propriety of having a *creed*, or *confession of faith*. In his sermon, he has expressly given to the public the opinions which Unitarians embrace, in distinction from the opinions, commonly called Orthodox. The design is just and honorable. I am utterly unable to conceive, what valid objection there can be against the attempt of any denomination of Christians, to make the public acquainted with their views on religious subjects; or, in other words, to exhibit the *articles of their faith*. The thing is evidently proper in itself, and often necessary, though liable to abuse. With so respectable an example before you, I trust you will be free from any further difficulties on this subject, and will proceed, as occasion may require, to correct any mistaken apprehensions which the public may entertain, as to your opinions, and to give them a just view of what you believe to be the Christian religion. You owe this to the community. You owe it to yourselves. And it is obvious, that justice, in this respect, can be rendered to you by none, but yourselves. Other men, especially those who differ from you, cannot be competent to make known your faith, any farther than they are instructed and authorized by you. Doubtless you have felt that you have had reason to complain of the incorrectness of some Orthodox writers, who have undertaken to make a statement of your views. It is with manifest propriety, that you have now claimed the right, and through him, who acts as your organ of communication, have ex-

exercised the right, of declaring your own opinions. If you are just to yourselves, you will not stop here. Whenever others impute to you opinions, which you do not entertain, or deny to you those, which you do entertain; and whenever they are doubtful as to your faith, or in any way misrepresent it; you will feel that, of right, it belongs to you to interpose, and to do yourselves justice. And you would think it a gross violation of the rules of christian candor, for any man to declare your opinions to be different from your own serious declaration.—Grant me, and those with whom I have the happiness to be united in opinion, the same right, which you so justly claim for yourselves,—*the right of forming and declaring our own opinions, and of being believed, when we declare them.* We have a just claim to the last, as well as to the first, unless there are substantial reasons to question our veracity.

By the diligent application of our rational powers to the study of the Scriptures, with the best helps which have been afforded us, we have arrived at some sober, settled views on the subjects of religion. These views we wish, for various reasons, to declare. And if we would declare them justly, we must declare them in *our own language*, and do what is in our power to make that language intelligible to all. Where the meaning of the terms employed is doubtful, or obscure; it belongs to us to give the necessary explanations. Where the terms are liable to be understood with greater latitude, than comports with our views; it belongs to us to give the necessary limitations. And where our positions, in any respect whatever, need modifying; it belongs to us to modify them.—Further. It is certainly reasonable to expect, when dealing with men of candid, liberal minds, that the language which, in any case, we use to express

our faith, will be understood, not in the sense which, taken by itself, it would possibly bear, nor in the sense which others might be inclined, for party purposes, to put upon it,—but *precisely according to our explanations*. These explanations, you will understand, do as really make a part of the proper enunciation of our faith, as the words which form the general proposition. Nothing can be more obviously just than all this, especially in relation to a subject, which is of a complex nature, or of difficult illustration.

With respect to this point of equity and honor, I have a few remarks to make on the Sermon now under consideration. The Author informs the public, what opinions he, and those who agree with him, embrace, and what they reject. This he has a right to do. Considering the circumstances of the case, he ought to do it. Nor can any one doubt that he is qualified to do it in the best manner. But he goes farther. He undertakes to give an account of *my* creed, and the creed of others with whom I agree. This is a more delicate task. In this he is evidently liable to mistake; and after all he may say on the subject, we may find it necessary to speak for ourselves. If the account he gives of our faith is not given in our language, and with our explanations and modifications,—certainly if not given in a manner which corresponds with our real opinions; we must notice the incorrectness. Most of all shall we have reason for some animadversion upon him, if he adopts, in any measure, that mode of representation, which men usually adopt, who wish to make the opinions of their opponents appear as exceptionable and absurd as possible.

So far as this sermon shall come under review, my remarks will relate chiefly to two points. *The first is, its affirming that certain opinions belong peculiarly and ex-*

clusively to Unitarians, when in fact they are held by the Orthodox. The second is, the misrepresentations it makes of the opinions which the Orthodox entertain, and of the reasoning commonly used to support them. These two points cannot be kept perfectly distinct in every part of the discussion; but it will be sufficiently evident to which my observations relate. For the present I shall beg your attention to the first.

Heretofore, it has been common for Unitarians in this country, and, if I mistake not, for this Author himself, to assert that, in respect of religious opinions, there is *no essential difference* between them and the Orthodox. For the sake of preventing disunion and strife, they have seemed to think it desirable, that the difference should be made to appear as small as possible. But from the tenor of this discourse, one would be apt to suppose that this Author's judgment or feelings had changed, and that he thought some important end was to be answered, by making the difference between the two parties as wide as possible. If this is a matter of fact, it is easy to see how it may have occasioned some of the mistakes, into which he has been led.

In the Sermon, p. 3, he declares what regard he and his particular friends feel for the Bible, and the principles of interpretation, by which they govern themselves in determining what doctrines it contains.—“We regard the Scriptures,” he says, “as the record of God's successive revelation to mankind, and particularly of the last and most perfect revelation of his will by Jesus Christ. Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures we receive without reserve or exception.”—It is implied in what he says, that this sentiment of reverence for the Scriptures is *peculiar to Unitarians*. For he first expresses his design to lay before his hear-

ers, "some of the *distinguishing* opinions of that class of Christians," in whose name he speaks, and then at the close says, *that he has given their "distinguishing views;"* that is, their views in *distinction* from those of the Orthodox.—I ask then, is it so? Is this high veneration for the Scriptures peculiar to *Unitarians*?—Do not the Orthodox uniformly declare their reverence for the Bible, and their readiness to submit to all its instructions? Do they not embrace that system of doctrines, which is peculiar to them, purely because they are convinced it is contained in the word of God, and because with this conviction, they cannot reject it, without disrespect to that word?—Read their confessions of faith, their systems of Divinity, their Commentaries, Sermons, catechisms, and books of devotion, and then say, whether they do not manifest as high a regard for the sacred volume, as this Author expresses?—Why then should it be signified, that this veneration for the Bible is among those things, which *distinguish* Unitarians from the Orthodox?—Such a representation must certainly appear somewhat unaccountable to one, who knows what opinions have generally been avowed and defended by these two parties, respecting the regard which is due to the Holy Scriptures.

As to these principles of interpretation, there is no need of adding any thing to what has been written by my Reverend Colleague. You perceive that these principles are not peculiar to Unitarians. They are substantially the principles of the Orthodox; so that, if you adopt them, the question between us is not, as would appear from the Sermon, whether the principles are to be *admitted*; but to what *conclusions* will they conduct us, when fairly applied to the interpretation of Scripture.

In relation to this point, the Author does indeed seem to make a concession in favor of others.—“We do not announce these principles,” he says, “as original or peculiar to ourselves.”—But immediately he takes occasion to follow his opponents with a train of reproachful insinuations, signifying, that although they occasionally adopt these principles, they vehemently decry them, when their cause requires; that they willingly avail themselves of reason, when it can be pressed into the service of their own party, and only complain of it, when its weapons wound themselves; that they violate the fundamental rules of reasoning, sacrifice the plain to the obscure, &c.

Under the same head I might place the following remarks of this Author.—“God’s wisdom is a pledge, that whatever is necessary for us, and necessary for salvation, is revealed too plainly to be mistaken, and too consistently to be questioned by a sound and upright mind. It is not a mark of wisdom, to use an unintelligible phraseology, and to confuse and unsettle the intellect by appearances of contradiction.”—Here also he evidently means to express sentiments, which belong *peculiarly* to his own party.—I cannot but think it strange, that it did not occur to his recollection, that *the plainness and intelligibleness of the Scriptures on all essential points* is a principle, for which the Orthodox in New England have uniformly contended with great zeal, even in their controversy with Unitarians.

Under the second head of his discourse, the Author undertakes “to state some of the views which Unitarians derive from the sacred book, particularly those which distinguish them from other Christians.”—It will be to my purpose just to notice the first doctrine he states, though it has been remarked upon so satisfac-

torily in the publication above named. This is the *unity of God*; which the Author represents as a doctrine *peculiar* to his party. After reading his remarks, and the remarks of other Unitarians on this subject, who would expect to find, that all respectable writers on the side of Orthodoxy have strenuously asserted the *unity of God*, as a fundamental doctrine of revelation, and have declared, times without number, that they could admit no views of the divine character inconsistent with this? Who would expect to find that, in all Confessions of faith written by Trinitarians, the *unity of God* is one of the first doctrines which is asserted, and in all their systems of Divinity, one of the first, which is distinctly and largely defended?—Truly, my respected friends, this doctrine is as important in our view, as it can be in yours. And we could not in reality have more reason to charge Unitarian Authors with injustice, should they represent us as denying the *existence* of God, than we have, when they represent us as denying his *unity*.

But we proceed to another point, on which this Author lays still greater stress.—“We believe,” he says, “in the *moral perfection of God*.—We value our views of Christianity chiefly, as they assert his amiable and venerable attributes.”—From the professed object of the discourse, and the language here employed, it appears, that the Author makes it the grand characteristic of Unitarianism in distinction from Orthodoxy, that it asserts the *moral perfection of God*.—But is this representation, as to the grand distinction between the parties, according to truth? Is it a representation, which he is authorized to make?—When the most eminent Divines and most enlightened Christians, who have at any time embraced the common doctrines of Orthodoxy,—Luther, Calvin, Boyle, Hale, Baxter, Doddridge, Watts, the Ed-

wardses, the Matthers, the Coopers, and multitudes, not to be numbered, of the same general faith, unite in declaring expressly, and constantly, that they *believe in the moral perfection of God*, that they ascribe to him infinite justice, goodness, and holiness, and continually adore his amiable and venerable attributes;—who is it that thinks himself entitled to look down upon this host of worthies, and reply,—“it is very possible to speak of God magnificently, and to think of him meanly; to apply to his person high sounding epithets, and to his government, principles which make him odious. The heathens called Jupiter the greatest and the best; but his history was black with cruelty and lust.”—I make use of no high coloring. This is the reply, which the Author of the sermon makes, actually, and in so many words, to the most serious professions of the Orthodox, whoever they may be, as to their belief in the *moral perfection of God*. If he does not mean to apply what I have quoted, to the *Orthodox*, he has lost sight of the object of his discourse, and his subsequent reasoning, as you will see in a moment, is wholly impertinent.

In another form, he afterwards repeats insinuations of the same sort. “*We believe*,” he says,—“*We*,” emphatically, and by way of distinction from the Orthodox,—“*We believe* that in no being is the sense of right so strong, so omnipotent, as in God. We believe that his almighty power is entirely submitted to his perception of rectitude.—It is not because he is our Creator merely, but because he created us for good and holy purposes; it is not because his will is irresistible, but because his will is the perfection of virtue, that we pay him allegiance. We cannot bow before a being, however great and powerful, who governs tyrannically. We respect nothing but excellence, whether on earth or in heaven.”

—Now the whole body of enlightened Christians, who embrace the common orthodox faith, give their united testimony to the same truths, and declare their veneration and love for a God of the same amiable character. In their creeds, systems, sermons, psalmody, and prayers, they abundantly assert these views respecting the *moral perfection of God*. They have asserted them continually, and publicly. They have taught them to their children. They have repeated them in a thousand forms.—And yet this author, speaking in your name too, feels himself entitled to say to them all in reply;—“It is very possible to speak of God magnificently, and to think of him meanly.—Your system takes from us our Father in heaven, and substitutes for him a being, whom we cannot love if we would, and whom we ought not to love if we could.”—*Candor* and *liberality of mind* are virtues which Unitarians have considered peculiarly honorable, and which they have appeared ambitious to advance to the highest degree of influence. I would just inquire, whether these virtues are likely to be improved, or to acquire greater influence, either among Unitarians, or the Orthodox, by such language as this Author uses respecting his opponents,—language apparently expressive of real conviction, and characterized by strength and elegance, but unfortunately wanting in justice and truth.—We claim the right of thinking for ourselves, and of declaring what we think. But according to the principle which seems to govern this writer’s pen, there would be no possibility of our ever making a declaration of our opinions, which would be entitled to credit. For suppose we should profess our full assent to the strongest propositions of this author respecting the moral perfection of God; suppose we should say the very things which he says, in the same forms, and in different forms,

and should enlarge upon them, and carry them into their practical uses, and should show by our conduct, that such are our sober views of the divine character; he could still meet all this with the reply;—"It is possible to apply to God's person high sounding epithets, and to his government, principles which make him odious. The heathens called Jupiter the greatest and the best; but his history was black with cruelty and lust."—If the picture, which this Author has drawn of our opinions on this subject were chargeable with only a little misrepresentation;—or if it were ever so great a misrepresentation on a subject of no considerable importance; it would be worthy of little notice. But it is, if I mistake not, a great and total misrepresentation, on a subject of vital consequence to religion, both theoretic and practical. And every man, and every child, who has received his impression from this sermon, as to the views of the Orthodox on the subject now under consideration, has been led into a palpable and total mistake as to a matter of fact,—a matter of fact, concerning which the Orthodox must be considered the best, and the only competent judges. To them therefore I appeal. And I am sure they will be sensible of the truth of what I say, and will be compelled, from a sense of justice to themselves, to declare, that, however free from blame the *motives* of this Author may have been, the representation he has here made of their views, is totally incorrect,—that it is false throughout, and in the highest degree.

LETTER III.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

I wish you not to infer from any thing contained in the foregoing letter, nor from the general aspect of it, that I am desirous of avoiding that kind of investigation, which the Author of the sermon has represented, as necessary in this case.—“We cannot,” he remarks, “judge of men’s real ideas of God from their general language.—We must inquire into their particular views of his purposes, of the principles of his administration, and of his disposition towards his creatures.”—To this mode of proceeding I cheerfully accede. Accordingly, I will not ask you to rest ultimately on my bare assertion, that Unitarians give an incorrect account of our opinions, nor upon my *general* declaration, that we believe in the *moral perfection of God*.—That you may be under the best advantages to judge, whether we do in fact, believe in the moral perfection of God, it appears indispensable that I should state, summarily, what *particular* views we entertain of God’s character,—“of the principles of his administration, and of his disposition towards his creatures.”—For the *correctness* of the statement I shall now make, I must refer you to the writings of those Orthodox Divines, who are the most judicious, and the most generally approved.

Views of the Orthodox respecting the moral character and government of God.

The sentiment, which forms the basis of our system, is, that GOD IS LOVE. This declaration of Scripture we understand in its plain and obvious sense, and believe it happily expresses the whole moral character of God.—

He is a Being of infinite and perfect benevolence ;—benevolence without mixture, and without variation. This is the disposition of God toward his creatures ; the disposition which prompted him to create, and which prompts him to govern. The object of benevolence, or goodness, is, to do good, to promote real happiness. The object of *infinite* benevolence must be to promote the *highest degree* of happiness.—As to the ways, in which God will secure the greatest amount of happiness to his intelligent creation, we can know nothing, except what God is pleased to reveal. So far as our duty or comfort is concerned, he has given us instruction. According to the Scriptures, the grand means, by which God will promote the happiness of his kingdom, is the administration of a *moral government*. Such a government implies a law, enforced by proper sanctions ; that is, by the promise of good to the obedient, and the threat of evil to the disobedient. These promises and threats, being necessary parts of a benevolent moral government, are expressions of the divine goodness. So is the execution of them. Thus the proper punishment of the disobedient, as it is essential to the administration of a perfect moral government, is, in reality, an act of goodness,—an expression of God's benevolent regard to his kingdom. When there is occasion for it, a *good father* will *punish*. He may punish not only *consistently* with his being good, but *because* he is good. God is a father to his kingdom ; and will, therefore, show his displeasure against that which tends to injure that kingdom.—As to the degree and duration of the punishment, which will be inflicted on transgressors, we are, of ourselves, wholly incompetent to judge ; for the obvious reason, that we are not capable of knowing what the present and future interests of a kingdom, so extensive, will require. We believe that,

according to the Scriptures, God will inflict on the wicked a great and everlasting punishment. But, so far as reasoning is concerned, we believe this, as a consequence of believing, that God will feel and manifest displeasure against sin in proportion to the strength of the love, which he feels for his kingdom. In other words, we believe he will inflict on the disobedient that very punishment, which they deserve, and which, *He being judge*, the welfare of his kingdom renders necessary. We consider the demerit of sin to be great, in proportion to the moral excellence of God, against whom it is committed, and to the value of those interests, which it aims to destroy. Here you see why we view *punitive justice*, as a branch of *benevolence*, an exercise of *goodness*. As God is a moral Governor, and the Guardian of the interests of the creation, the want of justice in punishing offences would betray the want of goodness. Thus we believe, as this Author informs us Unitarians believe,—that the justice of God “is the justice of a good being, dwelling in the same mind, and acting in harmony with perfect benevolence.” He represents the belief, “that justice and mercy are intimate friends, breathing the same spirit, and seeking the same end,” as peculiar to Unitarians; though it is in truth the general belief of the Orthodox.—But in case of transgression, justice and mercy must seek the same end in different ways. In the exercise of *justice*, God seeks the happiness of his kingdom by *punishing* an offence;—in the exercise of *mercy*, or *grace*, by *forgiving* an offence. This Author says, “God’s mercy, as we understand it, desires strongly the happiness of the guilty.” We believe the same. But he adds a condition. “God’s mercy desires strongly the happiness of the guilty, *but only through their penitence.*” —We go farther. We believe, indeed, that repentance

is essential to the happiness of the guilty; but we believe also, because we are so taught in the Scriptures, that repentance itself, without the death of a Mediator, could be of no avail. To forgive sin in any other way, than through *the shedding of blood*, would not consist with a due regard to “the interests of virtue,” and so, to use this Author’s language, “would be incompatible with justice, and also with enlightened benevolence.” On the other hand, we think it equally clear, that the happiness of the *impenitent* would be not only inconsistent with the divine perfections, but in the nature of things impossible.

We believe, as sincerely as Unitarians do, in the *paternal character* of God. You “ascribe to him,” as this Author informs us, “not only the name, but the dispositions, and principles of a father.” With the qualifications which the divine perfection renders necessary, we do the same.—The language refers to the dispositions of a *human* father. These dispositions belong to God, *so far as is consistent with his infinite perfection*. It is plain, that the dispositions of God, and the conduct flowing from them cannot, in *all* respects, resemble the dispositions and conduct of a human father. The nature of a human father, and the relation he sustains to his children, have but an imperfect analogy to the nature of God, and the relation he sustains to his creatures. From this we conclude, that his treatment of his creatures cannot be fully represented by the treatment, which a human father gives his children. Permit me to illustrate this by a few examples.—What human father, possessing even a common degree of paternal kindness and compassion, would ever treat his children, as God treated his rational offspring, when he destroyed the world by a deluge, or Sodom by fire, or when he caused the earth to

open and swallow up the company of Korah? Would a compassionate father drown his children, or consume them by fire, or bury them alive in the earth?—God suffers his rational creatures, even harmless children, to die of hunger, or of sickness, or to be destroyed by some act of cruelty. Could a human father stand and see his children die thus, when it was in the power of his hand to afford relief?—I mention these among a thousand instances, as proof, that the analogy between God and a human father, though a very striking and delightful one, is not perfect, and may be carried too far. Most certainly it is carried too far by those, who undertake to prove what God will do or will not do, as to the punishment of the wicked in the future world, by the consideration, that he is metaphorically called a *father*. The analogy implied in this metaphor must be guarded, and kept within due limits, as carefully as the analogy implied in the metaphors, by which God is called a fire, a man of war, &c. It is not necessary here particularly to exhibit the principles, which we apply in the interpretation of metaphorical language. I will only say, in short, that we can be in no danger of mistake, when we fix upon the analogy, which is suggested by the metaphor itself, and by the manifest design of the writer, and limit the analogy, as we do in common cases, by the knowledge we have obtained of the subject from other sources.—On these principles, the soundness of which will not be called in question, we look to God as a father; we love him as a father; we trust in him as a father. We believe he has a paternal affection for his rational offspring, and takes delight, as a father does, in promoting their welfare. Nay more; we believe that the love of God is not only sincere and durable, like that of a father, but is free from all human imperfection, and distinguished by a

purity, elevation, and activity, infinitely superior to what belongs to the love of the best father on earth.

I cannot do justice to Orthodox ministers without adding, that their belief in the moral excellence of God is not a matter of mere speculation. It is in the highest degree practical. They make the infinite and immutable goodness of God the grand motive to religious worship. They inculcate it, as the spring of all pious affections. They present it to the view of Christians to produce higher love, gratitude, and joy. They present it to the view of sinners, to show them the inexcusable guilt and baseness of their disaffection to their Maker, and to induce them to return to him by repentance. They dwell upon the unchangeable love of God, which has a length, and breadth, and depth, and height, passing all understanding, as the source of joy in prosperity, of comfort in affliction, and triumph in death. And they lead Christians to expect, that their highest enjoyments in heaven will arise from the more glorious display, which God will there make, of his infinite benignity and grace.

It would be great injustice to Orthodox ministers and Christians, both in Europe and America, to pass over the influence, which their belief in the divine goodness has, to excite *benevolent exertion*. It is because they believe that *God is love*, and that he is ready to pardon and save all who repent, that they are engaged in such plans of benevolence, and are striving, in various ways, to enlighten and convert the world. In all these benevolent efforts, they are aiming at a humble imitation of Him, who is the supreme object of their veneration and love.

Now when I consider what stress the Orthodox lay upon the moral perfection of God, the variety of ways, in which they acknowledge and affirm it, and the paramount influence which it has upon their conduct; I am

not a little surprised that any man should charge them with denying it. It is, in reality, the *very last* thing they would deny. I appeal to millions of witnesses, who will tell you, that they are as far from denying the *moral perfection* of God, as they are from denying that he *exists*; and that his existence would not only cease to afford them satisfaction, but would fill them with anxiety and dread, had they not a certain belief, that he is possessed of perfect rectitude, of unbounded and unchangeable goodness. And after the statement I have now made, and similar statements made by others, of the sentiments of the Orthodox on this subject; I leave it to you candidly to judge, what occasion the Author of this sermon could have for saying what he does, in the following pathetic passage;—“We ask our opponents to leave us a God, worthy of our love and trust, in whom our moral sentiments may delight, in whom our weaknesses and sorrows may find refuge.”

LETTER IV.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

I would now ask your attention more particularly to the *manner*, in which the Author of this sermon attempts to make it appear, that we deny the moral perfection of God. If I understand him right, as I think I do, he infers our denial of God's moral perfection from our “particular views of his purposes, of the principles of his administration, and of his disposition towards his creatures.”

Now if we admit, for the present, the most that any one could desire,—that our views on these subjects are,

in reality, inconsistent with the moral perfection of God, still the allegation here brought against us, is not well supported.—I may *really believe* a certain important doctrine, though I believe other things inconsistent with it. The *consistency* of my belief is one thing; the *reality* of it, another. I may entertain various opinions, which, if examined thoroughly, would appear inconsistent with my belief of some primary truth;—yet the inconsistency may not be apparent to me; and I may as really believe that primary truth, and act as much under its influence, as though I did not entertain those other opinions. In such a case, though an opponent might attack me on the ground of my *consistency*, he would not, with any justice, represent me as *denying* that primary truth. Accordingly, the most which this Author could properly say, even on the admission above supposed, would be that we do not believe the moral perfection of God *consistently*, though we may believe it *really*.

But can the Orthodox be justly charged with entertaining opinions, which are, in fact, inconsistent with their belief in the moral perfection of God? this is the question now to be argued. The Author of the sermon seems to rest the charge chiefly on two points; first, the doctrine we hold as to the *natural character of man*; second, the doctrine we hold, as to *the manner in which God designates the heirs of salvation*.—I shall begin with the first.

Here allow me to remark, with freedom, on the *mode of reasoning* which in my apprehension, ought to be pursued on such a subject as this.—I am happy to find the following principle suggested by the Author of the sermon.—“Whatever doctrines seem to us to be clearly taught in the Scriptures, we receive without reserve or exception.” Right. But in relation to this

subject, has he adhered to his own principle? With respect to the common doctrine of man's depravity, the grand inquiry which ought to have engaged his attention, was this;—*Do the scriptures, understood according to just rules of interpretation, teach the doctrine? And does the doctrine agree with facts, made known by experience and observation?*—All reasoning *a priori*, in this case especially, is to be rejected. And so is every hypothesis, unless it is evidently founded on Scripture and observation. Independently of revelation, and well known facts, *we are actually incapable of judging, what the goodness of God will require, as to the condition of man; or what man's character and state must be, under the government of a being infinitely wise and benevolent.* Our inability to judge on the subject might be made evident, from the utter impossibility of our having any adequate knowledge respecting either the infinite perfection of God, or the vast and endless scheme of his operations. But without any labored argument to prove, what must be so plain to every intelligent man, it will be sufficient for my present purpose, merely to refer to a few other facts, which are admitted on all hands, but which are quite as different from what we should have previously thought agreeable to the infinite perfections of God, as the moral depravity of man.—Who would have supposed that a God of tender compassion and unbounded goodness would send plagues, hurricanes, and earthquakes, and involve multitudes of affectionate parents, and multitudes of lovely, helpless children in a sudden and dreadful destruction?—Who would have thought that the Lord of the universe, who has an absolute control over all creatures and all events, would suffer the cruelties and horrors of the *Slave-trade* to exist for so long a time?—These are great difficulties. But there is one still greater; name-

ly; that the God of love, who delights in mercy, and would have all men to be saved, and who has given his Son to die for the redemption of the world, should, after all, suffer the greater part of the world to live and die without any knowledge of the Savior.—These facts, which are known to all, are as far from being agreeable to what we should naturally imagine the infinite goodness of God would dictate, as the fact, that men are subjects of moral depravity. But our being unable, by the mere exercise of reason, to discover the consistency between these facts and the infinite goodness of God, is no proof that the facts do not exist, and no proof that they are in reality inconsistent with divine goodness.—With regard to all subjects like these, the only mode of reasoning, which can be relied upon to lead us to right conclusions, is that which is pursued in the science of Physics. Regulating ourselves by the maxims of BACON and NEWTON, we inquire, not what we should expect the properties and laws of the physical world would be, nor whether this or that thing can be reconciled with the infinite wisdom and goodness of God,—but simply, *what is fact?* *What do we find from observation and experience, that the properties and laws of nature really are?* This inquiry, to be philosophical, must be perfectly unembarrassed by any other inquiry? The moment we undertake to shape the conclusions we adopt, or the facts we discover, so as to make them conform to any preconceived opinion; we depart from the legitimate rule of philosophical research, and expose ourselves to endless perplexity and error. I might, if necessary, fill a volume with examples of the vagaries of human reason, flowing from the neglect of this grand principle of philosophical research. The importance of this principle, and the hurtful consequences of disregarding it, are now admitted by all enlightened philosophers. And it

is to the strict observance of it, that we owe our present advancement in the science of *Physics*.

Now this principle is as applicable to the science of *Theology*, as to the science of *Physics*. Indeed, it will be found that in *Theology* it is still more necessary, and that any departure from it, is attended with still greater danger, than in *Physics*. *Theology*, as well as *Philosophy*, is founded on facts. The first thing to be done in either case, is to determine, by the proper method of inquiry, what are the facts, on which the science is founded. In *Philosophy*, we learn facts merely by observation and experience. In *Theology*, we have additional aid. Revelation, as well as observation and experience, makes known facts, which form the basis of *Theological* reasoning. But in both cases, the chief object of inquiry, and the rule of reasoning are the same. We first inquire for the knowledge of facts; and by reasoning from facts, we arrive at general truths. If in either case we neglect this grand principle of reasoning, we are involved in uncertainty, confusion, and error. Suppose a man attempts to prove, from what he thinks divine wisdom or benevolence must dictate, or from what he knows of some other subject, that all parts of the earth must enjoy equal illumination and warmth from the influence of the sun, and must afford equal advantages and comforts to the inhabitants. But what becomes of his arguments, when he looks abroad, and compares the rocks, and ice, and gloomy nights of Greenland, or the sands of Arabia, with the pleasantness and fertility of some other parts of the earth? Or suppose, in any case, he assumes what must be the nature of some particular thing, but afterwards finds, that the phenomena, which that thing exhibits, do not correspond with his assumption. Shall he deny or disregard those phenomena? Or shall he not rather

dismiss his assumption?—Now it is not a whit less unphilosophical, to admit any presumptive or hypothetical reasoning in *Ethics*, or *Theology*, than in the science of *Physic*s.—Suppose we think it inconsistent with the infinite goodness of God, that he should create an order of rational beings, and place them in such circumstances of temptation, as he certainly knew would be followed by their transgression and ruin; or that a God of infinite power, who has all hearts and all events in his hand, should suffer mankind, through a hundred generations, to be in a state of ignorance, rebellion, and wretchedness, when it is so easy for him to prevent it. But suppose on further inquiry, we find in both cases the existence of facts, which we denied. Shall we deny them still?—It is true we may not be able to reconcile them with the perfections of God. What then? Are we omniscient? Is our understanding above the possibility of mistake?

These remarks are intended to simplify the object of inquiry, with regard to the native character of man. They are intended to show that, according to the just principles of reasoning in such a case, we have nothing to do with the inquiry, whether the common doctrine of depravity can consist with the moral perfection of God, or with any difficulty whatever in the attempt to reconcile them. If I say, *this doctrine cannot be true*, because I cannot reconcile it with the goodness of God; it is the same as saying, *I am an infallible judge*, and my opinion must stand, though opposed by the declarations of Scripture, and the evidence of facts. To take such a position of mind would be an effectual bar to conviction, and render all reasoning absolutely useless. If we would regulate our investigations on this subject by correct principles; we must reject totally every prepossession against the doctrine of depravity, arising from a consideration of

the divine perfections, or from any thing else, and must restrict ourselves to this single inquiry, *what is true in fact?* If the subject is one, on which the Scripture undertakes to decide; the question is, *what saith the Scripture?* If experience and observation cast any light on the subject; the question is, what do *they* teach? If when we pursue our inquiry, we find, that the Scripture, interpreted without the influence of any prepossession, and according to just rules, teaches, that man is by nature unholy; this must, unhesitatingly, be admitted as a certain truth. That God declares it, is proof enough. His testimony is an infinitely better foundation for our faith, than all our reasonings. If observation and experience teach the same truth; we are to admit it as doubly confirmed. As to the *goodness of God*, we know it from other evidence. The truth under consideration must, then, according to the supposition, be admitted to be in reality consistent with the goodness of God, however hard it may be for those, who are of yesterday and know nothing, to elucidate that consistency.

The subject under consideration is one, on which we are peculiarly liable to judge erroneously, for the obvious reason, that we have a deep personal concern in it. We are among those, whom the commonly received doctrine arraigns, as polluted and guilty. The doctrine touches our character, and our honor. It aims a blow at our selfesteem. It disturbs our quiet. The consideration of this circumstance should excite us to guard most vigilantly against that prejudice, discoloring of evidence, and partial judgment, to which we know every man, in such a case, is exposed.

LETTER V.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

The doctrine, which the Orthodox in New England hold on the subject, introduced in the last Letter, is briefly this ; *that men are by nature destitute of holiness ;* or that they are subjects of an *innate moral depravity ;* or, in other words, that they are from the first inclined to evil, and that, while unrenewed, their moral affections and actions are wholly wrong. The doctrine, you perceive, is merely the assertion of a general fact. I shall at present consider this fact by itself, entirely unencumbered with any question about the occasion or the mode of it.

It is far from my design to exhibit, in detail, the arguments, by which this doctrine is proved. I shall attain my principal object, if I succeed in attempting to expose a wrong method of reasoning, and contribute any thing towards producing in those, who may honor me with their attention, a steady desire to know the truth, and a disposition to investigate the subject of man's natural character, on right principles, and without being shackled by unreasonable prepossessions. But the case seems to require, that I should lay before you, if not all the particular proofs, at least the general topics of argument, on which I ground my humbling conclusion.— Here then, I contend, and hold myself ready to demonstrate, that there is no principle in the science of Physics, which is established by evidence more uniform, and more conclusive, than the moral depravity of man. I speak now of the evidence which is furnished merely by experience and observation. without looking to the Bi-

ble. The appearances of human nature, from infancy to old age, and from the fall of Adam to the present time, prove a deeprooted and universal disease. The existence of this moral disease is practically acknowledged by all, who have any concern in the education of children and youth, or who endeavor, in any form, to bring the actions of men to conform to the rule of duty. The strength of this disease is made evident by all the restraints, which parents are obliged to put upon their children, rulers upon their subjects, and all men, who aim at being virtuous, upon themselves. This disorder of our nature is indicated by as clear, as various, and as uniform symptoms, as ever indicated the existence of a fever, or a consumption, in an individual.—The evidence of human depravity from this source alone, is so great, that, should I reject it as insufficient, I should manifest a strength of prejudice, which, I soberly think, no increase of evidence could overcome. And I would propose it as a serious question, whether, if any of us should stand by, as impartial spectators, and see, in another order of beings, the same indications of character, which we see in the human species, we should hesitate a moment to pronounce them, *depraved*.

But as our views of this subject must depend chiefly on revelation, I shall proceed to exhibit, though in a very summary way, the *principal scripture arguments*, on which the doctrine of man's universal depravity rests. I shall first illustrate the argument, or rather *the principle of reasoning*, from the *Old Testament*. For this purpose I shall take a single passage, which may stand for a multitude of the same nature. Gen. vi. 5. "*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*"

It is objected to the argument commonly drawn from this text, that it related to mankind in a season of uncommon corruption, and not to mankind at large, and that it is altogether improper to infer the character of the whole human race from the shocking barbarity and wickedness, which have been perpetrated in any particular age or country. The same objection is thought to lie against our reasoning from any of the numerous passages in the Old Testament, in which human wickedness is declared; namely, that they relate exclusively to those who lived at particular times, when iniquity prevailed to an uncommon degree, and cannot be applied to mankind generally.

We are now to inquire, whether this objection is valid.

The text quoted from Gen. vi. 5, did indeed relate to the corruption of men, who lived before the general deluge. But we find substantially the same testimony given of the human character, soon after the deluge. Gen. viii. 21, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." There are two reasons for considering this as relating to *mankind universally*, or to *human nature*. The first is, that the language is *general*. "The imagination of *man's* heart is evil;" not Noah's heart, nor the heart of either of his sons *particularly*; but *man's* heart,—the heart of the *human kind*. Thus we are led to consider it, as the testimony of God respecting the character of our apostate race. The second reason for this construction is, that the *curse* spoken of in the same verse related to mankind in all future ages. "I will not again curse the ground any more for *man's sake*;" that is, I will not at *any future time*. Immediately after the testimony above quoted, God said, "neither will I again smite any more every living thing, as I have done." It

was said in relation to all future time. The description given of man's character must be understood as equally extensive; "*for,*" or as it ought, according to the best authorities, and according to the obvious sense of the passage, to be rendered, "*though* the imagination of *man's* heart is evil from his youth." The meaning of the whole taken together is plainly this; that God would not destroy the world again by a deluge, as he had done, though the character of mankind generally would be, as it had been.—History shows that it has been so in fact.

Further to illustrate the force of the argument, from the Old Testament, and the weakness of the objection against it, I refer my readers to a well known principle of science, namely, *that all, who belong to the same species, have the same nature.* We always consider the actions of any part, certainly of any considerable part of a species, as indicating the character or nature of the whole. And why should we doubt the truth of this principle in relation to man's moral character, any more than in relation to his physical properties, or to the properties of any other order of creatures? In all our treatment of mankind, and in all our maxims of practical wisdom, we admit the principle, that *human nature*, as to its grand moral features, is at all times, and in all circumstances, the same. This is implied also in the fact, that the same precepts, motives, and restraints,—in a word, the same moral discipline has been found suitable and necessary in all ages.

But I do not stop here, but proceed to inquire, whether the *New Testament*, besides furnishing a new argument itself, does not give testimony to the soundness of the argument from the *Old*. The Psalmist, in Psalm xiv. liii. v. cxi. x. xxxvi. and Isaiah, ch. lix. describe the wicked-

ness which prevailed in their day.—“They are corrupt ; they have done abominable works ; there is none that doeth good. They are all gone aside, they are together become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre. Their feet run to evil. Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity ; The way of peace they know not ;” &c. The objector says, these passages described the corruption of the Jews in times of great degeneracy, and cannot be considered as a just description of mankind generally. But how does the Apostle Paul treat the subject ? He takes these same passages, a thousand years afterwards, and applies them, as descriptive of the character of Jews and Gentiles. Rom. iii. 9, he says, referring to ch. i. and ii., “We have before proved both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, that *they* are *all* under sin ; *as it is written*,”—immediately introducing from the Old Testament the texts above quoted, as a true account of the character of mankind without exception ; then stating the end he had aimed at in making such a disclosure of the human character ; namely, “that *every mouth* may be stopped, and *all the world* become guilty before God ;” and then directly bringing us to his final conclusion, that “by the deeds of the law shall *no flesh* be justified in his sight.” It is a connected discourse,—an unbroken chain of reasoning. And unless the texts, which the Apostle here cites from the Old Testament, are justly applicable to the whole race of man, “both *Jews* and *Gentiles*,” and, in connexion with the preceding part of his Epistle, are actually meant by him, to be a description of “*all the world*,” “*no flesh*” being excepted ;—the whole reasoning of the Apostle is without force ; his conclusion is broader than his premises ; and the quotations he makes from the Scriptures are not only *no proofs* of what he wishes to establish, but

have no kind of relation to it. The point he labors to establish is, that "*both Jews and Gentiles*"—that "*all the world*" have such a character, that they cannot be justified by law. But what is their character?—It is that which is first described in the preceding part of the Epistle, and then in the passages cited from the Old Testament. "We have before proved *both Jews and Gentiles*, that they are all under sin, as it is written; *There is none that doeth good, no, not one. They are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable, &c.*" The Apostle manifestly cites these texts, for the very purpose of describing, still more particularly than he had done, the character of "*all the world.*"—It might indeed be thought from the first part of verse 19, "whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law," that the Apostle meant to apply what he had just before said, to *Jews only*. But this would hardly agree with the scope of the passage, which was to establish a general truth respecting "*all the world.*" Besides, the first part of v.19 will easily admit a construction perfectly corresponding with the scope of the whole passage. The Apostle would prove that *all* men are under sin. The *Jews* would naturally make an exception in their own favor. He tells them that there can be no exception; that what he has quoted from *the law*, that is, from their own Scriptures, must certainly relate to *Jews*, as well as to *Gentiles*.—The quotations cannot relate to *Jews exclusively* of *Gentiles*, because that would not agree with the manner, already noticed, in which the quotations are introduced;—"We have proved *both Jews and Gentiles*, that they are *all* under sin; as it is written &c." Nor does it so obviously agree with the conclusion v.19, which relates to "*all the world.*" Besides, it is difficult not to believe that the writer of some of the Psalms

quoted, particularly of the xiv, extended his views beyond his own nation, though he undoubtedly referred to that primarily, and in a special sense. When he introduces that description of wickedness, which is quoted by the Apostle, his language is general. "The Lord looked down from heaven, upon *the children of men*, to see if there were *any* that did understand." The Psalmist then proceeds to give a description, not, one would think, of the posterity of Abraham *solely*, but of *the children of men, the human race*, and says, *they are all gone aside*.— But we shall come ultimately to the same conclusion, if we admit that the passages were originally intended by the Psalmist to relate merely to his own nation. For if such a character belonged to that highly favored nation, it must of course have belonged to the rest of the world. So the Apostle decides when, many ages after, he attributes that description of character to *all the world*. On the same principle the passages quoted by him are applicable to *us*, as well as to those who lived in the time of Paul, or of David; as applicable to us, as what the Apostle says respecting justification, salvation, duty, or any thing else.

This manner of quoting texts from the Old Testament is not peculiar to Paul. We find frequent examples of it in the instructions of Christ himself. The Prophet Isaiah, chap. xxix. 13, had given the following description of the hypocrisy of the people, who were contemporary with him; viz. "that they drew near to God with their mouth, and honored him with their lips, but had removed their hearts far from him." Jesus quoted this passage as *applicable to the Jews in his day*. "Well did Esaias prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written. &c." In the same manner Christ repeatedly quoted Isa.

vi. 9, 10, as a true description of the obstinate impiety of those, who rejected his gospel.

Now this manner of quoting and reasoning from Scripture, so often employed both by Christ and his apostles, clearly involves the principle, which I stated in answer to the objection ; viz. that *human nature*, in all ages and circumstances, is, *as to its grand moral features*, the same, and that the dispositions and actions, which mankind at any time exhibit, are real indications of what belongs to the *nature of man universally*. Unless this principle is admitted, how can the Apostle be justified in making such a use as he does, of his citations from the Old Testament ?—And to bring the subject nearer home, how can we make use of any thing which was said of the character of man, either in the Old Testament or the New, as appertaining to those who live at the present day ? Indeed, how can any of the declarations of the Bible, all of which were made so many ages ago, be of any use to us, except to gratify curiosity ? Whether, therefore, we consider the nature of the case, or the reasoning of the Apostle in Rom. iii. ; are we not warranted to receive, whatever the Bible in any part affirms respecting the dispositions or conduct of men, as applicable, *substantially*, to men in all ages ? If we are not, what can we say to vindicate the Apostle ? If we are, then the text I first quoted from Genesis, and those texts which are quoted from the Psalms in Rom. iii, and other similar texts in the Old Testament, do all illustrate the character, which now belongs to man. And when we read in the Bible, or elsewhere, the highest description of human wickedness in the old world, in Sodom, in Canaan, in Jerusalem, in Greece, Rome, or India, or of the wickedness of individuals, as Pharaoh, Saul, Jeroboam, Judas, or the Cæsars ; it is perfectly just and natu-

ral for us to reflect, *such is human nature*;—*such is man*. So that Orthodox writers, though they may not, in all instances, have attended sufficiently to the groundwork of their argument, do in fact reason in an unexceptionable manner, when they undertake to show what *human nature* is, from the description which is given of the wickedness of man in the Old Testament; and the objection to this reasoning, which I stated above, and which is, briefly, the objection of Dr. Turnbull and Dr. John Taylor, cannot be considered as valid.

Let me detain your attention a few moments, while I hint at the confirmation, which may be given to the general principle, asserted above, by an appeal to the sober convictions of men. They who are in the habit of comparing their moral affections and conduct with the perfect law of God, will have no difficulty in acknowledging, that they find, in the various representations of human depravity, contained in the Old Testament, a true picture of themselves. I say not that they are conscious of having committed sinful actions *in the same form*, or indulged sinful passions *in the same degree*, with all those, whose crimes are recorded in the Bible. This is not the case. But they are conscious of having in their hearts a wrong bias, a want of what the divine law requires, of the *same nature*, with that moral depravation, which has been exhibited by the greatest sinners. The sacred writers impute to various societies and individuals, pride, selfishness, idolatry, covetousness, impurity, revenge, falsehood, blasphemy. Have we not discovered in ourselves the root of all these vices? Should we not be liable to actual excess in every one of them, if we should be freed from restraints, and should follow, without any counteracting influence, the desires which naturally spring up in our hearts? And have not the great-

est proficient in self-government and holiness always been the most ready to make this humiliating confession? Even some of the heathen, who made serious attempts to improve their own character, were forced to acknowledge that the disorder of their nature was too stubborn to be subdued by them, without help from above.

It is certainly nothing conclusive against the principle contended for, that some men can be found, who are not sensible of its truth in relation to themselves. This may easily be accounted for, without in the least invalidating the principle. For they may be altogether inattentive to what passes in their own minds, and so may be ignorant of themselves; or if they are in some measure attentive to the operations of their own minds, they may fix their eye upon some of the wrong standards of duty which are set up in the world, and so may judge incorrectly. It is surely no uncommon thing for men to be insensible of the faults of their character, especially of the hidden affections of their hearts. This insensibility, so frequently described in the Scriptures, is a matter of common observation, and has always been regarded, as one of the greatest hindrances to the salutary influence of divine truth.

The argument from the Old Testament might be extended to great length, comprising all the positive declarations there made, and all the examples there exhibited, of human wickedness; all the confessions both of saints and sinners; all the means employed to subdue the moral corruption of men and held them back from sin, and every thing else, which showed formerly, and which, consequently, always shows, *what is in man*. They who read the Old Testament with such views as the Apostles entertained respecting it, will be constantly improving their acquaintance with themselves,—their knowl-

edge of their own moral degradation, and their desire after that gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, which renews and exalts the soul.

LETTER VI.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

IN the last Letter, I confined myself almost entirely to the establishment of a general principle, and to the proof which, according to that principle, may be drawn from the Old Testament, in support of the doctrine of man's moral depravity. I might also refer to declarations which are general or universal, as Jeremiah xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" "*The heart,*" not of any man, or any society of men in particular; but of *man universally*. The next verse confirms this sense. "I the Lord search *the heart*;"—the same heart, as the one spoken of in v. 9; so that if, when the Prophet says, the Lord searches *the heart*, we are to understand him as meaning, that the Lord searches *the heart universally*, or *the heart of every human being*; then also, when in the closest connexion with this, he says, *the heart* is deceitful and wicked, we must understand him as meaning that *the heart universally*, or *the heart of every human being* is deceitful and wicked.—This is the only sense which any man can give the text, v. 9, who attends to its connexion with the following verse, or considers what language we commonly use to express a general or universal proposition. Another passage containing a universal proposition of like character, is found in Eccles. ix. 3. "*The heart of the sons of men* is full of evil."

But in the New Testament every thing is invested with clearer light. Here we find evidence, exhibited in many different forms, that *man*, as a *species*, that the *human kind*, is sunk in sin, and while unrenewed, entirely destitute of holiness, and unfit for heaven. This evidence I shall now lay before you, though it must be with great brevity, and in reference only to a few passages.

The first passage, to which I would call your attention, is found in the discourse of Jesus with Nicodemus, John iii. 1—7. This conversation took place near the beginning of Christ's ministry. About four thousand years had passed away, from the fall of man. Those four thousand years had furnished no small evidence of the human character. The corruption and violence of the old world had been seen. And notwithstanding the tremendous purgation, which the world underwent by the general deluge, it had been seen, that the new race, descending from righteous Noah, pursued the same downward course with the generations before the flood. The same had been the case with the posterity of Abraham. Although various and powerful means had been used to restrain men from wickedness and induce them to serve God, they had in every nation, and in every age, shown themselves prone to evil. Jesus knew what display had been made of the human character in every period of the world. He knew what was in man. The grand result of what his all searching eye had seen, and then saw, of the affections and conduct of the human race, he expressed to Nicodemus; "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The moral renovation here spoken of, is represented as necessary for all men. *Εαν μη τις γεννηθη ανωθεν*. It is said of *any one*. The sense is, that *no man, no human being*, who is not the subject of this renovation, can be a partaker of

the benefits of Christ's kingdom. The necessity of this renovation, as appears afterwards, arises from the character which man possesses, in consequence of his *natural birth*. Of course, it is necessary for every child of Adam. "That which is born of the flesh, is *flesh*." "By *flesh*," says Rosenmuller, with evident propriety, and in agreement with commentators generally, "is meant the nature of man,—man with all his moral imperfection, subject to the dominion of his bodily appetites. And he who is born of parents, who have this moral imperfection, is like his parents." All the children of men are here represented as having, by their very birth, a moral nature, which renders them incapable of enjoying the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, unless they are *born again*. This interpretation is confirmed by all those texts, in which the word *σαρξ*, or *σαρκικός*, *flesh*, or *fleshly*, is used to express the opposite of that which is spiritual or holy. The metaphorical expression, being *born again*, must denote a *moral* change, because it is a change that fits men for a *moral* or *spiritual* kingdom. If we view this passage in connexion with those, which represent repentance and conversion, as necessary to prepare men for Christ's kingdom, we shall see that being *born again* denotes a change of the same general character with *repentance* and *conversion*. It is then clear, that this passage of Scripture, interpreted according to just rules, contains the following sentiment;—that *all men, without exception, are by nature*, or in consequence of their natural birth, in such a state of moral impurity, as disqualifies them for the enjoyments of heaven, unless they are renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Rom. v. 12. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men. for that *all have sinned*." Although this

text must be allowed to be, in some respects, very obscure ; two things are perfectly clear. 1. That the Apostle considered sin, as *the cause of death*, or the reason why God sent into the world the evils involved in the word *death*. 2. That as sin is the *cause of death*, the extent of the one may be measured by the extent of the other. Determine how far *death* extends, and you determine how far *sin* extends. If a part of the human species die, a part are sinners. If all die, all are sinners. "Death passed upon all men, *for that* all have sinned." Εφ' ᾧ, according to the judgment of the most eminent critics, and the use of the phrase elsewhere in the New Testament, means the same as διότι, eo quod, quia,—*for that*, or *because*. The Vulgate renders it, in quo, *in whom* ; from which some have thought the Apostle meant to assert, that it is *in Adam* that all men have sinned, so that his transgression becomes theirs by imputation. But I see nothing in the passage, or in the nature of the subject, which can justify such an interpretation.

On this particular point, our opinions have been often misrepresented. We are said to hold, *that God dooms a whole race of innocent creatures to destruction, or considers them all as deserving destruction, for the sin of one man*. Now when I examine the respectable writings of the earlier Calvinists generally, on the subject of original sin, I find nothing which resembles such a statement as this. It is true, exceptionable language has in some instances been used, and opinions, which I should think erroneous, have sometimes been entertained on this subject. But the Orthodox in New England, at the present day, are not chargeable with the same fault. The *imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity*, in any sense, which those words naturally and properly convey, is a

doctrine which we do not believe. If any shall say, as Stapfer does, who refers to Vitringa and other reformed divines, as agreeing with him,—that “for God to give Adam a posterity *like himself*, and to *impute* his sin to them, is one and the same thing;” I should not object to such an imputation. For I see not how any man, who has a serious regard to scripture, or to fact, or considers what are the laws of our nature, can hesitate to admit, that God has given Adam a posterity like himself.

But the word *imputation* has, in my view, been improperly used in relation to this subject, and has occasioned unnecessary perplexity. In scripture, the word, *impute*, signifies uniformly, if I mistake not, charging or reckoning to a man that which is his own attribute or act. Every attempt, which has been made, to prove that God ever imputes to man any sinful disposition or act, which is not strictly *his own*, has, in my judgment, failed of success. And as it is one object of these Letters, to make you acquainted with the real opinions of the Orthodox in New England; I would here say, with the utmost frankness, that we are not perfectly satisfied with the language used on this subject, in the Assembly’s Catechism. Though we hold that Catechism, taken as a whole, in the highest estimation; we could not, with a good conscience, subscribe to every expression it contains in relation to the doctrine of original sin. Hence it is common for us, when we declare our assent to the Catechism, to do it with an express or implied restriction. We receive the Catechism *generally*, as containing a summary of the principles of Christianity. But that the sinfulness of our natural, fallen state consists, in any measure, “in the guilt of Adam’s first sin,” is what we cannot admit, without more convincing evidence. But we think we have the best reason for believing that, in

respect of *character*, there is a connexion between Adam and the whole human race. Nor do we, as the Author of this Sermon seems to think, rest this opinion on “a few slight hints about the fall of our first parents,” but upon the plain, and reiterated declaration of the Apostle Paul, Rom. v. Notwithstanding all the difficulty with which this passage is attended, one point is plain. The writer makes it known, in different forms of expression, and with the greatest perspicuity, that a connexion really exists between the father of the human race, and all his children. Unless Adam’s transgression had, in the plan of the divine administration, such a relation to his posterity, that in consequence of it, they were constituted sinners, and subjected to death and all other sufferings, as penal evils; the Apostle reasons inconclusively, and entirely misses the end he aims at, in his comparison of Adam and Christ. Nothing can be more obvious, according to the common rules of interpretation, than that he meant to assert this connexion; so that, if no such connexion exists, he had the misfortune to publish a mistake.

Though it would not be consistent with the plan of these Letters to collect the various passages of the New Testament, which prove what man’s native character is; I cannot willingly leave the subject without adverting again to the manner, in which the Apostle Paul was accustomed to treat it. From a great multitude of pertinent texts, I take one. Eph. ii. 3. “Among whom also we all had our conversation, &c. and were *by nature children of wrath, even as others.*” He says this of believing *Jews*, as is evident from the beginning and the close of the verse, in connexion with the context. To be *children of wrath*, according to Schleusner, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and others, is to be *worthy of punishment*, *pœnis*

divinis digni. To be children of wrath, $\phi\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota$, *by nature*, is to be *born so*, or to be so in consequence of our birth, or in consequence of our *natural disposition*. “Ob naturalem nostram indolem.” See Schleusner’s Lex. on this text. Compare Gal. ii. 15, “We who are Jews *by nature*,” i. e. *born Jews, or Jews by birth*. Schleusner says that, according to the whole scope of the discourse, Ep. ii. $\phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$, *nature*, signifies the *state of those who had not been instructed and reformed by the christian religion*. True. But why was that state called $\phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$, *nature*?—a word which points us to our *origin, nativity, birth*.—We shall see the reason of this, if we compare this text with the passage, quoted above, from John iii. “That which is *born of the flesh*, is flesh;” a declaration fairly capable of no meaning but this, that man possesses *by his natural birth a depraved disposition, corrupt desires*, as the word *flesh* signifies in the text now under consideration, Eph. ii. 3, and in every other place, where it relates to the moral character or conduct of men. That which is born of the flesh, or that which man has by nature, is such a temper or character, that according to the Apostle, he is a *child of wrath*;—such, according to the representation of Christ, that he must be the subject of a *new birth by the spirit*, or he cannot see the kingdom of God.—This must be the meaning of these two passages taken together, unless we are driven by our dislike of the doctrine contained in them, to violate the plainest rules of interpretation. If similar phraseology should be found on any other subject; if, for example, it should be said, that which is born of *human parents* is *human*, or that which is born of *man* is *frail and liable to decay*,—and that every man is *by nature* the subject of various appetites and passions; who would not understand these phrases, as denoting what man is, or what he has, *by his birth*. or

what is *inbred*, or *native*? Or if language should be used by an inspired writer expressing in the same way, that which is opposite to what we understand by this text; that is, if it should be said, that the children of men are *by nature pure*,—or that what is born of human parents is *virtuous and holy*; would not our opposers think such a passage a proof sufficiently clear, of the *native purity*, the *original, inbred virtue of man*? And would they not be greatly “amazed” at the attempt of any man to put a different sense upon it?

That the human species is universally, while unrenewed, in a state of entire moral corruption, is implied in the invariable practice of the Apostles, wherever they went, to call upon men, according to their divine commission,—“upon all men every where to *repent*.” The duty, and necessity of repentance, which denotes a radical moral change, was inculcated on all, to whom the Gospel was proclaimed. If, in any part of the world, an Apostle found *human beings*, he instantly took it for granted, that they were children of disobedience, and children of wrath, and treated them accordingly,—just as he took it for granted that they were mortal.—All the provisions of the Gospel are adapted to those, who are polluted and guilty. If any can be found, whether old or young, who are not the subjects of moral depravity and ruin, they are evidently excluded from any concern with those provisions.—When we pursue the history of the christian religion through the days of the Apostles, we find wherever it produced its genuine effects, it produced *repentance and fruits meet for repentance*;—it formed men, whoever they were, to a new character; so that it became universally true, that if *any man* was a Christian, he was *a new creature*, or in the language of of Christ, was *born again*. We find no instance of the

contrary. The character, which St. Paul gives of the followers of Christ, implies that they had, without exception, been *renewed*. He often turns their thoughts to their former state of degradation and ruin. He paints that state in the strongest colors. He illustrates it by the most striking metaphors. He reminds believers, that before their regeneration, they were servants of sin, dead in trespasses and sins, enemies to God, impure, earthly. He speaks of this moral corruption, not as a fact, which was local, or of limited extent, but universal. And accordingly, he makes it a part of the general system of Christian doctrine.

There is a difficulty, I well know, in applying the description, given by the Apostle, of the character, which the first converts to Christianity originally possessed, to men of the present day, whose exterior character has been formed under the influence of a Christian education. But this difficulty disappears, when we attend to the principle, which the Apostle recognises in his reasoning, Rom. iii, and which I have already endeavored to illustrate; namely; that, whatever difference may exist, as to outward character, *all men have the same natural disposition, the same original ingredients of moral character*. In conformity to this principle, we pass by what is merely regular and amiable in the eye of the world; we pass by all the diversities of exterior character, and look to the grand moral affections of the heart, in which all are alike. Agreeably to this view, and agreeably to what our Savior says as to sin in the heart, Matt. v. 21, 22, 28, it would appear that, although men have not openly, or by formal acts, made themselves idolaters, thieves, adulterers, and murderers; they do, in a greater or less degree, possess those very passions, or desires, which, if indulged and acted out, would make them so. And thus we shall have the happiness of

agreeing with the Author of the sermon now before us, who in another ordination sermon, gives the following just description of the character of the human species.---
 “To whom is the minister of the gospel sent to preach? To men of upright minds, disposed to receive and obey the truth, which guides to heaven? Ah no! He is called to guide a wandering flock;—he is sent to a *world of sinners*, in whose hearts lurk *idolatry, sensuality, pride, and every corruption.*”*

Men, who assert the native purity of human beings, insist much upon the harmless and tender sensibilities of little children, before they are corrupted by example, and also upon the existence of what are called the natural affections in mankind generally. But how can those things, which man possesses in common with irrational animals, or those, which necessarily appertain to his present mode of existence, and which remain the same, whatever character he sustains, be considered as evidence of the purity of his moral nature?

The attempt, often made, to account for the universal prevalence of sin, by the influence of example, without supposing any native bias to evil, cannot afford satisfaction. For we are still pressed with the difficulty of accounting for it, that children, whose nature is untainted with moral evil, should be disposed to imitate bad examples, rather than good ones,—to neglect their duty, rather than perform it; and that all discreet parents and instructors, who have any familiar acquaintance with the youthful mind, should be led to frame their whole system of instruction and discipline, upon the principle, that children are *prone to evil, inclined to go astray*. Any plan of education, whether domestic or public, which should overlook this principle, and involve the opposite one of man’s *native purity*, would be regarded by

* Serm. at the Ordination of the Rev. J. Codman.

all men of sober experience and sober judgment, as romantic and dangerous.

But I must bring my remarks on this subject to a close. My object was to show that we receive the doctrine of man's native corruption upon its own proper evidence, as we receive any other truth; and that it is totally unphilosophical and unscriptural, to suffer this evidence to be obscured or perplexed by the inquiry, how the doctrine can be reconciled with the moral perfection of God. Both the moral perfection of God, and the doctrine of human depravity, rest upon evidence, which is, in our view, perfectly conclusive. We believe them both, and believe them entirely consistent with each other. Indeed, we see no peculiar difficulty attending their consistency. If any one asserts, that our doctrine of man's depravity and the moral perfection of God are inconsistent with each other; it will behove him to show, in what respects, and for what reasons, they are inconsistent. He ought to show too, how it is any more inconsistent with the goodness of God, for men to be corrupt in the earliest period of their existence, than in any subsequent period; or for all men to be corrupt, than for any part of them; or for men to be corrupt in a higher degree, than in a lower degree. If, from a consideration of the divine goodness, or for other reasons, any should persist in denying the doctrine of man's *native depravity*; they will easily see what a task they take upon themselves. They must first make it appear, by a thorough investigation, conducted in conformity to just and allowed principles, that none of the texts of Scripture, which I have cited, and no others of a similar character, contain the doctrine. In addition to this, they must satisfactorily account for all the corruption and wickedness, which man has exhibited, from childhood to

old age, in all nations and circumstances, and in opposition to all the means which have been used to restrain him, without admitting that his *nature is prone to evil*;—a task, I should think, of the same kind, with that of accounting for all the phenomena of the natural world, by which the Newtonian philosophy proves the law of gravitation, without admitting that law.

LETTER VII.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

Unitarian writers generally, as well as the Author of the Sermon before us, have appeared to think, that the commonly received doctrine of *Election* is totally incompatible with the goodness of God, and that our believing that doctrine is proof sufficient, that we do not believe in the divine goodness.

To this subject, though not a very popular one, I hope you will attend with that candor and unprejudiced judgment, without which, as you must have often seen in others, all inquiry after the truth is in vain. Against the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, now to be considered, there are strong prepossessions. And I am free to acknowledge, that Orthodox writers and preachers of high repute, but deficient in judgment, have, in some instances, exhibited the doctrine in a manner, which has given too much occasion for these prepossessions;—and too much occasion for this Author, and many others, to think that the doctrine is inconsistent with the moral perfection of God. I wish you, therefore, distinctly to understand, that it is not the doctrine of Election, as stated by some of its injudicious

advocates, or as understood by its opposers, that I would now defend.

This subject, as it respects a principle of the divine administration, is not only a very important one, but one which obviously involves questions of difficult and profound investigation. It respects the administration of a Being, possessed of infinite understanding, and infinite holiness,—a Being, to whom we have no right to dictate, and of whom we have no cause to complain,—a Being, before whose supreme majesty, we are nothing, and less than nothing. Though I have a heart as lofty, and vain, and presumptuous as others; yet when I bring this subject before me, and consider that I have undertaken to inquire respecting the administration of the eternal, incomprehensible God, my Sovereign, and my Judge,—I stand in awe; I check my presumption; and resolve to hold my mind in a humble, docile frame, lest I should incur that appalling rebuke of the Apostle,—“Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?” I bid myself remember, that neither my opinions, nor those of any mortal, are entitled to regard, any farther than they agree with the truths of revelation, and that, whatever my opinions or wishes may be, those truths will remain the same. I would devoutly cherish the impression that no opinions can be right, which would make any part of Scripture unwelcome to me; and that the greatest dislike of men, which may be incurred by defending the doctrines of revelation, is not worthy to be named, in comparison with the frown of my final Judge, for rejecting those doctrines.

It is generally acknowledged by Christians, that no opinion or reasoning respecting the divine character, or administration, can be relied upon, except that which rests on the declarations of Scripture. On this subject

especially, not the least respect is due to any argument, however plausible, which, on careful inquiry, is found contrary to what God has taught us in his word, or to what takes place in his providence. The object of our present inquiry is then very simple. If it were put to my natural reason to judge, by its own light, respecting what is called the doctrine of Election; my judgment might agree with the judgment of those, who reject the doctrine. If the question were, what difficulties attend the doctrine; I might perhaps bring forward as many as others. And if the question were, whether the doctrine, as generally represented by its opposers, and even by the Author of this Sermon, is according to the word of God; I should answer, as they do, in the negative. But the proper question is, *what saith the Scripture?* What does God teach us, as to the manner in which he designates those, who are to be heirs of salvation?

I shall not go largely into a consideration of the evidence from Scripture, in support of the doctrine now under consideration; but shall merely proceed far enough to show, that we do not believe the doctrine without evidence, and that our believing it is not a proof of our denying the moral perfection of God, but a consequence of our reverence for his word.

Proof of the doctrine of Election.

I find that Jesus Christ often speaks of a part of mankind, as being given him of the Father. This he does several times in John xvii. As an example of the whole, verse 2 may be taken. “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” The sense is, *that the Father has given to Christ a part of the human race, and that those, who have thus been given to Christ, are the persons who shall have eternal life.* As to the meaning of the

passage, the only question that deserves a moment's consideration, is, whether it relates to all who shall finally be saved, or merely to those who were disciples of Christ at that time.—In favor of the larger sense, there are several arguments.

1. Christ is here speaking of his general commission and work, as a Savior. He tells us, that the Father has given him power over *all flesh*, without the least intimation of any limits. And for what purpose was he endued with this extensive power? “That he might give eternal life to *as many as the Father had given him.*” His work, as a Savior, and the power committed to him did in fact extend, not merely to those who were then his disciples, but to the whole number of the redeemed. But why should he speak of his *power* in this extensive sense, if he meant that the end to be accomplished by it should be understood in so limited a sense? No limits are suggested. Why then should we not understand the phrase, “as many as thou hast given him,” to denote all, to whom Christ will actually give eternal life?

2. The context shows, that Christ, in the prayer here recited, had his eye upon all, who should be saved in future ages. v. 20. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also, who shall believe on me through their word.” There can be no reason to doubt, that he had as large an extent of views in the second verse, as in the twentieth.

3. This interpretation receives additional confirmation from a similar passage in John vi. 37, 39. “All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.—And this is the Father's will who sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it

up again at the last day." Those who *are given to Christ*, and those who *shall come to Christ*, are here identified. Indeed, the passage plainly signifies, that, in every case, a person's being given to Christ *secures* his coming to Christ; a circumstance which fixes one point; namely; that those, who will finally be saved, are given to Christ *before* they come to him.—From v. 39, we have additional proof that, when Christ speaks of those, who were given him of the Father, he includes the whole number that shall be saved. "This is the Father's will,---that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." The work of Christ, as a Savior, doubtless extends alike to all, who shall be raised to eternal life at the last day. But this work of his is here represented as relating to those, whom the Father had given him. From the whole it seems evident, that when Christ speaks so familiarly, in John xvii, of those who were given him, he refers to all who shall be saved.

But even on supposition, that the language related to those only, who were then his disciples; the argument would still be the same, because the principle would be the same. There could be no reason, why the Father should give Christ those, who were saved by him during his life, and not those who should be saved afterwards; and no reason, why being given to Christ should stand in certain connexion with salvation in one case, and not in the other.

If we should examine other texts of similar import, we should find still more abundant proof of what is so evident from the two passages above cited; namely; *that the Father has given a portion of mankind to Christ, in a peculiar sense, and in distinction from others, and that Christ will actually bestow eternal life on all who have been thus given him.* I see not how any man can give a dif-

ferent sense to the texts alluded to, without being conscious that he is driven to it, by his prepossession against this doctrine.

Pursuing the single inquiry, *what the scriptures teach*, we find several passages, which speak, with a remarkable emphasis, of a *purpose and choice of God* respecting those, who will be saved. My limits will allow me to consider only two.

The apostle says to the Ephesians, ch. i. 3—11, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ; *according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, &c. ; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace,*—in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, *being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*” Here we are taught, that God has a *purpose, choice, will, and good pleasure*, respecting those who are saved. It is such a *purpose*, that when men are saved, they are saved *according to it*. It is a *purpose or choice*, which was in the mind of God, *before they were saved, and before they existed*. They were “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.” And it is a *purpose*, which does not rest upon any personal merit in those, who are its objects. The *purpose or choice* is here repeatedly represented as a matter of *grace*, as *according to the riches of grace*;—exactly in agreement with other passages, which exclude *all works of righteousness* from having any concern in this subject.

The other passage I shall particularly notice, is Rom. ix. 11—24. In verses 11, 12, 13. it is said: “For

the children," that is, Jacob and Esau, "being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth, it was said unto her, the elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." It is beyond all doubt in my mind, that this interesting passage was meant to be understood in a *national* sense; that is, that they respected Jacob and Esau, not personally, but as the heads of two tribes or nations; or, in other words, that they respected those two nations. It is apparent too, that what is quoted from Moses, v. 15; "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," was said originally respecting a part of the Israelitish nation in the wilderness. But it is equally clear, that the apostle makes use of the divine conduct respecting the posterity of Jacob and Esau, mentioned in v. 11, 12, 13, and the declaration of God, quoted in v. 15, as illustrative of a general principle in the divine administration. This principle is brought into view, v. 16, as an inference from what preceded. "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." It is deduced, as a general principle, from what God said respecting the offending Israelites in a particular case. This mode of reasoning is repeated immediately after. First, a passage is quoted from the Old Testament; v. 17; "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same cause have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." From this declaration of God respecting a single individual, a general conclusion is drawn, v. 18. "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he

will he hardeneth." This is laid down by the apostle, as a general principle of the divine administration. And it is this general principle, that is asserted in the orthodox doctrine of Election, or sovereign grace.

Now take a brief view of this remarkable passage. What is it that the apostle takes so much pains to establish? Evidently this, that God makes distinctions among men, or bestows peculiar favors on some, and not on others, *pro libitu, pro arbitrio, according to his own will, or pleasure.** How does he prove this? From *particular instances* of the divine conduct, as made known by the Scriptures. It is for this purpose he quotes what God said respecting his treatment of Jacob and Esau, and of Pharaoh. Taken in any other view, the quotations have no relation to the subject, and the reasoning of the apostle from them is nugatory.

But how can the apostle infer a general truth from particular facts? How can he infer what the divine purpose and conduct will generally be, respecting the higher distinctions to be made among men in the concerns of religion, from what they were towards a few individuals in regard to other distinctions?—Plainly, because, as he evidently understands it, the same principle is involved in both. The truth asserted in v. 16, is *general*. "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The sense is, that, in relation to the subject under consideration, "nothing is effected by the efforts of man, but that every thing depends on the mercy of God.†" This general truth is inferred from what God said respecting his conduct in a particular case, because that case im-

* See Schleusner, Rosenmuller, and other Commentators, on the place.

† Rosenmuller.

plied the same principle. What objection can lie against this argument? If God proceeded in the manner described, in his treatment of two nations, that is, made a distinction between them by his own sovereign purpose and act; he may surely proceed in the same manner towards individuals. And if he has actually proceeded in this manner and on this principle, in his treatment of particular individuals; why may he not proceed in the same manner in his treatment of others generally? That the Apostle reasons thus, is undeniable.

It may be made still more certain, that we understand this passage correctly, by looking at the objection, which the Apostle supposed would be made. "Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?" v. 19. The nature of the objection, proves, that it related to that very doctrine of God's sovereign purpose and agency, which makes a part of our faith. It is the very objection, which is still made against that doctrine. The nature of the objection shows the nature of the doctrine, against which it was urged. And the nature of the answer, v. 20—24, shows, still more plainly, what was the nature of the objection, and the nature of the doctrine objected to. It is exactly the answer, which it is suitable to give to one, who urges just such an objection as this, against the Orthodox doctrine of God's sovereign purpose and agency. Such a striking correspondence would, in any other case, and must in this, be considered, as affording very satisfactory evidence of the scope and meaning of the discourse.

There is one more important inquiry respecting this passage; and that is, whether that general principle of the divine administration, which the Apostle establishes, relates to the eternal interests of men, or to something of less moment. Now I think nothing can be plainer,

than the correctness of the common construction of the passage, viz. ; that it relates to the difference which exists among men with regard to their spiritual and eternal state. This appears from the commencement of this particular part of the discourse, v. 6, 7, 8, in which the Apostle brings into view the essential difference between *real Israelites*, and those who are *of Israel*, that is, descended from him ;—between the children of the flesh, and the children of God. The Apostle labors throughout the discourse, to illustrate the manner, in which this difference is made, drawing his illustrations, as was natural, when reasoning with Jews, from the Jewish Scriptures. That he refers to the difference which is made among men in relation to their religious character and salvation, is evident also from v. 22, 23 &c, where, in pursuance of the selfsame subject, which was treated v. 6—18, he speaks of the vessels of mercy, prepared for glory, in contradistinction to the vessels of wrath ; of those who were called, both Jews and Gentiles, of God's people, &c.

If still further confirmation of the correctness of the reasoning above exhibited were necessary, I could, as I think, make it appear, that the doctrine of God's sovereign Election is the only doctrine, which accounts satisfactorily for the actual difference, which exists between true believers, and the rest of the world.

But if, after all, any should be disposed to urge the common objections against this doctrine, that it makes God unrighteous, and that, if it is true, we cannot be blamed for our sins ; I would, for the present, refer them to this chapter, to learn how the Apostle Paul would answer their objections.

The doctrine, we are now considering, is in my apprehension, clearly implied in the general doctrine of the divine purpose. That God has a wise and holy plan,

and that all events take place in conformity to it, is not only taught, expressly and abundantly, in the Scriptures, but results from the absolute perfection of God, and from the necessary dependence of all created things on him, as clearly, as any mathematical truth results from its premises. But if God has a general plan or design respecting the events which take place, he must surely have one respecting so important an event, as the salvation of his people.

But I can proceed no further with the proof. This subject has been argued by the ablest writers, that have appeared since the christian era. The controversy has been wrought up to such a degree of warmth, and the doctrine is associated in the minds of not a few, with so many strange and absurd notions, that it has become a matter of difficulty and hazard for a man to offer any proof in its favor, or even to profess that he believes it. Indeed, a man in some instances, can hardly find himself at liberty simply to repeat the texts of Scripture, which support the doctrine, without being attacked with a score of common place reflections, intended to put down the doctrine at once, without discussion. I trust my readers will be sensible, that the state of mind, which is exhibited in such cases, is altogether at variance with Christian candor, and in a high degree unpropitious to the cause of truth.

LETTER VIII.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

THOUGH I have detained you longer than I intended, on the doctrine of Election; I must beg your indulgence, while I express my thoughts without reserve, on various incorrect views and representations of the doctrine, and on some of the difficulties attending it.

Orthodox writers have not unfrequently made use of expressions which, at first view, may seem to furnish occasion for some of the heavy charges, brought against us by our opposers. But let it be remembered, that, for the rash, unqualified expressions of men, who have become hot and violent by controversy, we are not to be held responsible. We here enter our solemn protest against the language which has sometimes been employed, and the conceptions which have sometimes been entertained on this subject, or rather, perhaps, against the appendages which have been attached to it, by men, who have been denominated Calvinists. Though we embrace the doctrine, as one which is taught in Scripture, and which corresponds with enlightened reason and Christian piety; we do not embrace it in the form, and with the appendages, to which I allude.—But my present concern is chiefly with the representations of our opposers.

First. It is often represented, that we believe in an *arbitrary, unconditional, absolute decree of election*. These words are used abundantly by opposers of the doctrine, and are made the means of exciting many prejudices against it. This representation of the doctrine must receive particular attention.

The word *arbitrary* has acquired a bad sense ; and is now understood to express the character of a master or ruler, who is tyrannical, or oppressive ; who acts without regard to reason or justice, and is governed by his own capricious will. God's purpose respecting the salvation of men is, in our view, at the greatest distance from any thing like this. We consider the purpose of God to be altogether as just and reasonable, as his administration. If, in the actual *salvation* of the penitent and holy, God is wise and good ; he is equally wise and good, in his *purpose* to save them,—his conduct being an exact accomplishment of his purpose. No objection, therefore, can lie against the previous purpose of his will, which does not lie equally against the acts of his government. The inquiry, then, respects a matter of fact. Does God *act* wisely and benevolently in saving sinners ? Or does he act from a capricious, tyrannical will ? If the actions of his government are capricious and tyrannical, so is his purpose. If his actions are wise and good, his purpose is so likewise. Now although in various respects, God's proceedings in saving sinners are inscrutable to us, and we are unable to see by what reasons he is influenced ; we believe he has reasons, which are perfectly satisfactory to himself, and which, were they made known, would be satisfactory to us. It is utterly impossible, that a Being of infinite perfection should act under the influence of a capricious or despotic will. Though his administration may often be contrary to our judgment and our expectations ; we confide implicitly in his wisdom and goodness. Nothing can be more suitable for us, than such confidence in our all perfect Creator.

I say then, we do not hold the doctrine of Election in any such sense, as implies, that the purpose of God is

despotic or *capricious*. It is indeed often represented in Scripture to be the purpose of his *will*, and to be according to his *good pleasure*. But what can be more wise and reasonable, than the *will* or *good pleasure* of God? When the inspired writers declare the purpose of God to be according to *his own will*, they do, it is granted, signify to us, that it varies from the will of *man*; but they do this, to show its superior wisdom and goodness. If it were according to the will of *man*, it would be marked only with *human* wisdom. But as it is according to the will of *God*, it is marked with *divine* wisdom.

We inquire next, whether the purpose of God respecting the salvation of men is *unconditional and absolute*. I know that, in consequence of particular errors which have prevailed, it has been so represented by many of its advocates. But the language is certainly liable to be misunderstood, and ought not to be used without special care. Why should we employ words, which will not convey, truly and exactly, to the minds of others, the views which we ourselves entertain? Here, as before, I look at the divine conduct in saving sinners, considering that, as exactly corresponding with the previous divine purpose. And my inquiry is,—does God actually save sinners *unconditionally*? The first answer I give to this is, that God would never have saved them, had not Christ interposed, and made an atonement. This, then, is a *condition* of human salvation; it is the grand event, on account of which God forgives. But I inquire farther; does God actually save sinners, that is, forgive them, and receive them into his kingdom, without any condition *on their part*? The Bible furnishes the answer. “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” He that believeth shall be saved.” This is the uniform representation of the Bible. The

condition of eternal life *to be performed by men*, is repentance, faith, obedience. They can no more be saved without these, than without the death of Christ. These conditions, it is true, are of a different nature from the atonement; but they are equally necessary. From this view of the subject, I come to a satisfactory conclusion. If God does not actually save sinners without conditions; he did not *purpose* to save them without conditions,—his purpose and conduct always agreeing exactly with each other. In his eternal purpose, he regarded *the same conditions*, and regarded them *in the same manner*, as he does now, when he saves. Clearly, then, the purpose of God to save men cannot, in this respect, be considered as *unconditional*. And as the word is apt to be understood as excluding all regard to these conditions, and being so understood, involves a palpable and dangerous error; the use of it ought, I think, to be avoided; except when the particular error to be confuted, or some other circumstances, will show plainly, that it is used in a sense agreeable to the truth.

But the principal object of Orthodox writers in using the word *unconditional* in this case, has been the *denial of a particular error*. Some men have asserted, that the divine purpose respecting the salvation of sinners, which is so often spoken of in Scripture, is grounded altogether on the foreknowledge of the good works of those, who are destined to salvation; and have, in this view, called the purpose of God *conditional*. Orthodox writers have denied *such a conditionality* as this, and have justified themselves by appealing to such texts, as the following; 2. Tim. i. 9, “God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began.” Tit. iii. 5.

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” God’s saving us according to his purpose and grace is here contradistinguished to his saving us according to our works; and the defenders of Orthodoxy have justly considered all such representations of Scripture, as opposed to the opinion, that the divine purpose is conditional in the sense above mentioned.

To remove all appearances of inconsistency between the two different views above taken, of the meaning and propriety of the word *unconditional*, in relation to this subject, it is only necessary to make two obvious remarks. 1. Those things, which are spoken of as conditions on the part of man, are not so, in any degree, in the sense of *merit*, and therefore take nothing from the freeness or riches of divine grace. 2. That which is referred to in the passages above cited, where all conditionality is excluded, appears evidently to be the act of God in the first renewal of the sinner, or in first saving him from sin. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works,” &c. It was the *commencement* of the work of God in salvation. So in the parallel text, in Titus. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The salvation here spoken of, as excluding all consideration of works, was the act of God in *regeneration*,—*the renewing of the Holy Ghost*. This point is made still clearer by Ephes. ii, 4—10. Accordingly, we hold it as a fact, universally, that impenitent, unrenewed sinners do no good work, which God regards as a condition of their being renewed, or on account of which he has promised them regeneration:—that, in all cases, he calls and renews them,

according to his own purpose and grace. Now if his merciful act in their renewal to holiness is, *in this sense, unconditional* ; so is his previous purpose. That the one is so, is as certain and unexceptionable, as that the other is.

Such are my views, and, if I mistake not, of my brethren generally, respecting this part of the subject. But whenever we speak of the forgiveness of sin, the comforts of religion, or any other blessings, which God has promised to bestow, as tokens of his favor to his children, whether here or hereafter ; we are led, by the tenor of Scripture, to understand them as promised, not only on the ground of the perfect atonement made by the Savior of sinners, but also in view of conditions to be performed by them.

After the foregoing explanations, and similar ones from others, I hope the doctrine we hold respecting the purpose of God in the election of his people, or his agency in their salvation, will no longer be represented as implying, that God, in this respect, bears any resemblance to a capricious, arbitrary, or despotic ruler. Although some Orthodox writers may have inadvertently used language, which might lead to such a view of the character of God ; yet that view is totally repugnant to our feelings, and to every thing which our doctrine is intended to contain. God does, indeed, plainly possess the *uncontrollable power* of an absolute monarch ; but his uncontrollable power is always directed by infinite wisdom and goodness. Like a despotic sovereign, he does indeed act according to *his own will* ; but his will, be it remembered, is the will of a wise and benevolent ruler, a friend to his subjects ; and his acting in all things according to his own will, instead of being a cause of dissatisfaction and alarm, is the greatest possible security

to the interests of the universe. Like an absolute monarch, God may also frequently act, without any apparent reasons. But in reality there is no part of his administration, for which the highest and best reasons do not exist in his own mind.

Now the danger of representing the character and administration of God by the language, which is commonly applied to the character and administration of an absolute earthly sovereign, is, that the similitude, which is intended, and which really exists, will be carried too far; that instead of being restricted to those points in which a similitude would be honourable to God, it will be understood as reaching those, in which a similitude would be a stain to his perfect character. The words *despot*, *monarch*, *absolute*, and *arbitrary* were not originally and necessarily expressive of any bad qualities. *Despot* signifies a master, a prince who rules with unlimited power; *monarch*, one who exercises power or authority alone; *absolute*, complete, unlimited; *arbitrary*, according to one's own will. They all admit of a good sense; and, in truth, they would never be understood by us in a bad sense, had they not become associated in our minds with the bad qualities of those earthly masters or rulers, to whom they have been applied. But in consequence of this association, we cannot safely apply them, or others like them, to God, without special care to limit the points of analogy, which are intended. And in most cases of the kind, even this precaution would not preclude all exposure to error; because the words having acquired a bad sense, cannot be applied to any one, not even to God, whatever care may be used, without danger of conveying more or less of that bad sense to our minds. I should therefore, think it unadvised, in any common case, to make use of such terms, as those

abovementioned, in describing the character, or administration of God.

It is said by our opposers, that the doctrine we maintain on this subject, makes God *unjust*.

As to this charge of injustice, which is always meant to relate to those, who are not chosen to salvation, the views which we entertain, and which appear to me very satisfactory, are briefly these. The Scriptures teach, that all men are sinners, and, as such, children of wrath; that if God should be strict to mark iniquity, no man could stand before him; that salvation, in all instances, is of grace. Now suppose salvation is not granted to all. Suppose it not granted to any. Is God *unjust*?—unjust in not vouchsafing to men that, to which they have no claim? unjust in inflicting the evil, which they deserve? The divine *law* then is unjust. For how can the law be just in threatening an evil, which may not be justly inflicted? Further. If we should say, God cannot justly withhold the blessings of salvation in the instances here intended; this would be the same as saying, that justice requires God to save all. But the Scriptures represent it not only as an unmerited favor, that God saves any, but as a matter of fact, that he will not save all. Is God then chargeable with actual injustice? But if God is just in annexing such a penalty to his law, and just in executing it; it must be obvious that he is equally just in his *determination* to do so. For no principle of common sense can be more plain and certain, than that it is just for the omniscient God to determine beforehand to do that, which it is just for him actually to do. No imputation of injustice, therefore, can lie against the previous purpose of God respecting those who are not saved, which does not lie equally against his law, and his administration.

Here we find one of the principal sources of difficulty respecting this subject. It is not well considered, that the divine purpose is grounded on the same reasons, and conformed to the same views, with the divine conduct. When God punishes transgressors, he does it for sufficient reasons. When he previously determines to punish them, it is for the same reasons. When the Judge shall say to the wicked, "depart from me, ye that work iniquity;" the reason of the sentence is obvious, namely, that they had worked iniquity. With a perfect foreknowledge of that fact, and altogether on that account, he determines beforehand to pronounce that sentence against them. Thus the purpose of God perfectly corresponds with the acts of his government. Accordingly, his purpose to punish is no more absolute and unconditional, than his act in punishing. And the act of God in punishing those, who transgress his law, is no more absolute and unconditional, than the act of a magistrate in punishing transgressors of civil law. A good ruler punishes only for offences against the law; punishes only according to law; or, which is the same thing, according to the ill desert of offenders. And no good ruler can ever design or decree punishment on any other principles. I object as strongly, as any opposer of the doctrine of the divine purpose, against representing God as intending or appointing the destruction of sinners absolutely and unconditionally, without regard to justice, and goodness, and from a delight in seeing the misery of his creatures. Such a representation is infinitely distant from the truth. And whatever unguarded expressions Othodox writers may have sometimes used; I am persuaded they have really meant nothing contrary to the sentiments, which I have exhibited.

From the free remarks which I have made on this

subject, you will see what my views and those of my Orthodox brethren are, respecting what is called the divine purpose or *decree of reprobation*. It is, as we understand the subject, the determination of God, the righteous Governor of the world, to punish disobedient subjects *for their sins*, and according to their deserts. In one respect, therefore, there is an obvious difference between the purpose of God to *save*, and his purpose to *destroy*; a difference exactly agreeing with that which exists between the act of God in saving, and his act in destroying. He saves men as an act of grace, not out of respect to any thing in them, which renders them *deserving* of salvation. But he punishes the wicked purely out of respect to their sins, which render them *deserving* of punishment. He executes upon them simply an act of justice. That is, in a word; they, who are saved, receive a good which they do not deserve; but they who are destroyed, receive just that evil which they deserve. Accordingly, the *purpose* of God, in the former case, is a purpose to bestow upon men blessings, not deserved; but, in the latter case, it is a purpose to inflict upon men the very evil, as to kind and degree, which they deserve.

It has often been alleged, as an objection against the doctrine of Election, that it makes God *a respecter of persons*; or represents him, as influenced by *partiality*.

In order to determine, whether this objection is well founded, we must inquire what *respect of persons* is. The word, I think, has the same sense in Scripture, and in common discourse. Let us then see what its signification is.—Levit. xix. 15; “Thou shalt do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not *respect the person* of the poor, nor know the *person* of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor;” that is

thou shalt not be influenced in judgment by any consideration of the poverty or riches, the weakness or power of those, who are to be judged, but by a single regard to justice and truth. In 2 Chron. xix. 5—7, Jehoshaphat inculcated strict justice and fidelity upon Judges from the consideration, that with God, whose servants they were, there was no iniquity, *nor respect of persons*, nor taking of gifts; that is, that he was never biassed in judgment by any corrupt passions, personal attachments, or bribes, but acted purely out of regard to justice. See also Deut. x. 17, 18, where the people were cautioned, by similar language, against supposing that God would feel any partial respect to the persons of men, or that he would not exercise a just and equal regard to the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger. Acts x. 34. Peter learnt from his vision at Joppa, and from subsequent events, that God was not a *respector of persons*; that, in dispensing his blessings, he had not that partial and exclusive regard to the Jews, which had been attributed to him, but that, in every nation, he that feared God, and worked righteousness, was accepted. It referred to the special favor shown to Cornelius, a sincere worshipper of God among the Gentiles. So Rom. ii. 11, the same declaration is made, to show that, in his final judgment, God would treat all men on the same principle of impartial justice, without the least regard to any national distinction. See also James ii. 1—4, where *respect of persons* is explained to be a partial regard to the rich and splendid, and contempt of the poor.

Now if *respect of persons* is really what I have represented it to be; the doctrine of Election, which we hold, does not imply, that God is chargeable with it in any degree. It implies the contrary. For the doctrine

asserts, that he is not influenced to make choice of those who are to be saved, by any respect to their persons, more than to the persons of others, nor by a regard to any thing in them, or in their circumstances, which renders them more pleasing to him, or more worthy of his favor, than others. We believe, that those, who are chosen of God to salvation, are not chosen because they were, in themselves, more worthy of this blessing, than others; that God looked upon their moral feelings and conduct with the same disapprobation, and had the same view of their ill desert, and that he chose them, as we may say, *for reasons of state*,—for general reasons in his government, which he has not revealed. He did it, as it is expressed by the inspired writers, “according to the counsel of his own will,”—“according to his good pleasure,”—or “because it seemed good in his sight.” These phrases plainly denote that the purpose and administration of God are, in this respect, different from what our wisdom would dictate, or our affection choose; that they cannot be accounted for by any principles known to us, but result from the infinite perfection of God, and are conformed to reasons, which he has concealed in his own mind. These are our views. Accordingly, when, from the deep veneration we feel for the unsearchable wisdom of God, and an honest regard to what we conceive to be the obvious sense of various passages in his word, we assert the doctrine of Election; we are at the greatest possible distance from imputing to him any thing like partiality, or respect of persons. We believe he acts, and determines to act, altogether from different and higher reasons. And we are satisfied, that those reasons are perfectly wise and benevolent, not because we distinctly know what they are, but because we believe in the moral perfection of

God, and in cases the most profoundly mysterious, are sure, that his designs and actions are right.

Will any one still assert, that, if God chooses men to salvation, as the doctrine of Election implies, it must necessarily be from partiality, or respect of persons? Then it behoves him to prove, that God cannot choose them from any other motive;—that it is impossible there should be any other reason for making the difference. Unless this is made to appear by strong and conclusive arguments; we may still believe, that God does thus choose men to salvation, and, at the same time, believe that he is no respecter of persons, but that in this case, as in all others, he is influenced by reasons, which are perfectly consentaneous to his own eternal wisdom and benevolence, and which, if known to us, would appear in the highest degree honorable to his character.

Another objection, often urged against the doctrine of Election, is, that it *destroys free agency, and makes men mere machines.*

I reply; that, so far as our honest convictions are concerned, this objection is groundless; because we entertain no views of the doctrine, which seem to us inconsistent, in the smallest degree, with the most perfect free agency.

But it may be said that, whether we are aware of it or not, the opinion, which we entertain respecting the divine purpose, is *really* inconsistent with free moral agency.

In reply to this, I have time only to state, in few words, the reflections, which have been most satisfactory to my own mind.

The purpose of God, determining the salvation of his people, needs not to be supposed inconsistent with their

moral agency, unless the purpose of God respecting the conduct or condition of men is so in every case. I make it then a *general inquiry*. Is it in all cases, repugnant to the notion of the free moral agency of men, that God should have any previous purpose or design respecting their actions? If any man, accustomed to thorough investigation, should assert this broad principle; I should be much inclined to ask for his reasons.—Are the acts of the understanding, the affection, or the will of man deprived of their own proper nature, because they are conformed to a divine purpose? Is any one thing, great or small, which goes to constitute moral agency, taken away or in any degree altered, by the simple fact, that it exists according to God's eternal plan? It would seem to me reasonable to suppose, that God's purpose, or will, if it has any influence, must make things what they are, instead of depriving them of their proper nature.—I first look at things, both in the natural and moral world, as they exist. I try to discover what they are. Then, as they are of necessity dependant on God, I conclude they must exist according to his purpose. I find myself a moral being; that is, I am conscious of those powers, and those actions, which give me the clearest notion of a moral agent, and which, to my perfect satisfaction, render me accountable to a moral law and government. I then conclude, as I am a creature of God, that I exist as I am, namely, a moral agent, according to his purpose. And if God's purpose, determining my existence as a moral agent, is consistent with my actually existing as such; why may not his purpose, determining the exercises of my moral agency, be consistent with the existence of such moral exercises? The following positions, which I think conformable to sound reason and philosophy, express my views in brief. God

first determines, *that man shall be a moral agent*, and that in all the circumstances of his existence, he shall *possess and exercise all his moral powers*. And then God determines, that, *in the perfect exercise of all his moral powers*, he shall act in a certain manner, and form a certain character. The determination of God, thus understood, instead of being *inconsistent* with free moral agency, does in fact *secure* moral agency. In regard to this subject, it aims at nothing, and tends to produce nothing, but the *uninterrupted exercise of all our moral powers*.

But I drop all reasoning of this sort, and appeal to facts. There are numerous instances mentioned in Scripture, in which God is expressly declared to have *predetermined* the actions of men; and yet they had as much moral freedom, and felt themselves as worthy of praise or blame in those actions, as in any other. The examples of this, which every where occur in the sacred volume, prove incontrovertibly, that the purpose of God is consistent with moral agency. For in those cases, in which we certainly know that a divine purpose has existed, because it has been expressly declared, there has been, in every respect, as much evidence of moral agency, as in any case whatever, and as much, as we can conceive possible. Not the least thing, which can belong to the powers of a moral agent, or to the manner of exercising them, has been taken away, or obstructed, by the divine purpose. Nay, I should rather say, that those very powers of a moral agent, and the proper manner of exercising them, have been the true result of that purpose.

Now admitting in the cases referred to, even if they were much fewer than they are, that the purpose of God has consisted with the unimpaired moral agen-

cy of man ; I find no difficulty in admitting, that it may in any other case. And if so, the objection we have been considering, that the doctrine of Election destroys moral agency, and makes men mere machines, loses all its force.

I shall notice one more objection against the doctrine of Election, namely, *that it is inconsistent with the sincerity of God in the declarations of his word.*

The answer to this objection, which appears to me the most satisfactory, consists in assigning to the doctrine its proper form and relations. When I undertake to explain the purpose of God respecting those who are to be saved, I consider it essential to say, that it is to be so understood, as not to contradict his truth and sincerity in any of the declarations of his word. If, in connexion with God's purpose respecting the salvation of his people, the Bible teaches, that he commands men universally to repent, and invites them to accept eternal life, and that he is perfectly ready to grant them the blessings of salvation, on the most reasonable and gracious terms ; our faith must receive the doctrine, as having this form, and standing in this relation. It is thus the doctrine is actually received by Orthodox ministers generally. While they believe the doctrine of Election, they do undoubtedly believe and expressly teach, the perfect sincerity of God in all his addresses to men, whether chosen to salvation, or not ; and they present the invitations, of God's word to sinners, without any reference to that distinction, and with as much earnestness, and as much belief of the divine sincerity, as if they had no conception of any divine purpose. And my apprehension is, that all this is perfectly just ; and that if we had a thorough acquaintance with the subject, we should see, that the pur-

pose of God, and his corresponding agency are of such a character, that they occasion no difficulty at all respecting his sincerity. These two points of divine truth are entirely distinct. They relate to the character of God, and to the state of man, in different ways. And when they are proved, each one by its own proper evidence, we receive them both, exactly as we receive different truths, made known to us in different ways, in any of the sciences. As to the fact of their *consistency*, it is sufficient to satisfy us, to find, that they are both supported by conclusive evidence, and that neither of them palpably contradicts the other. If any man asserts that there is an inconsistency between these two doctrines, he must prove it. And in proving it, he must remember, that it will be difficult to satisfy thinking men, unless he can make it appear, that the evidence which supports one or the other of them is defective, or that the main proposition, contained in one of them, is, in the same sense in which it is there affirmed, contradicted or denied in the other.

In closing my remarks on this part of the subject, I am willing to concede, that *those views* of the doctrine of Election, against which Whitby, and many other respectable writers direct their principal arguments, are justly liable to objection. And if, in stating the doctrine, we should copy the example of some of its advocates, and call the purpose of God *an absolute, irresistible unconditional, unfrustrable decree*, using these epithets abundantly, and without qualification, and in such a manner, as would imply, that the divine purpose is unreasonable, or oppressive, or the divine agency in executing it, compulsory; we should really give the doctrine such a character, that it could never be received by men of rational and candid minds. This is the apology, which I have

been accustomed to make for some Christians who exhibit marks of sincere piety to God, and heartfelt reverence for his word, who yet hesitate to admit, in so many words, the doctrine of Election. What they disbelieve is not the simple doctrine, as we understand it, but something which has been artfully, or injudiciously appended to it. Cases of this kind have led me to reflect on the importance of special caution, as to the manner of explaining and defending this profound and holy doctrine.

I have now done, as concisely as possible, what I thought necessary to explain the proper form and relations of this doctrine, and to guard it against misapprehension. I make these explanations a part of the statement of the doctrine. And it must, I think, occur to my readers, that, when I use such care to shape and limit the doctrine, and to guard it against misapprehension, I do but imitate what the Apostle Paul did in other cases. His opposers were inclined to put a wrong construction upon his doctrines, and to make wrong inferences from them. "If our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? God forbid."—Again, he taught, in respect of penitent sinners, that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." He then reasons with objectors. "What shall we say then? shall we sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." We make use of the same caution on the present subject. The Scriptures teach that God has given to Christ a portion of the human race; that all, who have been thus given to him, shall come to him, and be saved, without any exception; and that they are saved according to God's eternal purpose. This is what we mean by the doctrine of Election. But is this purpose of God *absolute* and *arbitrary*, in the sense in which these terms are

commonly applied to man? God forbid.—Is this purpose of God, in all respects, *unconditional*? By no means. For without the shedding of blood there can be no remission; nor can any be received into Christ's kingdom without repentance and faith.—But if God determines to save only a part of mankind, is he not *unjust*? God forbid. There is certainly no injustice to those who are saved; nor can there be any to those, who are not saved, if their sufferings are only what they deserve. But is not the purpose of God in this respect chargeable with partiality, or respect of persons? We say, God forbid. He makes the difference on principles, or for reasons perfectly agreeable to infinite wisdom and goodness.—But does not God's purpose to save his people, or his agency in executing that purpose, destroy their free agency, and make them machines? By no means. They are as free in this case as in any other; as free as they could be, were there no divine purpose. Finally; is not this immutable purpose of God inconsistent with the truth and sincerity of his proposals of mercy to sinners? We say here also, God forbid. His purpose no more interferes with his sincerity, than it does with any other divine attribute, or with any other truth. In his offer of salvation, he treats men as moral agents; and he always has bestowed salvation upon those, who have accepted his offer in the manner proposed; and he would have bestowed it upon those who perish, if they had in the same manner, complied with the conditions. Who then can impeach his sincerity?

You now see what we mean by the doctrine of Election, and in what manner we believe it. As the result of his own unsearchable wisdom and grace, and for reasons which relate to the great ends of his admin-

istration, God eternally purposed to save a great number of our race, and purposed to save them precisely in the manner, in which he does actually save them. Now every man, who duly weighs the subject, must perceive, that, according to this statement, the notion of a *previous* divine purpose is attended with no peculiar difficulty. If the divine purpose exactly corresponds with the divine conduct, our whole inquiry may properly relate to that conduct. For if the divine conduct in saving men is unobjectionable; the divine purpose, of which that conduct is the accomplishment, must be equally unobjectionable. Whatever it is proper for God to do, it is proper for him to determine to do. And whether that determination precede the action by a longer or shorter space, its character is the same.

After coming to this article of divine truth, concerning which so many mistakes have been entertained, and against which so many objections have been arrayed, I felt a desire to disclose to my readers, with the utmost frankness, my inmost thoughts upon the subject; being fully persuaded, that the doctrine, properly stated, is honorable to God; that it is abundantly confirmed by the scriptures, and has strong claims upon our faith. Indeed we should find it difficult to see, how any objection could ever be urged against it, were it not for the natural repugnance, which according to the word of God, exists in the heart of man, against the doctrines of divine truth, and which, to our great discomfort, and with a full conviction of its unreasonableness and criminality, we have felt in ourselves.—Were it not for this repugnance, which plainly shows the moral disorder of the human mind, no man, we think, could be found, who would not regard the doctrine with the most cordial acquiescence. For, my respected readers, the precious blessings of salvation

must be ultimately, either in the hands of God, or of man. The extent, to which they shall be received, must be determined by God, or by man. The Scriptures teach, and facts teach, that God has reserved this great concern in his own hands; that he “saves men according to his own purpose and grace;” or which is the same thing, that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.” I make the appeal to your impartial judgment, whether this momentous concern could be in better hands; whether we have not reason for unbounded confidence in the purpose and administration of a Being, who is infinitely wise and good; and whether any sentiment respecting this whole subject can be more reasonable in itself, or more suitable for us, than that, which was uttered with so much joy by the blessed Jesus, respecting this very doctrine; *Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.*

LETTER IX.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

If there is any one doctrine of revelation, which the Orthodox distinguish, in point of importance, from all others, it is the doctrine of the *Atonement*. My design in this Letter is, not to write a treatise on this subject, but to expose certain erroneous methods of reasoning respecting it, to clear away some of the objections and difficulties, which have been supposed to attend it, and so to prepare the way for a fair consideration of its truth and importance. This is all which the nature of my undertaking requires.

Here, as in other cases, a regard to truth obliges me

to say, that Unitarians have greatly misrepresented our opinions. The Author of the Sermon before us gives it as a part of the Orthodox system, that "God took upon him human nature, that he might pay to his own justice the debt of punishment incurred by men, and might enable himself to exercise mercy." He undertakes in another place to express our opinion in still stronger terms; "that God took human nature, that he might appease his own anger towards men, or make an infinite satisfaction to his own justice;" and after giving our opinion this shape, he asks very earnestly, for one text where it is taught. We reply, that an opinion, *thus shaped and colored*, is taught nowhere in the Bible, and believed by no respectable Trinitarians. It is an essential part of our faith, that there is a real distinction between the Father and the Son, and that the distinction is of such a nature, that they are two, and are in Scripture represented to be two, as *really*, as Moses and Aaron, though not in the same sense, nor in any sense inconsistent with their being one. In consequence of this distinction, we consider it perfectly proper to say, that the Father sends the Son to die for sinners, and accepts the sacrifice he makes; that the Son obeys the Father, seeks his glory, &c. We find that the Scripture does thus represent them; and though in our view they both possess the same divine perfection, we believe that, in consequence of the distinction between them, this representation of Scripture is just. We pretend not, with minds so limited as ours, to be able to know the intrinsic nature, or the ground of this distinction; but its *results* we know, because the Bible reveals them; and we believe the distinction to be correspondent with what is thus revealed. So that it is something quite diverse from the form of sound words, which we adopt, and quite diverse

from our belief, to say, that "God sent himself,"—"that God took human nature, that he might appease his own anger, and enable himself to exercise mercy." And if any writer should still say that, if the Son shares divine perfection with the Father, it is impossible there should be any such distinction, as the Scripture makes between them; he would indeed repeat that which has been said by a succession of writers from the *Fratres Poloni* down to the present day, but which, so far as I know, has had little better proof, than strong affirmation.

But it is not to my purpose to go into any argument in proof of the personal distinction in the Godhead; but merely to say, that the passages, above quoted from the Sermon, and a multitude of other passages, which might be quoted from Unitarian writers, are far from being a true and impartial representation of our faith. They are indeed calculated to slur the Orthodox doctrine of the Atonement. But with every sober, honest man, the question will be, *are they just?*—It is as plain to us, as to this writer, that God, as God, cannot be a sufferer, or bear a penalty. And hence we infer the necessity of the incarnation. "The Word," the divine Redeemer, "was made flesh," and thus was put into a capacity to suffer and die.

The Author of this Sermon, and other Unitarian writers seem to think, that the idea, which is conveyed to common minds by the Orthodox system, is "that Christ's death has an influence in making God placable or merciful, in quenching his wrath, and awakening his kindness towards men." This representation demands particular attention.

I observe, then, that it is uniformly the sentiment of the Orthodox, that *the origin, the grand moving cause of*

the whole work of redemption, was the infinite love, benignity, or mercy of God ; and that it is purely in consequence of this love, that he appointed a Mediator, and adopted every measure, which he saw to be necessary for the salvation of man. The goodness, mercy, or placability of God, considered as an attribute of his character, could then be neither produced nor increased by the atonement of Christ ; as the atonement itself owed its existence wholly to that eternal, immutable goodness. This view of the subject, which we derive from John iii. 16, and many other texts of similar import, we inculcate with more than ordinary frequency and earnestness. We believe that it is essential to the honor of the divine character, and to the sincerity and comfort of christian devotion. If we have ever made use of language, or indulged opinions, in the smallest degree unfavorable to this sentiment, we deplore the error we have committed. And whenever we find a fellow creature, who has entertained a different sentiment, we will vie with the Author of this Sermon, in our efforts to correct a mistake, which we regard with so much horror.

But how happens it, that Unitarians have so often, and so materially misapprehended our opinions on this momentous subject ? The only occasion we have given for their misapprehension has been, the use of *strong metaphorical language*. It has been common for Orthodox writers and preachers, especially when they have aimed to move the affections of men, or to impress the truth upon them deeply, to represent Christ, as rescuing sinners from the vengeance of God, or shielding them from the arrows of his vengeance ; as appeasing, or turning away his anger, staying his fury, quenching his wrath or vengeance, divesting his throne of its ter-

rors, satisfying his justice, delivering men from the demands of his dreadful law, &c.

Now I pretend not that this language is exactly like the language of the Scriptures. But the resemblance is so great, that no objection can possibly lie against the one, which does not lie equally against the other. To make this perfectly clear, I shall give a few examples of the manner, in which both the Old Testament and the New frequently speak of God. Psalm xc. 7. "We are consumed by thine anger." Isa. v. 25. "His anger is not turned away;"—xxx. 30. "The Lord shall show the indignation of his anger;"—xl. 25. "He poured on him the fury of his anger;"—lxvi. 15. "The Lord will come to render his anger with fury." Hosea xi. 9. "I will execute the fierceness of mine anger." Deut. xxix. 30. "The anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man." In other places the anger of the Lord is said to be kindled. It is said, that he is angry with the wicked every day; that he hath whet his sword; that he hath bent his bow, and made it ready; that he revengeth and is furious; and that he will meet his enemies, as a bear bereaved of her whelps. The writers of the New Testament sometimes use similar phraseology. They speak of the indignation and wrath of God, and represent vengeance as his prerogative.—The Scriptures also represent God as turning or being turned from his anger, from the fierceness of his anger, and from his hot displeasure. This was the familiar language of history and devotion under the former dispensation. And we well know that the God, whom Moses, David, and the prophets worshipped, was the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It will be said, that the language above cited is *metaphorical*. Undoubtedly it is. And so is the language.

which is used by Orthodox writers on the subject of the atonement. The Scripture metaphors, which I have brought into view, are drawn from the same sources, and are of the same nature with those, which are objected to in the writings of the Orthodox. And I am sure that no advocate for Orthodoxy, how great soever the warmth of his natural temperament, and how glowing soever his imagination and his style, has ever, even in poetry, used bolder metaphors respecting God, than are found in the sacred writers. Where shall we find imagery more terrific, than in those passages of Scripture, in which God is represented as full of anger and vengeance, even the fierceness and heat of anger, so that his wrath smokes and burns against the wicked ;—in which his fury is represented to be like the fury of a bear bereaved of her whelps ;—in which too he is set forth, as a terrible executioner, or warrior, with his sharp sword, or with his bow and arrows, ready for the work of destruction? And what advocates for the Atonement have employed language more highly figurative, than we find in those passages, in which God is said to cause his anger to cease, or to be turned, by prayer, from the fierceness of his wrath? Even if we should familiarly speak of the Atonement in the language, which the Author of the sermon thinks so exceptionable, and should represent it as designed to “render God merciful, to quench his wrath, and awaken his kindness towards men ;” we might very safely rest our justification for the use of such metaphorical language, on the example of men, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Will it be said, that the bold metaphors, above cited from the Scriptures, were peculiar to the idiom of the Eastern language, especially the language of the ancient Hebrews, and that they are inadmissible under the dis-

pensation of the Gospel? I grant that they belonged to the idiom of the Eastern nations, especially of the ancient Hebrew writers. But it must be remembered, that Christ, in the most unqualified terms, recommended the Scriptures of the Old Testament to his disciples; and also that the writers of the New Testament thought it proper to quote, without palliation or explanation, some of the metaphorical passages referred to, and sometimes, with similar metaphors, to enliven their own style. And surely it cannot be thought strange, that a Christian minister, who is accustomed to entertain so high a reverence for the Holy Scriptures, and to look to them, as containing every thing pure and excellent, both in matter and form, should infuse into his preaching or writing the same kind of metaphor, as that which abounds in them. It has generally been considered best by Unitarians, if I mistake not, as well as by others, to *keep as near, as may be, to the peculiar phraseology of the Scriptures*. Why, then, are we blamed for doing it here? It is not very easy to account for the manner in which Unitarian writers have treated this thing. If they acknowledge that the language of Scripture, above cited, is to be understood as *highly metaphorical*; why should they suppose that similar language in our sermons and books of divinity is meant to be understood *literally*? The moment they interpret our language, as they interpret the figurative language of the Bible, the difficulty vanishes.

But what is the *meaning* of the metaphorical language now under consideration? To satisfy ourselves on this subject, it is only necessary to consider the nature and design of metaphors, and the manner in which we learn their signification. In metaphorical language, words are taken out of their proper, literal sense, and for the sake of illustra-

tion or impression, are used to denote other things, which are conceived to have some resemblance to what is denoted by the literal sense. It is essential to a metaphor, that there should be, in some respect, a real or apparent resemblance between the *proper* sense of the word, and the *metaphorical*. How, then, are we to interpret the metaphorical language of Scripture, above cited? Does it imply that God himself is really like an angry, fierce, revengeful man, who is impelled by his outrageous passions to inflict pain, and commit acts of violence? Infinitely otherwise. What the Bible makes known respecting God, and all our best conceptions of his character forbid it. Every divine perfection forbids it. And common sense forbids it. Nor is it the least objection to the use of this species of metaphor, that the literal sense would be contrary to truth, and would violate the plainest principles of religion. This is the case with respect to some of those metaphors, which are considered most unexceptionable; as when God is called a rock, and when he is said to walk, or ride, or sit. In all such instances, common sense, properly enlightened respecting the nature of the subject, is competent at once to determine the import of the metaphorical language. If a metaphor is taken from an object familiarly known, and is used with any degree of judgment, or taste; we perceive instantly the point of similitude which is intended, and the meaning of the metaphor is perfectly obvious.

We say, then, that the texts above quoted, do not imply, that the *character* of God is in any degree like the character of a man, who is impelled by his angry, malignant passions, to acts of violence. They do not imply that any thing like the feeling of revenge in a man, can ever belong to the God of love. The analogy intended is between the *effects* of anger and revenge in

man, and the *effects* of what is called anger and revenge in God. But even here, careful restriction is still necessary. For the evils, which God inflicts upon sinners, spring from *motives* totally different from human anger and revenge. Nor do the effects of the divine displeasure resemble the effects of human anger, as to the *manner* in which they take place. But as to the *certainty* and *dreadfulness* of the effects, there is an obvious resemblance. In order to set forth how fearful and how inevitable is the punishment of the wicked, it is the custom of the inspired writers to resort to the most terrific objects in nature. To illustrate the dreadfulness of the displeasure of God against sinners, they point us to a man, whose anger is fierce, and consumes all before it; and, to make the illustration still more impressive, they point us to a raging bear bereaved of her whelps. So terrible are the effects of the divine displeasure.

If we have taken a correct view of the metaphors above cited, we are prepared to understand the representations of Scripture on the other part of the subject. When God is spoken of as turning or being turned from the fierceness of his anger, or causing his anger to cease; the sense must obviously be, that the dreadful *effects* of his righteous displeasure are prevented, or removed. A man whose anger abates, and whose mind becomes tranquil, ceases to inflict evil. It is with a view to this, that, when the effects of God's holy displeasure are prevented, or removed, he is said to turn or be turned from his anger; and, if those effects were very dreadful, from the fierceness of his anger. And on the same ground, if any being in heaven or earth, should do any thing, which, according to the principles of the divine government, would have an influence to prevent or remove the evils, that would otherwise result

from the displeasure of God ; that being might be said to turn God from his anger, or render him merciful ; and if the evils, thus prevented or removed, were great and dreadful, he might, by a still bolder figure, be said to “ quench the wrath of God, and awaken his kindness towards men.”

Now as this kind of metaphor is so abundantly used in the Scripture, why may it not be used by those, who make the Scripture their pattern and guide ? And when, in conformity to their perfect pattern, they do use it, why should they not be understood, as using it in the same manner with those inspired writers, from whom they borrow it ? Why should not the same principles of common sense, and candor, and good taste be applied to the interpretation of it in the one case, as in the other ? If this were done, no objection could remain in the minds of Unitarians, certainly not in the mind of the Author of this Sermon, against the language of Orthodox writers, respecting the influence of the Atonement. For he says, that many Unitarians, clearly meaning to include himself, “ think that the Scriptures ascribe the remission of sins to Christ’s death, with an emphasis so peculiar, that we ought to consider this event as having a special influence in removing punishment, as a condition or method of pardon, without which, repentance would not avail us, at least to that extent which is now promised by the gospel.” I am glad to find this development of scriptural views ; although there is a sinking phrase at the close of the sentence, which the Apostle Paul would never have written. It is then admitted as a fact, and certainly it must be regarded as a fact of vast moment, “ that the death of Christ has a special influence in removing punishment ;” that it is an indispensable condition of pardon, and the only consistent method, in which salvation can

be granted. This important fact is described by Orthodox writers in various ways. It is the representation of some, particularly of those, whose ardent temperament, or vivid fancy, makes them fond of glowing imagery, that the death of Christ quenched his Father's wrath, caused him to lay aside his thunder, and to look upon sinners with a smiling face ; that it turned a throne of fiery vengeance into a throne of mercy, &c. In such metaphorical language as this, the just punishment of sin is likened to the effect of human wrath, of thunder, and of irresistible power in a king, who rises, in frowning majesty, to inflict condign punishment upon rebels ; and the language teaches, that the punishment of sin, illustrated by such images, is prevented or removed by the mediation of Christ. The language, taken literally, would impute a character to God, which would excite universal horror. But if understood according to the legitimate principles of interpreting metaphors, it teaches the simple, but allimportant truth, that the death of Christ was the means of procuring pardon, or the medium, through which salvation is granted.

Another representation which is frequently made, and which is borrowed from Scripture, is, that Christ *bought* us, or *redeemed* us from destruction by the price of his own blood. This figure is drawn from the practice of redeeming captives from bondage, by paying a price. The similitude, when exactly expressed, is this ; as captives or slaves are released from bondage and restored to liberty, by the payment of a satisfactory price ; so sinners are delivered from just punishment, and made heirs of heaven, by the atonement of Christ. Sometimes this same thing is spoken of by Orthodox writers, as the payment of a debt. This figure is also derived from Scripture, which represents us, as God's debtors.

Matt, vi. 12. "Forgive us our debts." Spiritual concerns are familiarly represented in the parables of Christ, by what takes place between debtors and creditors. As sinners we deserve punishment; that is, we owe it to the righteous Governor of the world, to suffer evil in proportion to our sins. When Christ is said to pay our debt, it is signified simply, that by means of his sufferings, he delivers us from punishment. This similitude does not relate particularly to the mode of deliverance, nor to the nature of the evil which is escaped, nor to the nature of the good secured; but merely to *the fact* of his procuring deliverance by means of his death. As the debtor, who has nothing to pay, and is confined to prison, is freed from imprisonment by the generosity of a friend, who steps forward in his name, and pays his debt; so sinners are freed from punishment by the kindness of the Savior, who interposed and shed his blood for them.

It is said, that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us. The law denounced a punishment. This was its curse. Christ delivers us from that punishment, by being made a curse; that is, by suffering an evil, which, so far as the ends of the divine government are concerned, was equivalent to the execution of the curse of the law upon transgressors.

When Christ is said to have *satisfied divine justice*, or the demands of justice, the sense is the same. In civil governments, if justice is satisfied; in other words, if that is done which perfectly answers the ends of justice; there is no further necessity of punishment. So, when Christ has done and suffered that which answers the ends of justice in the divine government, the necessity of punishment, so far as those ends are concerned, is superseded. And if any of us should say, that *our sin was imputed* to Christ, our meaning must be, that Christ suf-

ferred on account of our sin,—suffered, in some sense, as he would have suffered, if our sin had been imputed to him; though a real imputation of our sin to Christ, in a *literal* sense, would have been a palpable inconsistency in a government founded in justice and truth.

I might mention other forms of figurative language, which have been employed by respectable divines, to set forth the design and influence of Christ's death; and might say respecting them all, that if they were interpreted according to the same principles, which govern us in the interpretation of the metaphorical language of Scripture, a very satisfactory sense might be given to them, so that no difficulty would remain. I would therefore appeal to all those, who have duly considered the nature and just interpretation of metaphors, whether it is a mark of judgment, or good taste, to overlook the metaphorical sense of the phraseology now under consideration, and to persist in treating it, as though it could have no other than a literal sense. Against the literal sense, there are indeed many objections. And there are as many against the literal sense of the texts of Scripture, above recited. But against that metaphorical sense, which I have suggested, there are no objections in either case.

But respecting these metaphors, I have two additional remarks. The first is, that some men, who profess to hold the general principles of Orthodoxy, have evidently been led into error by mixing a degree of the literal sense with the metaphorical. Though they seem to interpret the phrases referred to, as figurative; it is soon made apparent by their reasoning, that they still retain some impression of the literal sense. To this I think we can trace the notion, that, if Christ has made a perfect atonement, and satisfied divine justice, those, for whom he has done this, are no longer under the same obligation

to obey the law, and punishing them for their sins would no longer be just. This would indeed follow from understanding some of the representations of Scripture, and of Orthodox writers, in a literal sense. For if Christ paid our debt, or the price of our redemption *literally*, i. e. just as a friend discharges the obligation of an insolvent debtor, or purchases the freedom of a slave by the payment of money; it would certainly be an unrighteous thing for us to be held to pay our own debt, or to suffer the evils of servitude.

To the same cause I am disposed to ascribe it, that so many men have thought the doctrine of the atonement, or of salvation through the blood of Christ, unfavorable to the cause of morality. If the atonement be literally and exactly like the payment of what is due from an insolvent debtor; if it have such an effect, as to release the sinner from his obligation to render obedience to the law,—such an effect as to take away or diminish his ill-desert, or to make it less just in God to punish; the doctrine would indeed be unfavorable to morality. But we deny that the atonement has any such analogy, as is here implied, to pecuniary transactions; and we deny that the metaphorical language, which is taken from those transactions to illustrate the subject, indicates any such analogy. The atonement, as a means, and we believe the only consistent means, does indeed deliver sinners from punishment. But its influence is such, and operates in such a way, that the righteous authority of the law is confirmed, and that the undiminished obligations of sinners to obedience, their ill-desert, and the justice of their punishment are all set in the clearest light.

Another hurtful notion, which seems to spring from the same source, that is, from attaching something of a literal sense to figurative language, is, that

God's requiring perfect satisfaction to his justice in order to the forgiveness of sin, or his determination not to save sinners, unless their debt is fully discharged by another, shows less benevolence, than if he should forgive and save by his own unpurchased goodness, without any satisfaction rendered by another. This notion often lurks in the minds of those who believe the doctrine of atonement, but whose faith is mixed with obscurity of knowledge, and easily perplexed with difficulties. By those who reject the doctrine of atonement, the same thing is urged, as an objection against it. They contend, that the doctrine represents God to be mercenary, selfish, inexorable ; and so makes his character much less amiable, than if he should forgive his disobedient but penitent children, by free mercy, without requiring any satisfaction from another. "How plain is it, according to this doctrine," says the Author of the Sermon before us, "that God, instead of being plenteous in forgiveness, never forgives ; for it is absurd to speak of men as forgiven, when their whole punishment is borne by a substitute." Unitarians have often made the same allegation against our doctrine. Now this would be a real difficulty, and might be urged conclusively against the doctrine, if the language, employed in describing the atonement, were to be taken literally. For surely a rich creditor, who imprisons a poor insolvent debtor, and refuses to release him, till every farthing is paid by him or by his surety, shows much less kindness and generosity, than if he should give up the debt and release the poor debtor *freely*. And a father, who deals out to an offending child the full measure of justice, and withholds every token of paternal kindness, till he receives the most perfect satisfaction, exhibits a much less amiable character, than if, from the ardent love of his heart, he should

be inclined to hail the first opportunity of showing favor to his child ; to meet him, while yet a great way off, and, on seeing marks of penitence, to embrace him, to cover his faults, and load him with kindness. But here the analogy fails. For God's refusing to forgive without satisfaction, is an exercise of his infinite goodness, as the guardian of his kingdom. His requiring full satisfaction to his justice, or a full atonement for sin, and his appointing that such an atonement should be made, resulted wholly from benevolence. "God so *loved* the world, that *he gave his only begotten Son.*" It shows higher love for God to save in this way, than if he should save without an atonement, by an act of unpurchased mercy ; which is only saying, that it shows greater benevolence in God, as moral governor, to save sinners in a way, which will vindicate the honors of his violated law, and secure from injury the interests of his kingdom, than in a way, which would expose his law to contempt, and the interests of his kingdom to injury. And this view of the subject, I think, must be obvious to every enlightened christian, who is disentangled from the literal sense of metaphorical language, and who attends to the whole account, which the Bible gives, of the love which God has exercised, and the measures he has pursued, in the salvation of men.

It would lead me beyond my intention, to point out all those errors, which may be traced to the habit of giving something of a literal sense to the metaphorical language of the Holy Scriptures, and of other writings, on the subject of the atonement. Having suggested instances of this, sufficient to excite proper attention to the subject, I shall proceed to my second remark ; namely ; *when there is an evident tendency in the minds of men to understand any part of the metaphorical language, which*

has commonly been used respecting the atonement, in a literal sense, and when we perceive that this occasions hurtful misapprehensions ; it is the dictate of christian wisdom, to be sparing in the use of such language, and, when used, to guard it with some special care against its liability to be understood literally. This caution I think should be applied to the language, which illustrates the atonement by pecuniary transactions, as the payment of a debt, which a poor man owes ; cancelling his obligations ; or purchasing his release from imprisonment. Nor should I think it the part of wisdom, at this day, and on this subject, to make a very copious use even of those Scripture metaphors, which represent God as having the passion of anger, or wrath, and the atonement as the means of quenching it, or turning him from it. An abundance of this species of metaphor is not expedient, because it is not so consentaneous to the genius of our language, as to that of the Hebrew ; and especially, because the endless controversies, and extravagant fancies, which have prevailed in the world, have perplexed the minds of men, and exposed them to erroneous impressions on this subject. The object of language is to communicate useful truths to others. If it comes to be the case with any particular words or phrases, that they do not in fact communicate such truths, though the words or phrases may be proper in themselves, and even though they may be authorised by Scripture ; it becomes expedient to explain them clearly, or to adopt new ones.

Socinian writers seem to suppose, that we overlook those numerous texts, which, without any reference to the death of Christ, declare the free mercy of God towards penitent sinners, Here I think it easy, by a few connected remarks, to remove all misapprehension, and to present the subject in a light which cannot fail to be satisfactory.

The doctrine now before us, divides itself into two parts; first, the *simple fact*, that God is merciful, and will forgive penitent sinners; second, the particular *way* or *method* of forgiveness. These two things are perfectly distinct in their nature, and may, if God pleases, be subjects of distinct revelations. He may, if he sees it to be best, reveal to mankind, at one period of time, or in one part of his word, the *simple fact* of his mercy, or his readiness to forgive the penitent, without giving at that time, or in that part of Scripture, the least intimation of any medium, through which his mercy flows. And it is clear, that the knowledge of this *simple fact*, without any other information, would be of vast importance. Now this *simple fact*, so important to guilty men, is made known in a great multitude of texts, both in the Old Testament and the New, where nothing is said of the *method*, in which mercy is exercised. If this had been the case universally, and God had nowhere revealed any thing, but simply that he would forgive the penitent; our faith must have been confined to that simple truth. As to the *way*, or *method*, in which the divine forgiveness would be exercised, we should know nothing, except that it must be a way consistent with the perfections of God, and the safety of his moral government. I grant, that our faith, even if thus limited, might be a powerful principle of action, and an inexhaustible source of comfort. And in such a case, it would certainly be our duty to check the impatience of a prying curiosity, and to wait quietly, till God should see fit to give more light. But he has given more light. He has taught us, by a revelation, additional to what I have just supposed, that his mercy, which is so often declared in the Scriptures, is exercised towards penitent sinners, *through the blood of Christ*; that forgiveness comes in this way, and

in no other. Thus our faith is extended, just in proportion to the greater extent of the revelation.

With regard to this last point, it is the opinion of some writers, who admit the doctrine of the Atonement, that nothing is revealed, but the single truth, that forgiveness comes through the mediation of Christ; and that we are wholly incapable of knowing what particular bearing the death of Christ has upon the moral government of God, or *how* it secures mercy to penitent sinners. But careful attention to a few texts of Scripture must, I think, lead to a different conclusion. I shall name only two. Gal. iii. 13. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The text, and what immediately precedes it, clearly teach, that men, as transgressors, are under the curse of the law, which they have transgressed; that Christ delivered them from that curse, that is, from the evil, which the law denounced against them for sin; and that he did it, *by being made a curse for them*. A literal and exact substitution was impossible. But the Apostle's language must signify, that the curse, which Christ was made, or the evil he endured, had respect to the same law, from whose curse sinners were redeemed. It had respect to the same law; not that it was literally and exactly the penalty of the law, or the punishment which the law threatened against sinners; but it had such a relation to the law, and such an influence upon it, that sinners, on account of it, might be consistently released from its curse; whereas, had not Christ been made a curse for them, that is, suffered and died for them, they themselves must have endured the curse. Thus, although the curse of the law, falling on Christ, is, in various respects, different from what it would be, if it should fall upon sinners: yet, in relation to the ends of the law, or

of the divine administration, it is substantially the same. And as those benevolent ends are secured, by the curse falling upon Christ; it becomes consistent with the order of God's kingdom, for penitent sinners to be delivered from the curse.

The other passage I shall quote is Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26. "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Here the immediate object of Christ's being set forth is represented to be, to *declare, or make known the righteousness of God*. Notwithstanding the authority of Schleusner and Rosenmuller, I am clearly of opinion, with most Commentators and Divines, that *δικαιοσυνη*, in this place, has its primary and common sense, and signifies that attribute of God, which leads him, as moral Governor of the world, to render to every man according to his deeds, and of course to inflict the curse of the law on sinners. The object of the death of Christ is then, to declare, or manifest, that God is righteous, and that in the salvation of sinners he will support the honors of his law, and "the interests of virtue."

In contemplating this subject, I ask myself, what hinderance there is in the way of God's showing the same favor to transgressors, as to the obedient. The answer is obvious. His law, and his character, as Lawgiver, forbid it, and the interests of his moral kingdom forbid it. If, in the common course of his administration, he should show the same favor to transgressors, as to the obedient, he would set aside the authority of his law, and leave no

visible distinction between virtue and vice. Any ruler, who should proceed in this way, would soon bring to an end the order and happiness of his subjects. The expedient, which the wisdom of God has adopted, prevents this consequence of extending favor to transgressors. The cross of Christ makes known the righteousness or justice of God, as moral Governor. It shows that he does make, and will forever make a distinction between holiness and sin. It has such an influence upon his moral administration, that he can be just, and the justifier of him that believeth; that is, can forgive sin without degrading the majesty, or surrendering the claims of justice. To express the same in other words; the influence of the atonement is such, that it has become consistent with justice to do, what would otherwise have been totally inconsistent. It is in this way I come to a similar conclusion with the author of the Sermon; namely; that Christ's death, "has an inseparable connexion with forgiveness, that it has a special influence in removing punishment, as a condition or method of pardon, without which repentance would not avail us."

Correspondent with this is the practical view which devout Christians generally take of this subject. When they behold Jesus, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled, suffering and dying for sinners, they see the honors of God's righteousness vindicated, and the principles of his moral government established. They consider what ends are accomplished in the divine administration by the just punishment of transgressors. All these ends they see accomplished, in the highest degree, by the death of Christ. And thus it becomes clear, that God can forbear to punish penitent transgressors, on account of Christ's death, without any injury to his moral government, or any sacrifice of the interests of virtue.

Against our scheme, Unitarians urge one particular objection, which may deserve a few moments' special notice. The objection in short is, that the Trinitarian scheme lowers down the value of Christ's sacrifice, and "robs his death of interest." The alleged ground of this objection is, that we believe Christ to be God and man, united in one person, and that, as divinity could not be the subject of pain, the *sufferer* must have been merely a man.

This objection entirely overlooks an important article in our system. We believe, that all the divine and human perfections, which the Scriptures ascribe to Christ, constitute but *one person*; and consequently that all his actions and sufferings belong to him, *as one person*; much as all the actions and sufferings of any man, whether mental or corporeal, belong to him, as one man. It results from this view of the subject, that the value or significance of any action or suffering in Christ must be according to the dignity or excellence of his whole character. Whether the action or suffering takes place particularly in one part or another of his complex person, it is attributable to his whole person; and it derives its peculiar character from the character of his whole person, constituted as it is. The suffering of Christ was therefore of as high importance or value, in making an atonement, as if it could have been, and in reality had been, in the most proper sense, the suffering of the Divinity. So that whatever may be the conceptions of Arians or Socinians, as *we* view the subject, the fact that Christ endured suffering in his human nature, and not directly in his divine, occasions no difficulty as to the preciousness, which we ascribe to his atonement. And I think the views of the Orthodox in this case are capable of being defended in the most satisfactory manner.

The rejection of the doctrine of the Atonement, with which some, who call themselves Christians, are chargeable, is not to be regarded merely as a speculative error. It plainly indicates the disposition of the heart. For, after God has sent his Son to be a propitiation, and has told us, that we must rely upon his atoning blood, as the sole ground of forgiveness ; if we disregard that provision, and hope for heaven on the footing of our own virtue or good works, we give proof of a temper of mind, which is in total contrariety to the humble spirit of christian faith. We signify that we think ourselves entitled to future happiness, on our own account, and that we have no need of the merit or intercession of another to recommend us to the favor of God. Some Socinians boldly use language like this. They have the audacity to bring forward a personal claim upon the favor of God. The same spirit appears in all, who rest their hopes of heaven on their own goodness. Although God has provided a perfect righteousness, as the foundation of their hope ; and has taught them, that the salvation of sinners depends wholly on Christ crucified, and that no works of righteousness, which they have done, and no accomplishments or dispositions, which they possess, must ever be named in his presence ; they still persist in spurning this provision of infinite mercy ; in counting as foolishness, the grand plea, with which a Savior's death has furnished them, and in obtruding their own virtue upon his notice, as a better reason for their acceptance, than all the worthiness and all the grace of Christ crucified.

Thus far I have thought it necessary to proceed in order to remove misapprehensions, and to give a just, though brief view of the real sentiments we entertain on this momentous subject. It has, I trust, been made evident that our scheme of faith is far from sully-
 ing the

glory of God's moral perfections, or impugning the principles of either justice or benevolence. On the contrary, it has for its foundation the immutable perfection of God's moral character, and the inviolable principles of his righteous government. And it is, if we know our own hearts, the strong attachment we feel to his glorious character and government, and our earnest desire, that they may have the honor of a perfect and eternal vindication, which creates in us such an interest in the doctrine of the atonement.



LETTER IX.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

THE design I wish to execute in these letters, requires me particularly to bring into view one more doctrine of the Orthodox, namely, the doctrine of *divine influence*. To those, who entertain the same views with us of the character of man, and the nature and necessity of holiness, this doctrine must appear of the highest worth. But here, as in former cases, instead of giving a regular treatise on the subject, it is my intention to correct mistakes, to expose the weakness of objections, to solve difficulties, and to do all I can to induce those, who have rejected, or half believed this doctrine, to inquire with a candid, unprejudiced mind, into its truth and importance.

It has been the general representation of Unitarians, that we believe there is an invincible, overpowering, irresistible influence of the divine spirit on the minds of men, which is totally repugnant to their moral agency

and accountability, and which makes them entirely passive,—mere machines.

In order that you may be under advantages to judge, whether this representation is just; I shall here offer you a brief statement of our doctrine, with the leading topics of argument, which we urge in its support, and the explanations we are accustomed to give it in relation to other obvious truths.

Our doctrine of divine influence results, as we conceive, from the nature and condition of created beings, who are and must be dependent on their Creator and Preserver. This necessary dependence of an intelligent creature, relates to the acts of the mind, as well as to outward circumstances. But we infer the doctrine more directly from the fact, that men are universally sinners; that their moral nature is the subject of a most woful disorder. We think it the dictate of sound experience, that men will not in fact cast off the dominion of their corrupt affections, and render to God the homage of a sincere obedience, without special divine aid.

But the argument, on which we rest without any wavering, is the testimony of the sure word of God. I need not give the proof in detail. They who attentively peruse the Scriptures, will not fail to perceive, that this doctrine is there taught with great clearness, and in a great variety of forms. If God, by his spirit, produces no good affections in our hearts; if he vouchsafes no spiritual illumination; if he does nothing to cleanse us from sin, and form us to holiness; what can be the import of those texts, which teach, that God works in his people both to will and to do; that he creates in them a new heart & a new spirit; that he opens their eyes, draws them, turns, renews, strengthens them, and helps their infirmities? And what can be the meaning of the lan-

guage, which christians universally use in prayer, when they ask God to subdue their sins, to purify their hearts, and to work in them all the good pleasure of his goodness; and when they ascribe to God all the good they possess? We understand the language of Scripture on this subject in its most obvious sense; and on this obvious sense we found our belief, that all virtue or holiness in man is to be ascribed to the influence of the divine spirit, and that without the effectual agency of the Spirit, man would have no holy affections, and perform no acts of holy obedience. This is a general statement of the orthodox doctrine.

But we do not stop here. The doctrine has relations to other subjects,—relations which are of great moment. We are sensible we cannot do justice to the doctrine, without attending to those relations, and giving the consideration of them a proper influence in regulating our conceptions of the doctrine.

This doctrine has a relation, first, to the attributes of God. In view of this relation, we say, the influence, which God exerts in or upon his creatures, is such as agrees with his infinite perfections,—such as results from them, and is suited to make a just exhibition of them. It is prompted by divine benevolence, as the influence is to accomplish a good end. It is regulated by divine wisdom, which renders it perfectly suited to accomplish that end. Secondly, the doctrine of divine influence has an immediate relation to the human mind. In view of this relation, we say, that the divine influence is adapted to the nature of the mind; that the Holy Spirit operates in such a manner, as to offer no violence to any of the principles of an intelligent and moral nature; that it always produces its effects in the understanding, according to the essential properties and laws, which belong to

the understanding, and in the will and affections, without interfering with any of the properties and laws, which belong to them. We consider this peculiar agency of the divine Spirit in producing and continuing holiness in men to be just as consistent with every thing, which belongs to an intelligent and moral nature, as the general agency of God in preserving and governing his rational creatures. Nor do we apprehend, that there is any thing more incompatible with the nature, and properties of the mind, in the influence, which *God* exerts upon it, than in the influence which *we* exert upon it. It is a matter of fact, that we have an influence, often a controlling influence, over the understanding and will of our fellow creatures. The influence which others have upon us, be it ever so great and effectual, may operate, as we certainly know, in a way perfectly correspondent with our moral nature. We are so constituted, that we may be influenced by others to do good, in consistency with our own freedom, and virtue, and praiseworthiness; that is, we are none the less voluntary in doing good, and none the less deserving of approbation, because we are induced to do it by the rational, moral influence, which others exert upon our minds. I pretend not that the two cases are exactly parallel. But it is natural to suppose, that the divine influence is, at least, as consistent with our free agency and accountableness, as any human influence can be. For surely God, who made us, can have access to our understanding and heart, and produce any effects there, which he pleases; and surely he must know how to do this, without infringing any of the principles of our intelligent or moral nature. This, in our view, cannot be denied, without implicitly denying the dependence of moral beings on God, and taking away his power to control their actions, and to execute the plan

of his own government. For if any man maintains that the special operation of the Holy Spirit, is incompatible with the moral freedom of man; how can he consistently maintain that agency of God in his providence, which is denied by none, but Atheists? And who that admits the Bible to contain truth unmixed with error, can doubt the constant agency of God in every part of the creation, and especially in the souls of his redeemed people?

It is in the manner above mentioned, that we explain the doctrine of divine influence. It has been explained substantially in this manner, from time immemorial. These relations of the subject to the moral government of God, and to the moral agency of man, and the qualifications which necessarily arise from them, have been insisted upon with no ordinary zeal, by the Orthodox Divines in New England. We assert neither the special agency of God in the kingdom of his grace, nor the common agency of God in his providence, without asserting or implying that the agency is such, as secures to man the unimpaired exercise of all his rational and moral powers,—such as preserves his moral freedom entire. We treat the whole subject in such a way, as evinces to every man of reflection, that we understand it with these qualifications. We speak of man, as being in the highest sense *active* in repenting, believing, and obeying. We represent repentance, and obedience, as his duty, and labor to persuade him to perform them. We urge motives to influence him, as a moral agent; we present to him the rewards of obedience, and the punishment of disobedience; we exhort and reprove him, and in all respects treat him in such a manner, as shows, that we believe the doctrine of man's moral agency, as firmly, as we believe that of the divine influence.

If our opponents can prove, that our views of the divine influence certainly lead to the denial of man's freedom and accountableness, as a moral agent, they may justly charge us with holding principles, from which such consequences do in fact follow; though they cannot charge us with holding those consequences.—But why should our views be considered as involving such consequences? Is it because we assert the divine influence to be *powerful and effectual*? But how does it appear, that an influence upon the mind, which is perfectly suited to its nature, and its faculties, has any more tendency to make man a machine, or to destroy his agency, when it is powerful enough effectually to accomplish its design, than when it fails of accomplishing it? Is it so with us? When we exert a powerful and effectual influence over a person, persuading him to relinquish some sinful indulgence, to which he was addicted, or to perform some virtuous action, to which he had a strong reluctance; do we, on that account, look upon him, as any the less a free moral agent? Do we regard that determination of his mind, and that conduct, to which we persuaded him, as having no virtue, because he was led to it by our persuasive influence? Even if he should tell us, what is often a matter of fact, that the influence of our arguments was *overpowering, and irresistible*; we should consider this as a proof, not of the loss of his free agency, but of the strength of our arguments; and we should regard his ready submission to such arguments, as evidence of a sound understanding, and of a commendable disposition.

The mode, in which we exert our influence, is indeed widely different from that, in which the divine influence is exerted. But the consideration of this difference will furnish a new argument in favor of our doc-

trine. For surely he who made intelligent creatures, and who unerringly knows the powers and properties of the mind he gave them, and all its laws of action, must be able to adapt his influence to the nature of their mind more perfectly, than we can. These brief remarks are sufficient to show, how utterly they misconceive the subject, who think, as many seem to do, that the agency of God can extend only so far, can rise only to such a degree of efficacy, without interfering with the agency of man. The fact is, that the highest point of energy, to which the divine agency, thus exerted, can rise, interferes not in the least with the proper exercise of our rational and moral powers. The whole design and tendency of the influence, which the Holy Spirit exerts over us, is to unshackle the mind from corrupt passion and prejudice, and, instead of encumbering and destroying moral agency, to conform its free exercises to the rules of virtue, and so to improve and elevate all the moral faculties.

I ask again ; is it supposed that the divine influence, which we assert, is incompatible with moral agency, because God exerts it upon us in a way so different from that, in which we exert our influence ; that is, without the use of language, or any outward signs ; or because we do not perceive its operation upon us, as distinct from the acts of our own minds ? To this I would reply ; that the invisibleness of the divine influence no more proves that it is not real and efficacious, than the invisibleness of the Creator, or the act of creative power, proves that the Creator does not exist, or that his creative power was never exerted. Could we stand, as spectators, to witness the creation of a world ; we should only see the *effect produced*. The cause would be *invisible*. But would this occasion any doubt, as to the *reality* of that cause ?—As to the use of language and other out-

ward signs ; it shows our imperfection, that we can have access to the mind in no other way. The direct access, which our Creator has to the mind, is, in all respects superior to what we are capable of, and of course *his* influence, whatever might be said of *ours*, can never be supposed in the smallest degree to infringe moral agency.

But though we allow ourselves in the unfettered use of reason on this momentous subject, our ultimate reliance is on the oracles of truth. The inspired writers speak of the influence of the Spirit, as being in the highest degree *powerful* and *efficacious*, without the least appearance of apprehending that it is incompatible with human activity, or that there is any occasion to defend the doctrine against the objection above stated. Indeed they view the doctrine in a very different light, and make use of it, as a motive to activity. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do." In this practical use of the doctrine, there is the most evident propriety. For what can be a more animating encouragement to a man, who is struggling against the power of moral corruption, and is ready to sink under a sense of his weakness, than the assurance of that divine Spirit, which will help his infirmities, and render his efforts successful? As the end of the Spirit's influence is to subdue sinful affection, and excite that which is holy; the more powerful and efficacious that influence is understood to be, the more encouragement to diligence does the christian derive from it.

The grand difficulty, which attends this subject, seems to arise from the supposition of some analogy between the power of God upon the human heart, and that exercise of power among men, which overcomes or supercedes voluntary agency; in other words, that which shows itself in cases of *coercion* or *force*.

If they who object to our doctrine, as incompatible with man's free agency, will examine their own thoughts carefully, they will find, I think, that their objection arises chiefly from the supposition of this analogy ;—that it arises from the habit of comparing the effectual operation of the divine power on the mind and heart, with instances, in which men are constrained by superior force, to do or suffer that, which is against their choice. Such analogy we deny altogether ; and we deny every conclusion drawn from it.

I cannot leave this part of the subject, without remarking on the unfairness of our opponents, in going to such an extreme, as they generally do, in giving a construction to the words, *irresistible, overpowering, invincible, &c.* when applied to the divine influence. Although I am by no means fond of a very copious use of such terms ; yet I owe it to those who employ them more freely, to say, that these words are in good use, in relation to this general subject, and, all prejudice aside, will bear a sense perfectly unexceptionable. This I say, *first*, from a consideration of *the nature of the case*. Whenever these words are used, they are to be understood *relatively* ; and the subject generally shows, to what they relate. If I speak of an irresistible or overpowering *argument*, I speak of it with reference to that, which might be supposed to make resistance, or to that which is to be overcome ; i.e. I speak of it with reference to some reason or objection, which has been urged against the point to be proved, but which is now made to appear without force, or yields to an argument of *superior* force. Or the terms may relate to some opposing prejudice or passion, which is now weakened and subdued by the strength of the reasoning, or the persuasiveness of the eloquence, directed against it. In a manner like this, we are always

understood, when we speak of an *irresistible* or *overpowering* argument. The terms, in such a case, are never supposed to imply, that the understanding, or the conscience is the thing that is overcome, or subdued; and for the plain reason, that the force of an argument, however great, cannot produce such an effect. In many cases, the direct tendency of the *irresistible* argument is to illuminate and strengthen the moral faculties of the mind, or to subdue that by which they were blinded and weakened. Now who was ever so weak as to imagine, that an *irresistible, overpowering* argument had any tendency to break the mental faculties or to prevent the freedom of their operation in any movement of moral agency? We are accustomed to use these terms freely, and without fear of being misunderstood, in relation to any influence, which a man exercises over the minds and moral actions of others, either by his eloquence, his generosity, or his superior wisdom and piety.

I would have it remembered, that, by this illustration, I mean only to evince, that the words *irresistible*, *unconquerable*, &c. when applied by Calvinistic writers to the influence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of men, are not justly liable to the objection commonly urged against them; because the nature of the case shows, to what they must relate. When we represent the influence of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the hearts of men, as *irresistible*, or *overpowering*, we speak solely with reference to that, which is supposed to make resistance, or is to be overcome. Now in the divine work of sanctifying the hearts of men, or causing them to love God, is it possible to suppose, that *moral agency* is to be overcome? If their moral agency should in fact be overcome, would that help to make them holy? And can any

think that we mean to assert this? The thing to be overcome by the divine influence, is sinful inclination, corrupt affection. Men naturally love the creature more than the Creator. They are earthly in their desires, and have a disrelish for divine things. This is their disorder,—the disease of their souls. The influence of the Spirit bears upon this moral disease. When we say, that influence is *irresistible*, and *overpowering*, our meaning is, that this disease of the soul, though very powerful and stubborn, is made to yield to the merciful agency of the divine Physician;—that the remedy becomes *effectual*. The question really is, whether the *successful* operation of the divine Spirit,—in other words, whether the *efficaciousness* of the remedy, applied to the spiritual disorder of man, is destructive of his moral agency? There is, in my view, just as much reason to ask, whether the efficaciousness of the remedy, which is applied for the cure of a *fever*, is destructive of moral agency. I take it as an admission of all, who call themselves Christians, that the moral disease of man is *capable* of a *cure*, and that it is most desirable, that it should be cured. If it is cured, it must be by a remedy suited to the nature of the disorder. What the nature of the disorder is, God perfectly knows; and is perfectly able to apply a *suitable* and *efficacious* remedy. Now when this almighty Physician kindly undertakes the cure of our souls, the obstinacy of the disorder yields; its resistance is taken away; that is to say, the heart is effectually cleansed from its pollution; love of sin, enmity to God, pride, ingratitude, and selfish, earthly desires are *subdued*, and man is induced to love God, and obey his commands. In other words, the sinner is so influenced by the Spirit of God, that he *freely* forsakes his sins, and, with all readiness of mind, devotes himself to the service of

Christ. And this is the same as saying, that, instead of exercising his moral agency *wrong*, he now exercises it *right*. The nature of the case shows, that this is and must be the meaning of the words under consideration, when applied by intelligent Christians to the influence of the Holy Spirit. I say therefore, that they will bear a sense perfectly unexceptionable; and that this is the sense, which naturally occurs, and which, for this very reason, every man is obliged, by the rules of candor and sound criticism, to put upon them.

I have a second reason for thinking that those, who use the terms under consideration, mean to use them in a sense, which does not infringe moral agency; and that is, that they uniformly speak of man, even when he is supposed to be the subject of that very irresistible influence, as exercising an unimpaired freedom, and agency; as *choosing* holiness, *refusing* sin, *loving* God, *obeying* the gospel. These are certainly acts of a free, moral, accountable creature, and, as clearly as any thing, can show the properties of a *moral agent*. The plain meaning of those, who speak of the influence of the Spirit, as irresistible, or overpowering, must therefore be, that the divine influence not only is *consistent* with moral agency, but actually produces, as its proper effect, the free exercise of moral agency, in all those modes of it, which are required by the commands of God.

Now considering that the terms, which have been thus freely examined, are commonly used in cases somewhat similar to that of the divine influence, without ever being supposed to imply any thing repugnant to the most perfect moral agency; considering also, that, when they are used in reference to that influence, the nature of the subject shows to what they must relate, and in what sense they must be taken; and considering, finally, that

those, who use them, make it perfectly manifest by other language respecting the same subject, that they mean nothing, which can interfere with any of the principles of moral action; I appeal to you, my respected readers, whether the outcry, which has been made against what is called the *resistless, overpowering* influence of the Holy Ghost in the conversion of sinners, is consistent with candor, or with justice? I have long been convinced, that there is a palpable unfairness and violence in the treatment, which the Orthodox have received on this subject. If, in describing the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, any of us use language, that is strong and impressive,—language which points to the power and obstinacy of the evil to be overcome, and to the certain efficaciousness of the remedy applied; our opposers labor to put upon that language the most unfavorable construction possible. Instead of kindly and fairly inquiring whether our words will admit of an unexceptionable meaning, and whether that unexceptionable meaning is the one which we aim to express; do they not, in many instances, make it their object to find out, if possible, some meaning, which shall be marked with absurdity, and which shall, at any rate, expose to contempt the sentiment they wish to confute? This is a heavier allegation than I am fond of bringing against any respectable men. But I cheerfully leave it to others to decide, whether the attempts which have frequently been made to decry this most precious doctrine of the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit in renewing and sanctifying the hearts of sinners, together with the want of candor, the heat of feeling, and the vehemence of expression, which have been exhibited by at least some of our opposers, do, or do not prove the allegation just.

I cannot close this letter without expressing my as-

tonishment, that any who profess to be Christians, should set themselves against the doctrine of the divine influence. For if we see a moral disorder in ourselves, which we wish to be subdued; it would be reasonable to suppose, that we should set a high price upon any thing, which would assist us in subduing it. And if the word of God reveals a divine agent, whose almighty energy effectually subdues the power of sin; those who have any right feelings, must prize this, as a most precious discovery. They must seek this heavenly influence, as the most important blessing, earnestly desiring, that it may be exerted upon their hearts. The greater its energy, the more highly do they value it. Instead of feeling any objection against the notion of its being *irresistible* and *overpowering*, they most sincerely pray that it may be so. They know it is directed to the one grand work of subduing sin, of purifying the heart, and guiding into the truth. They wish this work to be done effectually. Every thing in them, which makes resistance, they wish may be overcome. Their prayer is, "let the influence of the Holy Spirit be too powerful to be resisted. Our own efforts must be unavailing, unless aided from above. May God work effectually in us both to will and to do. We crave the operation of that efficacious, invincible power, which will subdue every corrupt affection, and sanctify us throughout in body, soul and spirit."—Such must be the cordial prayer of every one, who knows himself, and has a desire to be like the blessed Jesus. And I am constrained again to express my astonishment, that any can be found, who calumniate or despise that doctrine of divine influence, which is one of the most distinguishing and most attractive features of the Christian religion.

LETTER X.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

IN the foregoing letters, I have endeavored to arrange my remarks on the principal doctrines embraced by the Orthodox, with as much regard to order and connexion, as possible. In consequence of this, I find I have omitted several passages in the Sermon before me, to which particular attention seemed to be due. It has not been my object to animadvert on every sentence, which I might deem exceptionable. But there are in the Sermon a few passages of a general character, which I have not yet brought into view, but which cannot justly be suffered to pass unnoticed. To these I would now for a short time invite your attention.

I have already remarked on what I consider a palpable instance of injustice in many Unitarian writers; namely; that they represent certain opinions to be peculiarly and exclusively theirs, when in reality they are embraced and inculcated by the Orthodox. The Sermon furnishes some examples of this, in respect to the mediation of Christ, besides what I have before noticed. The author, in pursuance of his general design, gives a summary account of the views, which he and his brethren entertain on this subject, and which, according to his representation, distinguish Unitarians from the Orthodox. But with respect to these views *substantially*,—I must say, they form no such distinction. If Unitarians hold them, there is, thus far, no controversy between them and us. And the agreement of the two parties in these views, should have been asserted; just

as we assert that they are agreed in believing the existence of a God, and the doctrine of a resurrection. So that if, by professing these views, the Author gets any credit to himself and his brethren, exclusively of the Orthodox, he gets it unfairly.

The principal of these views respecting the mediation of Christ, I shall now quote from the Sermon; and as I wish to make all convenient despatch, I shall take the liberty at the same time to repeat them, as belonging to myself and my brethren.

“ We believe, that Christ was sent by the Father to effect a moral, or spiritual deliverance of mankind; that is, to rescue men from sin and its consequences, and to bring them to a state of everlasting purity and happiness. We believe, too, that he accomplishes this sublime purpose by a variety of methods; by his instructions respecting God’s unity, parental character, and moral government, which are admirably fitted to reclaim the world from idolatry, and impiety, to the knowledge, love, and obedience of the Creator; by his promises of pardon to the penitent, and of divine assistance to those, who labour for progress in moral excellence: by the light which he has thrown on the path of duty; by his own spotless example, in which the loveliness and sublimity of virtue shine forth to warm and quicken, as well as guide us to perfection; by his threatenings against incorrigible guilt; by his glorious discoveries of immortality; by his sufferings and death; by that signal event, the resurrection, which powerfully bore witness to his divine mission, and brought down to men’s senses a future life; by his continual intercession, which obtains for us spiritual aid and blessings; and by the power with which he is invested of raising the dead, judging the world, and conferring the everlasting rewards, promised to the faithful.”——“ We believe, that Jesus, instead of making the Father merciful, is sent by the Father’s mercy to be our Saviour; that he is nothing to the human race, but what he is by God’s appointment; that he communicates nothing but what God empowers him to bestow; that our father in heaven is originally, essentially and eternally placable, and disposed to forgive; and that his unborrowed, underived, and unchangeable love, is the only fountain of what flows to us through his Son. We conceive, that Jesus is dishonoured, not glorified, by as-

cribing to him an influence, which clouds the splendour of divine benevolence.”——“Whilst we gratefully acknowledge, that he came to rescue us from punishment, we believe, that he was sent on a still nobler errand, namely, to deliver us from sin itself, and to form us to a sublime and heavenly virtue. We regard him as a Saviour, chiefly as he is the light, physician, and guide of the dark, diseased, and wandering mind. No influence in the universe seems to us so glorious, as that over the character; and no redemption so worthy of thankfulness, as the restoration of the soul to purity. Without this, pardon, were it possible, would be of little value. Why pluck the sinner from hell, if a hell be left to burn in his own breast? Why raise him to heaven, if he remain a stranger to its sanctity and love?”——“We believe, that faith in this religion, is of no worth, and contributes nothing to salvation, any farther than as it uses these doctrines, precepts, promises, and the whole life, character, sufferings, and triumphs of Jesus, as the means of purifying the mind, and of changing it into the likeness of his celestial excellence.”

These views are all ours; and we are happy to express them in the simple, elegant, and forcible language of this Sermon. And we would indulge the hope, that the injustice of representing them as *peculiar* to Unitarians, in distinction from the Orthodox, will not soon be repeated.—We have, indeed, other and higher views, as you may have already perceived, respecting the mediation of Christ; but none incompatible with these. And let me say, it is very evident to us, that those other and higher views, which are peculiar to the Orthodox, respecting the atonement and mediation of Christ, invest all the practical views, above exhibited, with new beauty and force, and render them, in a higher degree, effectual in promoting a devout and holy life.

I now proceed, with increasing surprise, to notice the same species of injustice, respecting *the nature of christian virtue, or holiness*. The injustice, which I now charge against this Sermon, lies in this;—that Orthodox ministers and Christians, especially those in New Eng-

land, are held up to public view, as rejecting the sentiments here referred to, respecting the nature of holiness, when, in fact, all that is particularly valuable in these sentiments, is insisted upon, and abundantly illustrated by various Orthodox writers, whom we hold in the highest estimation. Those, who are acquainted with the writings of the most respectable Divines in New England, and those who have statedly heard the preaching of Orthodox ministers of the present age, and who know the general sentiments of Orthodox Christians, will have no difficulty in determining, whether impartial justice is here rendered us. I speak in the name of my brethren generally. Do not *we* believe, as well as Unitarians, “that the moral faculties of man are the grounds of responsibility, and the highest distinctions of our nature, and that no act is praiseworthy, any farther than it springs from their exertion?” When we speak of the influence of God’s Spirit on the mind of man, do not we, as well as Unitarians, “mean a moral, illuminating, and persuasive influence, not physical, not compulsory?” Do not we, as well as they, “give the first place among the virtues, to *the love of God*?” Do not we believe, “that this principle is the true end and happiness of our being; that we were made for union with our Creator; that his infinite perfection is the only sufficient object and true resting place for the insatiable desires and unlimited capacities of the human mind;—that the love of God is not only essential to happiness, but to the strength and perfection of all the virtues; that conscience, without the sanction of God’s authority and retributive justice, would be a weak director; that benevolence, unless nourished by communion with his goodness,—could not thrive amidst the selfishness and thanklessness of the world;

—and that God—is the life, motive and sustainer of virtue in the human soul?”

Do not we believe, as well as this Author and his brethren, “that great care is necessary to distinguish the love of God from its counterfeits?” Do not we “think that much, which is called piety, is worthless?” Should not we be as ready, as they are, to say, that, “if religion be the shipwreck of the understanding, we cannot keep too far from it;”—and “to maintain that fanaticism, partial insanity,—and ungovernable transports, are any thing rather than piety?” Is it not as favorite an opinion with us, as with them, “that the true love of God is a moral sentiment, founded on a clear perception, and consisting in a high esteem and veneration of his moral perfections?”—This Author says in the name of his brethren; “We esteem *him*, and *him only*, a pious man, who practically conforms to God’s moral perfection and government; who shows his delight in God’s benevolence by loving and serving his neighbor; his delight in God’s justice by being resolutely upright; his sense of God’s purity, by regulating his thoughts, imagination, and desires; and whose business, conversation and life are swayed by a regard to God’s presence and authority. In all things else, men may deceive themselves. Disordered nerves may give them strange sights, and sounds, and impressions. Texts of Scripture may come to them, as from heaven. Their souls may be moved, and their confidence in God’s favour be undoubting. But in all this there is no religion. The question is, do they love God’s commands,—and give up to these their habits and passions? Without this, ecstasy is a mockery. One surrender of desire to God’s will is worth a thousand transports. We do not judge of the bent of men’s minds by their raptures, any more than we judge of the direction

of a tree during a storm. We rather suspect loud profession; for we have observed, that deep feeling is generally noiseless, and least seeks display.”

To all these views we most cordially subscribe. A man, who should undertake to exhibit elegantly, and in a few words, what Edwards wrote on **Religious Affections**, could not do it better, than in the language of this Author. Edwards, and Bellamy, and many other authors, most beloved, and most frequently perused, among the Orthodox in New England, have labored with great assiduity and success, to distinguish true religion from its various counterfeits, to put down all the excitements and transports which spring from human imagination or passion, and to recommend that religion, which consists in conformity to God’s moral character, and obedience to his law. And if the Author of this Sermon should call to mind all the theological works, with which he was once conversant, he would not improbably find, that in regard to these very sentiments, which he represents as peculiar to Unitarians, he is under no small obligation to Orthodox writers. No writers have ever shown better than those above mentioned, “that religious warmth is only to be valued, when it springs naturally from an improved character; when it comes unforced;—when it is the warmth of a mind, which understands God by being like him; and when instead of disordering, it exalts the understanding, invigorates conscience, gives a pleasure to common duties, and is seen to exist in connexion with cheerfulness, judiciousness, and a reasonable frame of mind.”—This Sermon simply asserts these just and important sentiments; but the writers above named, have largely illustrated and confirmed them. And with Orthodox ministers in New England.

this distinction between true piety and its counterfeits is, more than almost any thing else, the subject of preaching and conversation. Probably however, we still fall short of our duty. And we ought to deem it a favor, if any one shall come forward to chastise our negligence, and to excite us to greater seriousness and fidelity in this momentous concern, even though we may be conscious that he does it, by denying us the credit of sentiments, which we hold precious as our life.

This Author proceeds. "Another important branch of religion, we believe to be love to Christ. The greatness of the work of Jesus, the spirit with which he executed it, and the sufferings which he bore for our salvation, we feel to be strong claims on our gratitude and veneration. We see in nature no beauty to be compared with the loveliness of his character; nor do we find on earth a benefactor, to whom we owe an equal debt."—Does all the honor and happiness of entertaining such views as these, belong exclusively to Unitarians? Do these sentiments respecting Christ distinguish them from the Orthodox?—I would ask the same questions respecting most of the observations, which this Author makes on the *benevolent virtues*? Is it a *peculiar, distinguishing* mark of Unitarians, to attach great importance to these virtues? Let any man read the books, or hear the preaching, which we most admire, and then say.

Without proceeding any farther, it could not but be evident to my readers, that they cannot unhesitatingly, and without examination, repose full confidence in the representations, which are found in this Sermon, respecting the sentiments of the Orthodox.—On such a subject as this, and with respect to such a writer, I should have preferred silence, had not justice required me to speak.

But I knew it could not be made consistent with truth and propriety, that those ministers and Christians, who are denominated Orthodox, should lie under the reproach of rejecting a great number of the most obvious principles of religion;—principles, which they believe to be of vital importance to the system of Christianity, and which they maintain with a seriousness and ardor, which bear ample testimony to the sincerity of their faith.

On this particular subject, as well as on every other, which is introduced into these Letters, I feel happy, in addressing myself to those, who have chosen *candor and liberality*, as the honorable badge of their party. Let me ask you, then, my respected friends, whether it can detract any thing from the *value* of those truths, which you believe, that they are believed also by the Orthodox; and whether the *honor* of believing such truths would be any the less to you, if it should be shared equally by us?—What end, then, can this Author seek to accomplish, by making a selection of some of the most unexceptionable, most amiable, most attractive truths of religion, and representing them as belonging peculiarly to Unitarians, and as distinguishing them from us,—when in fact we believe them, to say the least, as sincerely as they do? Possibly credit and influence may, by such means, be secured to Unitarians. But there are men, who will inquire, whether they are secured *justly*? Possibly reproach or disgrace may, by the same means, be cast upon us. But is it *deserved*? And pray tell me, what good end can be answered by possessing credit, which is unjustly acquired, or by inflicting disgrace, which is not merited?—This Author advances much, to which we most cheerfully subscribe, in praise of candor and charitable judgment toward those, who differ from us in religious opinion. Referring to this, he says; “There is

one branch of benevolence, which I ought not to pass over in silence, because we think that we conceive of it more highly and more justly, than many of our brethren." And he shows how strongly he reprobates the conduct of a Christian, who is "covered with badges of party, who shuts his eyes on the virtues, and his ears on the arguments of his opponents, *arrogating all excellence to his own sect, &c.*" I wish there were less appearance of inconsistency between these charming passages in the Sermon, and those others, on which I have thought it necessary to animadvert.

Though I intend not by any means, to enumerate all the instances of misrepresentation, which occur in this Sermon; there is one passage, respecting moral government, upon which I would detain you a few moments. "If there be any principle of morality," says this Author, "it is this, that we are accountable beings, only because we have consciences, a power of knowing and performing our duty; and that in as far as we want this power, we are incapable of sin, guilt, or blame. We should call a parent a monster, who should judge and treat his children in opposition to this principle; and yet this enormous immorality is charged on our Father in heaven."—The author would evidently impute this gross impiety to the Orthodox. And yet I must say, in their behalf, that the principle for which he contends, is *ours*, as well as *his*. We believe that this principle is inwrought into our moral nature; that every man feels its truth; that every judgment he passes upon his own actions, and every conviction of duty, implies a practical acknowledgment of it; in a word, that it is one of those principles, which need no arguments to prove them, because they are themselves plainer, than any thing which can be adduced as proof.

The views, which we entertain of the moral corruption of man, whether original or superinduced, and in whatever degree it may exist, are perfectly consistent with the principle, "that we are accountable beings, only because we have consciences, and a power of knowing and performing our duty." Indeed, such are our notions of the nature of an intelligent, moral being, that we conceive it to be utterly impossible, that any degree of depravity should take away his conscience, or his power of knowing and doing his duty. These, as we think, are inseparable properties of an accountable creature, in all stages of his existence, and whatever may be his circumstances, or his character. He cannot be subject to law, or accountable for his actions, without these properties, any more than he can, without a soul.—It is with these views, we hold the doctrine of man's depravity. We believe it, not in such an unrestricted, absolute sense, as is sometimes supposed, but with all the limitations, which result from its connexion with other acknowledged truths. Explanations, like those above suggested, ought always to be considered, as making a part of the declaration of our faith; and, in this case they are peculiarly necessary, on account of the facility, with which the doctrine comes into alliance with various hurtful errors.—Let it therefore be remembered, that if any one represents us as believing, that men are depraved in such a sense, that their conscience, or their power of knowing and doing their duty is taken away, or any principle of free moral agency infringed;—in other words, if any one represents us as believing the doctrine of depravity, whether innate or acquired, in such a sense, as makes it any less fit and proper, that God should place men under a moral government, and address to them commands, promises, and

threats, than if they were perfectly free from corruption ; they give a representation of our views, as really incorrect, as if they should accuse us of holding, that, in consequence of men's depravity, they have no eyes to see the light of the sun, and no ears to hear the noise of thunder.

If there is any principle respecting the moral government of God, which the Orthodox clergy in New England earnestly labor to inculcate, it is this ; that, as accountable beings, *we have a conscience, and a power of knowing and performing our duty.* Our zeal in defence of this principle has been such, as to occasion no small umbrage to some, who are attached to every feature and every phraseology of Calvinism. On this subject, there is, in fact, a well known difference between our views, and those of some modern, as well as more ancient Divines, who rank high on the side of Orthodoxy. I urge it, therefore, as a matter of justice, that how earnestly soever the Author of this Sermon might have been disposed to censure the opinions of others, he ought to have made an express exception in *our* favor. And considering what advantages he has had of being acquainted with the modes of thinking and preaching, which generally prevail among the Orthodox ministers of New England, I hardly know how christian candor ought to shape its apology for this oversight.

It is readily admitted, that some men may be found among us, whom we venerate and honor, as advocates for true religion, who yet have preached or written obscurely, or confusedly, on the subject of depravity, free agency, and a moral government. But surely, we are not, as a body, to be charged with entertaining all the opinions, and with justifying all the expressions of every man, who believes generally the principles of Ortho-

doxy. I am confident, that you would strongly condemn us, if we should treat you in such a manner as this. Should I, in these Letters, impute to you, as a Society of Unitarians, all the extravagancies of opinion, which some German, English, or American Unitarians have held, and all the rashness and violence of language, which they have employed; you would doubtless think me guilty of acting contrary to fairness and equity. I have endeavored to avoid the most distant approach to this species of unfairness; and therefore have purposely refrained from associating passages in this Sermon with passages from those Unitarian writers, against whom the greatest public odium has been excited.—Now on the other hand; suppose you find in an author, or hear from a preacher, reputed Orthodox, an unguarded expression on the subject of depravity, or moral agency, or on any other subject,—an expression liable, at least, to misconstruction, and suited to excite prejudice against Orthodoxy; will you impute that expression, or the opinion conveyed by it, to the Orthodox generally? We may perhaps consider the expression, and the opinion, as exceptionable, as you do; and it may be as really contrary to truth, for you to impute them to us, as for us to impute them to you.—The question is, have we authorised that writer, or that preacher, to speak in our name, and publicly to make known our faith? Or have we ever, in any form, declared our unqualified assent to his opinions, or professed those which are like them? If not, why should every speculation and every expression of his be charged to our account? Infidels may just as well charge upon the whole community of Christians, the irregularities and vices of every individual, who is regarded as belonging to that community. There have been, within a few

years, some instances of this kind of unfairness towards the Orthodox generally, and particularly towards some of the subdivisions among them, which cannot but be reprobated by all men, who possess common justice, or common sense.

LETTER XI.

MY RESPECTED FRIENDS,

I have reserved, as the last subject of discussion in these Letters, *the practical influence, or tendency* of the system, embraced by the Orthodox.

To my mind, it is exceedingly obvious, that representations are often made on this subject, which are radically erroneous, and that, by these means, an impression is produced on the feelings of many, hostile at once to their personal welfare, and to the interests of religion. Such representations ought to be corrected, and the subject, which must, by both parties, be considered as highly important, to be set in a true light. The salutary influence of the Orthodox system has been often illustrated, and has appeared to me so perfectly clear, that it has been a matter of astonishment, that any intelligent man should entertain a doubt respecting it. The most candid construction, which I have been able to put upon the opinions and representations of our opponents, as to the practical tendency of Orthodoxy, is, that they take an erroneous view of the system itself. They behold it in a false light. They overlook its genuine features, and see, or think they see deformities, from which it is wholly free. Now admitting that

the system does appear thus in their view, I can easily account for it, that they should believe its moral tendency to be so mischievous. If the system of the Orthodox were, in truth, what Priestley, and Fellowes, and Belsham, and even the Author of this Sermon have represented it to be ; its consequences would indeed be *pernicious*. So I might say, if Christianity were, in truth, that monstrous thing, which infidel philosophers have represented it to be ; the opposition and hatred, which have risen up against it, would have been just. But it is not so. And the Advocates for Christianity have a right to say, and are bound to say, and to prove, that it is a system of consummate excellence ; that the enmity of its opposers against it, has been altogether unjust and criminal ; that it merits the highest attachment, and that, to all its friends, it is fraught with inestimable blessings. I would not make a reproachful comparison. But we know, that the Orthodox system is not what Unitarians have declared it to be. Its genuine features are not seen at all in the picture, which they have drawn of it. Now the question to be discussed in this Letter, is, not whether such a system of doctrines, as Unitarians impute to the Orthodox, is mischievous in its tendency ; but what is the influence of *that system*, which we *really believe, and teach* ?

The Author of this Sermon thinks, that it is “ unfavorable to devotion ; ” — “ that it takes from the Father the Supreme affection which is his due, and transfers it to the Son ; ” — “ that it awakens human transport, rather than that deep veneration of the moral perfections of God, which is the essence of piety ; ” — “ that it robs Christ’s death of interest, — weakens our sympathy with his sufferings, and is, of all others, most unfavorable to a love of Christ, founded on a sense of his sacrifices for

mankind ;”—“ that it discourages the timid, gives excuses to the bad, feeds the vanity of the fanatical, and offers shelter to the feelings of the malignant ;”—“ that it tends strongly to pervert the moral faculty, to form a gloomy, forbidding, and servile religion, and to lead men to substitute censoriousness, bitterness, and persecution, for a tender and impartial charity ;”—that it is a “ system, which begins with degrading human nature, and may be expected to end in pride.”—Priestley, Belsham, and others, in perfect accordance with this Author, have represented the system of Orthodoxy to be *rigorous, gloomy, and horrible,—the extravagance of error,—a mischievous compound of impiety and idolatry.*

It would be a sad case, if the Unitarians above named, had no better proof to offer of a candid, liberal spirit, than what they have given in these heavy, but unsupported charges,—these harsh and causeless censures. I might very safely leave such censures as these, without any remark,—trusting that their extreme violence would be sufficiently visible to counteract any unfavorable effect, which they might be likely to produce.—But I have another object in view, which requires me not to pass over this subject lightly. I wish, in as comprehensive a manner as possible, to give a direct elucidation of the salutary influence of the system, which the Orthodox believe. The confutation of particular charges, as far as necessary, may be found in this general elucidation.

I shall first inquire, whether the grand and obvious properties of that system of religion, which we believe, are not adapted to produce a good influence in a general view, on those who embrace it. After this, I shall advert to some particular parts of Christian virtue and duty, and inquire in what way they are likely to be affected by the Orthodox system.

What then are the grand, obvious properties, which a system of religion must have, in order to produce a good influence on the character and practice of those who embrace it?

First. It must exhibit a *Being of infinite perfection, as the object of worship.* If there is any thing faulty in the character of him, whom we worship, it will, according to a well known principle, have a bad effect upon our character. But the God whom *we* love and adore, must not be described by our opposers. Or if they do describe him, their description must not be received, instead of ours. The Orthodox have described the character of God, as infinite and immutable in every divine perfection, both natural and moral; as amiable and glorious in the highest possible degree. Is not such a God worthy of supreme love and adoration? And can the sincere worship of such a Being fail to promote moral purity in us? Can it be otherwise, than that the habit of affectionately and devoutly contemplating the perfect justice and benevolence, which we ascribe to God, must have a powerful tendency to make us just and benevolent? I know we are accused of worshipping a Being, who is unjust, partial, and malignant. And it is a matter of course that we should be accused of imitating that injustice, partiality and malignity, which are thought to belong to the character of him, whom we worship. But it remains to be proved, that such attributes do in fact belong to the character, which is the object of our adoration. It has often been affirmed by our opponents; but the unsupported affirmation, that we worship an unjust, malignant Being, cannot surely be admitted as proof, in opposition to the most sober declaration on our part, that we ascribe to God infinite justice and benevolence. But there can be no

occasion to enlarge on this topic, after what I have written, in Letter III. To that I refer you. And if you have carefully attended to the views there expressed, of the character of Jehovah, and can have confidence enough in me to believe, that they are indeed the views, which I and my brethren entertain ; I will add nothing, but an appeal to your judgment, whether the worship of such a God can be otherwise than salutary to the cause of virtue ?

Secondly. A scheme of religion, in order to have a good moral influence, must exhibit *a moral government, marked with holiness and righteousness throughout.* There must be a holy and benevolent Sovereign, who, by a system of wise and good laws, requires of his subjects that conduct, which is necessary to the order and happiness of his kingdom. In his administration, he must show a constant regard to the principles of his government, and an invariable determination to give them support and efficiency. The authority of the law, and the character of holiness and justice in the Lawgiver must be sustained, by the influence of a penalty ;—a penalty, the execution of which shall spread an impression of awe through the universe, at the sight of God's high displeasure against sin. Now does not the system of religion, which the Orthodox maintain, exhibit a moral government possessing all these properties ? Does it not constantly hold up to view, a Supreme Ruler, perfectly holy and benevolent ? Does it not inculcate upon all men, a wise and holy law, in all its extent, as of immutable obligation ? Does it not constantly teach, that the Governor of the world loves holiness, and abhors sin, and that he manifests an invariable determination to support the principles of a righteous moral government ? Does it not exhibit with tremendous force, the sanctions of the

law,—that is, the everlasting happiness of the obedient, and the everlasting punishment of transgressors? Is not the penalty of the law, as we represent it, awful in the highest degree, and so fitted, as far as any thing of the nature of penalty can be, to prevent transgression? So far as men are to be influenced by *fear*, will they not be prompted to a careful obedience, according to their impression of the certainty and the greatness of the evil, which will be consequent upon sin? In this respect, has not the Orthodox system most obviously the advantage over its opposite? Have we not always been reproached by those, who would gladly lower down or disannul the sanctions of the law, for displaying in too strong colors the certainty and the dreadfulness of future punishment? And is it not true, that those, who soberly admit the views, which we give, of the displeasure of God against sin, and the punishment with which he will recompense it, find it more difficult, than others, to keep their minds in a state of inconsideration, and sinful repose?—I am willing to make the appeal to all attentive observers, whether there is not, in fact, the greatest and most sensible repugnancy between a life of ungodliness, and the representation we make of the divine government? And, in truth, does not this fact account for much of the opposition, which our views of religion have always had to encounter among men, who are too proud to bear reproof, too fond of quiet, to submit willingly to what would disturb and alarm them, and too earthly, to yield to the attractions of a devout and spiritual life?

That the interests of virtue may be secure, *the exercise of mercy towards offenders*, whenever it takes place, must be so regulated, that the divine law shall be magnified, and its sanctions exercise all their power over the

consciences and hearts of men. This is one of the *grand points* in the Orthodox system. I shall not now enter on the particulars, which make up the system in this respect, but shall merely state, what we conceive to be fairly its practical result, and on account of which, more than for any other reason, we feel so much interest in its support.

According to our views of the intervention of Christ, the salvation of sinners reflects no dishonor upon the character of God, as a moral Governor. He appears to his subjects, as just and true, and awakens as deep an awe in their minds, when he *forgives*, as when he *punishes*. In consequence of this, God's rational creatures find in his administration as powerful motives to deter them from transgression, and induce them to obedience, as if they saw in fact, that the penalty of the law was, in all its dreadfulness, inflicted upon every transgressor. So that, while rebels against God are pardoned, his law loses none of its authority or influence; the interests of virtue are not sacrificed; and the glory of justice and truth is in no degree tarnished. Nay, all the attributes of God acquire the lustre of a higher display, and all the principles of his benevolent and righteous government, a more powerful ascendancy. Accordingly, those who are placed under this dispensation of mercy, are moved to repentance and obedience by the high authority of a perfect moral government, and by all the attractions of infinite compassion and grace. Thus our system of religion, in regard to the work of redemption, is calculated, in our view, to promote the cause of holiness in the highest degree. It is stamped with perfect holiness throughout. It exhibits a holy God, who is constantly engaged in administering a holy government. It proclaims a pure and holy

law, and enforces it with the most weighty sanctions. It brings to our view a holy Redeemer, who gave a perfect vindication and support to that law. It presents a holy salvation, to be obtained through the influence of a holy Intercessor, and by the persevering efforts of a holy faith. Every thing, with which we have to do in this great concern, bears the stamp of holiness, and tends to promote holiness in us.

Now tell me candidly, my respected friends, whether the system of Orthodoxy, some features of which have now been portrayed, is not of as holy a nature, and of as purifying a tendency, as the system which Unitarians adopt? Do we not exhibit as holy a God, as righteous a law, and as high sanctions to enforce it, as they do? Is not the tribunal to which we point men, as just, and the sentence, of which we forewarn them, as momentous and decisive, as that which Unitarians teach us to expect? Do we not hold forth a blessedness of as great worth, and a punishment as dreadful, as they?

In regard to the work of redemption; does not our scheme present as complete a vindication of the violated law and government of God, as theirs? Does it not show as much regard to the interests of virtue? Does it not demand holiness with as commanding an authority, and allure men to it by as melting a display of kindness? Does it not present as many and as bright examples of moral excellence, divine and human? What then is wanting to give the religious system, which we embrace, the most salutary influence upon the character and conduct of men?

As to practical influence, any religious system is, in reality, what it is to those who cordially embrace it, not what it is, or what it appears to be, to those who reject it. I doubt not, that a trial of the Orthodox system by

this rule, would end in its favor. Enlightened Christians, who seriously believe this system, do, if I mistake not, find in it motives, in great variety, and of powerful efficacy, to universal holiness.—I should however feel a strong reluctance, in reasoning on this subject, to do what some writers have done ; that is, to institute a comparison between the Orthodox and Unitarians, in respect of character. For although Orthodox believers have, in different periods, especially in these last days, achieved much for the welfare of man, and have, in many instances, exhibited an elevation of christian virtue, which has been an honor to the grace of God ; instances enough of a contrary character occur, to make us blush ; and even those, who have reached the highest point of goodness, have fallen far short of the attainments they ought to have made, under the influence of such powerful motives. Instead, therefore, of making any boasting comparisons, I would join with those who are humble and contrite in heart, in the deepest lamentations over that astonishing perverseness, which counteracts the influence of the most holy motives,—over that obstinate disease of our nature, which renders the best means of cure in so great a measure ineffectual.

But the fact, that the remedies, which physicians apply to the sick, are not always, and in the highest degree, efficacious, does not prove, that their *tendency* is not salutary, or that there is any thing more salutary.

In the case now under consideration, notwithstanding all the instances, in which the system of the Orthodox has failed of producing a salutary effect, we are still carefully to inquire into the *practical tendency* of the system, or the *moral influence* which it is *suijeto* to have, and in this respect, to compare it with the opposite system.

I shall proceed therefore, to the second thing proposed,—viz., to advert to particular parts of Christian virtue, and duty, and to inquire what influence the Orthodox system is likely to have upon them.

1. *Love to God.* The more exalted our conceptions of his natural and moral attributes, the more likely are we, other things being equal, to abound in love. Certainly, clear and elevated apprehensions of his glorious character have a stronger tendency to excite love, than those which are low and obscure. Now it is as evident to me, as the light of noon, that the system of Orthodoxy clearly exhibits the perfections of God, and invests them with the highest glory. It teaches us to acknowledge his infallible wisdom, and his unlimited benevolence in all his works. In view of all the evils, which fall to our lot, or to the lot of others, it teaches us not only to submit to his sovereign power, but to admire his paternal goodness. Those very measures of government, which our opponents think irreconcilable with his moral perfection, appear to us bright illustrations of it. In every point of view, the faith we embrace, is suited to excite love to God, and to give to that love the character of constancy and ardor.

2. *Gratitude to God.* In proportion to the impression we have of his kindness to us, will this affection be excited. If we believe that God, from the impulse of his own compassion, has bestowed upon us a favor of infinite value, and wholly undeserved; we shall feel a stronger motive to gratitude, than if we consider the favor bestowed, of inferior value, or suppose that we have any personal claim to it. According to this principle, those views of redemption, which we have been taught to consider, as the dictates of Scripture, are fitted to

raise gratitude to the highest pitch. We look upon ourselves to be in such a state, in consequence of our apostasy from God, that it is the greatest achievement of infinite benevolence, to save us. We see from what an abyss of guilt and wretchedness God delivers, and what an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory he bestows. And we see that this deliverance from guilt and wretchedness, and this eternal glory were purchased by the precious blood of Christ. With these views, we are constrained to anticipate that song, which is prompted by the gratitude of saints in heaven; "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, —to him be glory and dominion forever and ever."

With respect to gratitude, it is perfectly easy to make a comparison between the influence of our system, and that of our opponents. Unitarians may gratefully acknowledge the goodness of their Creator in forming and upholding them, and in the common bounties, with which his providence blesses them. They may admire his benevolence too, in providing, as they conceive he has done, for their happiness in a future state. And they may set a high price upon the various means of moral improvement, which they enjoy. But their system does not tend like ours, to excite those high and tender emotions of gratitude, which spring from a consciousness of deep criminality and unworthiness. It is easy to compare the sensations of a man, who has been rescued from the danger of perishing in the ocean, by some heroic effort of benevolence, with the sensations, which are produced by the common acts of kindness. It is easy to conceive too, how those sensations of the drowning man would be heightened, if his deliverance was effected by the disinterested kindness of one, whom he had often

wounded by injuries, and especially, if the danger, from which he was rescued, was the immediate consequence of an act of unprovoked hostility. Such a generous effort of compassion, heightened too by circumstances like these, would do all that an act of human kindness could do, to turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh, to call forth all the tenderness of gratitude, and to fix a sense of obligation, never to be obliterated.

The principle of this comparison, with respect to the excitement of gratitude, is inseparable from our nature ; and the result of the comparison will show, that the religious sentiments, which we entertain, are adapted not only to produce gratitude, but to give it the greatest degree of strength and tenderness, of which the human mind is capable. According to our scheme of faith, we are sinners without excuse. We have lifted up our hand against our Maker, and in instances too many to be numbered, proved ourselves his enemies. In consequence of this, we have brought ourselves upon the brink of hopeless destruction. Our Father in heaven has interposed, and by an act of love, unparalleled in strength and purity, and at an expense, which the creation could not pay, has delivered us from that hopeless destruction, and given us an inheritance in the heavens. Compared with this act of divine love, the noblest exploits of benevolence, ever performed by man, lose all their splendor, and all their power to move the heart. The kindness and grace of God, exercised towards us in this glorious work, will create a holy gratitude, which will swell the hearts of the redeemed forever, and transfuse a celestial ardor, inexpressibly delightful and pure, into their everlasting songs. Nor are those, who cordially yield themselves up to the influence of these views, strangers to

this holy affection, even now. It often glows in the heart of the young disciple of Christ. It often cheers the spirits of Christians, in every stage of their progress towards heaven, and prompts them to bless God for his goodness, even in affliction. It kindles a celestial light in their souls on the bed of languishing; and in the hour of death, it awakens in them sensibilities, which, amid the weakness and agonies of dissolving nature, struggle to utter themselves in, "thanks to God for his unspeakable gift."

3. *Love to Christ.* The bare mention of this virtue will lead at once to the obvious result of the comparison, which I have instituted between the two systems. For surely that system must be admitted to have the strongest tendency to excite love to Christ, which ascribes to him the highest excellence of character. The different systems of Unitarians ascribe to him various degrees of created and limited excellence. The Orthodox system clothes him with eternal and infinite excellence. Those who embrace this system, feel it to be their duty and privilege, to love Christ with the most exalted affection,—an affection without any limits, except those which arise from the finiteness of their capacities. But Unitarianism, in every form, forbids this high and unlimited affection to Christ. It tells us we are in danger of overrating his character. It begets a fear of regarding him with too high a veneration. When we have hearts, which wish to express their sacred ardor in the adoring language of Thomas, "my Lord and my God;" it thrusts itself before us, and tells us to forbear. Whereas the system of Orthodoxy calls us to raise our love to Christ to a higher and higher degree. It tells us he has an excellence and glory, which our affection can never reach. It makes our blessedness in a future world to consist

very much in clearer discoveries of his divine perfections, and in exercising towards him a more exalted, more uninterrupted love.

4. *Faith in Christ.* The same general remarks apply to this point, as to the last. Believing or trusting in the Sâvior is represented, as one of the grand, comprehensive duties of the Christian religion. But surely that faith or trust in Christ, which results from the principles of our opponents, must be a very different thing, from that which our system inculcates. Under the influence of the doctrines which we believe, we repose a confidence in his atoning blood, which relieves us from the agitations of guilt, and inspires us with humble, joyful hope; a confidence in his power, and wisdom, and goodness, which puts our hearts at rest respecting the most important concerns of the creation. Our own interests, temporal and eternal, we commit, cheerfully and entirely, to his care. We trust in him for all that is necessary to purify our hearts, to guide and protect us during our pilgrimage, to comfort us in affliction, and to give us peace and triumph in the prospect of death. And when the time of our departure draws near, we hope to look up to our merciful, condescending Redeemer, and, with that confidence in his infinite grace, which quells every fear, to say, "*Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit.*" —Does the Unitarian system teach any thing like this? Does such a faith spring from the principles, which it inculcates?

5. *Dread of sin, and watchful care to obey the divine precepts.*

The importance of the doctrine of rewards and punishments is insisted on by Unitarians, as well as by the Orthodox. The question is, does their scheme, or ours, exhibit the doctrine in the form best adapted to impress

men with a dread of sin, and excite them to obey the divine precepts? Now I think it must be obvious to those, who are acquainted with the most respectable authors on both sides, that the heaven which we are taught by our system to contemplate, is a state of higher perfection, and of purer and more elevated enjoyment, than that, which our opponents describe. Unitarian authors represent the future condition of Christians, as being much less removed from their present condition, than what we suppose to be fact. Accordingly they look upon us, in relation to this subject, as overstepping the bounds of sober truth, and attempting to set off the joys of heaven with too high colors. Read what they have written on this subject, and you will be satisfied, that the views they exhibit of the heavenly felicity, are less adapted to excite a deep interest in the mind of man, and less adapted to sway his active powers, than those which are exhibited by the best writers on the other side. If this is in fact so, then, whatever may be said as to reason and argument in the case, the Orthodox system has certainly the advantage, as to *moral influence*. For the contemplation of a future reward, to be obtained by virtuous efforts, must evidently tend to excite those efforts, very much in proportion to the greatness and excellence of that reward.

If any hesitate to admit what I have advanced on this part of the subject, I will not stop to contest the point, but pass to the consideration of *future punishment*, on which our reasoning can be attended with no difficulty. Here my first inquiry is,—does the threat of punishment tend to deter men from sin? Is the penalty of any law, divine or human, fitted to have an influence to prevent transgression? If so, it must be by moving the passion of *fear*. The evil threatened is addressed to this passion,

and can produce an effect upon no other principle of action. The next question is, whether the prospect of an evil, that is great and insupportable, has a tendency to excite a *stronger* sensation of fear, than the prospect of an evil, comparatively small and easily endured? I appeal to common sense. I appeal to common practice. When legislators find, that the penalty of any law does not work upon the fears of men powerfully enough to prevent the commission of crimes, they increase its severity. And this they do upon the general principle, that the penalty of a law will be likely to awaken the fears of men, and influence their conduct. other things being equal, very much in proportion to the greatness of the evil, involved in that penalty. Upon this obvious principle, I wish you to examine the practical tendency of our doctrine respecting future punishment. We believe that the future punishment of the wicked will be *inexpressibly great*, and will *endure forever*. We bring that great and endless punishment into view, in order to illustrate the evil of sin, and the displeasure of God against it. We believe that such a punishment is just; that it is no more than commensurate with the ill-desert of sin; and that it shows no more displeasure against sin, than is necessarily prompted by the perfect love which the King Eternal feels for the welfare of his kingdom. Now will not any man be powerfully held back from the commission of sin, by the serious apprehension, that it is a great evil, that God is greatly displeased with it, that it tends to produce extensive injury to the creation, and that it will be followed with inexpressible and hopeless misery? If you would weaken the power, which hinders a man from sin, weaken his apprehension of the greatness of the evil of it; weaken his apprehension of the displeasure of God against it, and of

the dreadfulness and the duration of the misery to which it will lead. Now is not this what the system of Unitarians actually does, so far as it opposes the views of the Orthodox respecting future punishment? I have nothing to say here, as to the arguments used on one side or the other. I speak simply, as to *practical tendency*. And I am not anxious what conclusions any man will adopt, who will allow himself, on rational principles, soberly to investigate the two systems under consideration.

I might say, were it necessary, that the powerful influence of the doctrine of future punishment, as we hold it, is illustrated by numberless facts. Men strongly inclined or tempted to sin, have been deterred from the commission of it, by the fear of endless punishment. By the same fear, many have been roused from spiritual lethargy, and excited to make that most important inquiry, "what shall we do to be saved?" How many have been excited by this doctrine, to such reflections as these;—"is that sin, which I indulge in my heart, so great an evil in the sight of a just and benevolent God, that he has threatened everlasting punishment, as its recompense? Am I, while impenitent, exposed to that recompense? And shall I, by the momentary pleasures of sin, bring hopeless ruin upon my immortal soul?"—Such reflections as these, naturally occasioned by the doctrine of endless punishment, have, in instances too many to be enumerated, led, through the mercy of God, to a thorough reformation of character.

6. *Reverence for the word of God.* The grand maxim of the Polish Socinians was, that *reason is our ultimate rule and standard*, and that whatever in religion is not conformed to this, is to be rejected. This maxim, as they understood it, gave them perfect liberty to alter or set aside the obvious sense of the Bible, whenever it

did not agree with the deductions of reason. Unitarians in general have, with more or less decision, adopted the same maxim. I do not say, that all, who are called Unitarians in New England, treat the word of God with the same irreverent license, which some English and German Unitarians have shown. But I think no candid and competent judge can doubt, that the *general aspect* of Unitarianism does less honor to revelation, than the contrary system. Unitarianism bows with less veneration to the word of God, and receives its instructions with a less implicit confidence. It has lower views of the nature and degree of that inspiration, which the writers of Scripture enjoyed, and is proportionably less inclined to receive their word, as infallible. In forming our opinions, we inquire simply, *what saith the Scripture; and what was the sense, which the inspired writers meant to convey?* When we learn this, we are satisfied. Our reason receives its doctrines from the word of God. It sees the objects of religion, not in its own light, but in a light borrowed from revelation. As soon as our reason discovers what God teaches, we suffer it to go no farther. The Bible, we believe, contains a harmonious system of truth, eternal truth, unmixed with error. If our reason seems to see inconsistencies, we charge not the appearance of those inconsistencies to any fault in the Scriptures, but to the weakness and obscurity of reason, and we have no doubt it will entirely vanish, when our reason acquires a higher degree of improvement. I must refer it to the christian public to determine, whether Unitarianism teaches its disciples to treat the word of God with this kind of reverence and submission.

Our system gives us liberty to pass over no part of Scripture, as unworthy of regard. What is said on one part of a subject, we charge ourselves to receive with as

much confidence, as what is said on another part; and what is opposed to our prepossessions, as readily, as what is agreeable to them. I might show this to be our practice, with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity, the moral corruption of man, the divine purposes, and the divine agency. But, in my apprehension, the Unitarian theory is so constructed, as to set aside one part of Scripture entirely. That is to say, the faith of Unitarians, certainly of that class of them, who believe in the simple humanity of Christ, is the same, as it would be, if those texts, which ascribe the highest perfections to Christ, were expunged from the Bible. There are texts, which assert that the Word was God,—that all things were made by him and for him,—that he is over all, God blessed forever. But these texts, and others of similar import, make no alteration in the faith of Socinians. Their opinions are founded on other representations of the Scriptures *exclusively*. These texts have no influence at all upon them. The Orthodox have a belief in the inspiration and authority of the Bible, which prevents them from treating any part of it in this manner. If the Bible teaches, that Christ is a man, they believe he is a man. If the Bible teaches, that he is divine, they believe he is divine. If it teaches, that he created all things, they believe it. If it teaches, that he prayed to the Father, that he suffered, and died, and rose from the dead, they receive all this as a matter of fact. So of the rest. Whatever the Bible declares respecting Christ, they regard as infallible truth. They extend the limits of their faith far enough to comprise all parts of the testimony of God. They do not come to the Bible with such a bias of mind, that, if they believe Christ to be *man*, they will believe this *only*, and whatever the Bible may say, will not believe that he is

also *God*; or that, if they believe the divine *unity*, they will believe this *only*, and whatever the Bible may say, will not believe a divine Trinity. They have such liberality of faith, that, on the simple authority of God's word, they will believe both. I mention this merely to show, that their system, or their habit of thinking, leads them to entertain so profound a reverence for the Bible, that, as soon as they know what it declares, they are satisfied. They suffer not their reason to set itself up, and claim authority, as a teacher, or guide; but require it to submit to the authority of Revelation, and to exercise itself only to receive instruction from God, with the humble docility of a child. Now even admitting, that the system of the Orthodox contains a mixture of error, it is very apparent, that they have made it what it is, from sincere reverence for the word of God. *The high authority and infallible truth* of the Scriptures, is the principle, which controls their reasoning and their faith.

I could extend these remarks, and show, that on the subject of man's moral depravity, the atonement, regeneration, and other controverted points, the reasoning of Unitarians manifests less reverence for the word of God, than that of their opponents. I could illustrate this, as before, by the simple fact, that there are many passages of the Bible, which the writers seem to have thought very important, which yet are of no account with Unitarians, and have no influence whatever upon their faith. It would be easy for Unitarians themselves, by a little inquiry, to perceive, that their faith would be just what it now is, were the texts referred to, erased from the sacred pages. All the effect, produced upon their minds by any one of those texts, is, to occasion them perplexity and trouble, and to put them to the wearisome labor of

explaining away its obvious sense, and making it appear consistent with their views.

I might cite many observations of English and German Unitarians, expressive of their low ideas of inspiration, and their want of reverence for the word of God. But I intended merely to direct the eye of the reader to what seems to me exceedingly obvious, and lead him to inquire, whether the *general aspect* of the system embraced by Unitarians, and the general style of their reasoning on religious subjects, is not indicative of less reverence for the sacred oracles, than what is manifested by the Orthodox. But whether the result of a comparison be or be not the same in their minds, as it is in mine ; the uniform declarations and conduct of the Orthodox, and the general character of their writings, will, I hope, leave no man in doubt, as to the reverence which they entertain for the word of God, or as to the tendency of their system of religion to promote such reverence.

7. Let us finally consider the subject, in relation to *benevolent action*, particularly that highest kind of it, which is directed to *the spread of the gospel, and the salvation of men*.

The views, which our religious system exhibits of the eternal love of God, and especially of the condescension and grace of Jesus Christ, have a manifest tendency to beget the sincerest and most active kindness towards mankind. Under the influence of such examples of goodness, as we are taught to contemplate in the providence of God, and in the life of Jesus, we cannot be indifferent to the wants, or the sufferings of our fellow creatures.

But the grand influence of Orthodoxy relates directly to the spiritual and eternal condition of men. We

believe,—and it is a distinguishing mark of our religion,—that the world lieth in wickedness ; that all men are the subjects of a total alienation of heart from God, and justly exposed to everlasting punishment. This view of mankind, especially when we look upon ourselves as partners with them in the same guilt and ruin, must produce the tenderest emotions of sympathy. And when with a temper of mind, which is in any measure what it ought to be, we consider their moral degradation and misery in connexion with that grace of God, which has provided salvation ; how deeply must we be affected ; and how powerfully must we be stirred up to benevolent exertion in their behalf. Look abroad into various quarters of the world, where mankind are in a state of the profoundest ignorance and wretchedness, and see the efforts which are made for their reformation, and their happiness. Then look into Christian nations, and see, who are the most active in promoting these benevolent efforts. See what is the spring of all these remarkable movements, which really present the only prospect we have, of the salvation of the world. What is it that rouses the exertions of those, who are giving their substance or offering their prayers, or of those, who are exposing themselves to hardships, and suffering and death, in the cause of human happiness ? 'Tis simply this. They see that the children of men have destroyed themselves ; that their immortal souls are ready to perish. This touches the pity of their hearts, and kindles all the fervor of benevolent desire. They see that a Savior is provided, and that self-ruined sinners may obtain eternal life. This awakens their hope, their zeal, and their efforts. The reason they have to expect, that the grace of God will abound in the salvation of sinners, gives them alacrity and patience in their labors. If souls,

precious as their own, and equally the objects of the mercy which the gospel proffers, may obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory; they have a reward like that, which Jesus himself enjoys, when he sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. I say then, that the doctrine of the utter ruin of man, and of the grace of God which bringeth salvation, is the spring of those animated exertions for the good of the world, which mark the present era.

To try the natural tendency of the doctrine of man's depravity, and his redemption by Christ, as we hold it, I will suppose the following case.—There is a certain Unitarian, who, though a very benevolent man, yet, with his present views of religion, makes no particular exertions, by the contribution of money, or by personal labors, for the conversion of sinners, either at home, or abroad. He is content that men in Christian and in heathen lands should remain as they are, except what may be done for them by the gradual progress of knowledge, and the arts of civilized life. But this same Unitarian alters his religious opinions, and becomes well satisfied, that mankind are, every where, in that very state of moral corruption and ruin, which the Orthodox system asserts, and that just such a salvation is provided, and may be obtained in just such a way, as that system teaches. Of this he becomes deeply convinced. What will be the consequence? Will not his heart be touched with compassion for sinners? Will he not long to see the grace of God displayed in their conversion? Will he not join himself to the company of those, who are laboring and praying and giving of their substance, for the salvation of those, who are perishing? Is not this the natural consequence of such a change in his religious views? Do not facts, as well as the nature of the case, show it to be so?

Now invert the supposition.—A man, who feelingly embraces the common Orthodox system, and who is led, by his views of the ruined, miserable condition of the human race, to unite with those, who show the highest degree of zeal in promoting the conversion of sinners at home, and in sending the gospel to the heathen ;—such a man changes his faith, and comes to entertain the views of Unitarians, respecting the state and the prospects of human beings. Is not his zeal for the conversion of sinners, and for evangelizing the heathen, extinguished? And does he not forsake the society of those, who are active in promoting the benevolent enterprises of this auspicious day? Do not facts, as well as the nature of the case, show this to be the natural consequence of such a change in his opinions?—Unitarians, as it seems to me, act with perfect self-consistency on this subject. Their opinions and their practice correspond; and with the sentiments they now indulge respecting the nature of the gospel, and the character and condition of man, what powerful motives can they have to labor, or make sacrifices for the conversion of sinners? Have we any reason to expect, that Unitarians will so far imitate the holy Apostles, as to become preachers of the gospel among the heathen, and to be willing to spend and be spent, to suffer persecution, and to die, in the cause of human salvation? Possibly they may be accessible to the influence of motives, which we have not duly considered. If we are chargeable with a mistake, or with ignorance, on this subject, or if we indulge views, which can be considered, as in any measure unjust or injurious, we must refer to the writings and the conduct of Unitarians, as our apology. What exertions have they made to promote the spread of the gospel in pagan lands? What heathen tribes or nations are now receiving the words of eternal life from their missionaries, or experiencing, in

other ways, the salutary effects of their religious charities, and their prayers?—For myself, I know not how it is, that any, who have a heart to feel for the woes, or to desire the eternal happiness of man, can be indifferent to the benevolent operations of this day, in behalf of those who are destitute of the gospel. But are not Unitarians, generally, chargeable with this indifference? Are they not chargeable with more than indifference? Instead of uniting with the multitude of good men, who devote themselves to works of Christian benevolence; do they not look with pity or contempt, upon the most fervent prayers, and the most earnest, faithful, and successful labors of the church of Christ, in the cause of human salvation? And is not all this a dark and forbidding characteristic of their system?

The views I have expressed, as to the practical tendency of Orthodoxy and of Unitarianism, are such, I apprehend, as must result from a due consideration of the character of these two systems.—I am aware it may be difficult for those, whose minds have strong prepossessions against Orthodoxy, to conceive that it should produce such effects, as I have ascribed to it. But certainly such effects do naturally result from it, as it is understood and embraced by the Orthodox. Such must be my apprehension, till some one shall take the doctrines of Orthodoxy, just as *we* hold them, not as represented by our opponents, and make out, by fair reasoning, that they have an opposite tendency.

I intended to proceed farther under this general head, and to consider the tendency of our religious system, compared with the opposite one, to promote a spirit of humility, and of prayer. But it will be perfectly easy for the reader to apply to each of these subjects the principles, which have been applied to the other subjects, treated in this Letter.

I shall now finish what I have to say on the important subject of *practical influence*, by one remark; namely; that the advantage, which the Author of the Sermon has, in setting forth the practical influence of Unitarianism, is derived, almost entirely, from those views of religion, which really belong to the Orthodox. These, generally, are the views, which he makes prominent in his Discourse, and by which he gives plausibility to his system. I leave the propriety of this mode of treating the subject, to the consideration of others.—To those of my readers, who understand thoroughly what the Unitarian scheme is, I must also refer the decision of another question; that is; whether this Author has not, in some instances, been silent respecting certain opinions, which are common among Unitarians, when the importance of those opinions, as well as the express design of his Sermon, required him to speak of them without reserve. If, on every important topic, he has been perfectly explicit in giving *his own* views; it must be that he differs very widely in opinion from the generality of Unitarians. And if so, then I should doubt, whether some man, who was of the same mind with them, might not have been more properly employed, as their agent and representative before the public. Though he may have given a true and unreserved account of his own religious faith, I cannot think he has given a just account of the general faith of those, for whom he undertakes to speak. Thus in my apprehension, he fails essentially as to both systems. As to Orthodoxy, he does not show a feature of it in its true light. What he has written would enable no man on earth correctly to understand any one article of our faith. As to Unitarianism,—I think he has as really failed of giving a just and complete account of it, though not in the same way, nor in an equal degree.

Although I have, in these Letters, spoken frequently of the injustice, which the Orthodox have been accustomed to suffer from their opposers, I would not have you imagine that I have meant to complain of any *personal* injuries, or wished to excite feelings of commiseration towards the Orthodox. I have complained of injustice in the treatment, which our religious faith has received from our opponents, because it tends to bar their minds and the minds of others, against the most salutary truths, and to perpetuate the evils of controversy.

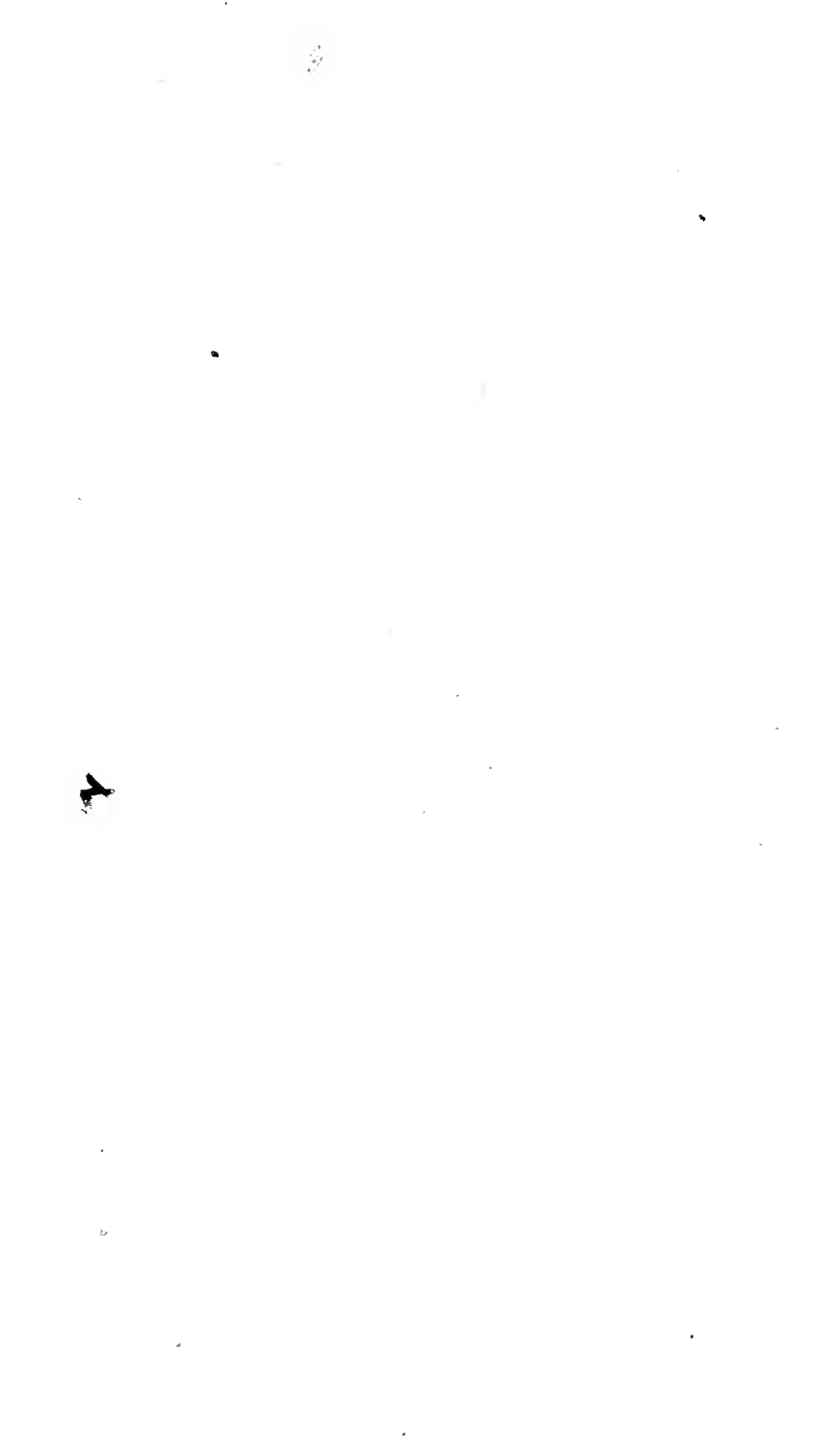
I am conscious of no disposition and of no temptation, to reproach or injure those, whom I have here addressed. On the contrary, I have strong inducements to respect and honor them,—especially those of them, who were among my beloved Instructors and fellow students at the University, and many others, to whom I have particular personal attachments. But I have wished to cherish the influence of still higher motives, toward those, from whose religious opinions I dissent. I would regard them, as fellow creatures, whom God requires me to love, as I love myself,—who are destined to the same immortal existence, and capable of the same immortal joys with myself,—who are to appear, a few days hence, before the same high and holy tribunal, and whose final sentence is to come from the lips of the same infallible Judge. Under the influence of these considerations, suffer me to say, I have found it easy, not only to guard my mind against every feeling of animosity, but to exercise love and tenderness. In executing the business, which I am now closing, I have charged myself, first, to do as much as possible, to promote the cause of Christ; and then, as little as possible, to inflict a wound upon the feelings of my opponents. Indeed I have written with the desire and the hope of contributing, through divine mercy, to their eternal welfare.—I have also endeavor-

ored to keep in mind, that the feelings, which are apt to agitate the minds of contending parties, will shortly vanish, and that the controversy, which has made its way into New England, and the conduct of all those, who take a part in it, must be subjected to review, before Him, who cannot err.

And now, my respected friends, I desire freely and affectionately to inquire, what Unitarians expect to gain, by the efforts they are making in their pamphlets, periodical publications, and sermons, to disseminate the peculiarities of their religious system? Do they expect that Unitarianism will have a more powerful influence to promote good morals in society, or that it will produce better men, or better civil and literary institutions, than that religion, which brought our forefathers to New England, and which has given to all our institutions, to our ministers and churches, to our rulers, and to our community at large, a character of preeminence, which has been universally seen and acknowledged among us? As to this subject of practical influence, our system most evidently possesses every thing which is valuable in that of Unitarians. Whatever motives to goodness can be drawn from the "paternal character of God," or from any of his moral attributes, from the "loveliness and sublimity of virtue," from the example of Christ, from the precepts of the Gospel, or from the doctrine of a resurrection, and a future state of retribution; our system inculcates them at least as forcibly, and turns them to as good account, as that of our opponents. And our system has much in addition, which we consider of infinite worth, but of which theirs is wholly destitute. I ask then, what they expect to gain by the efforts they are making,—which are, in reality, efforts to diffuse among men, lower conceptions of the glory of Christ, and of the honor due to him from his people,—lower conceptions

of the disorder of the human mind, and of the evil of sin,—lower conceptions of the value of Christ's atonement, and of the necessity and worth of divine influence to renew men to holiness,—lower conceptions of the recompense, which sinners deserve, and of the obligations of those who are pardoned, to the grace of God? Let the thing be varnished over ever so artfully, this is the real tendency of their efforts. And what good to themselves or to others do they expect from such efforts? Why should they wish to promote a system, which lets down the standard of Christianity, so that it meets, half way at least, the wishes of the irreligious ;—a system, which does, in fact, find a place in the hearts of those, who are living to the present world, without giving them any disquietude, and which is likely to be embraced by thousands, in preference to the opposite, for the very reason, that it relieves them from being disturbed by the warnings of conscience, and allows them to live in the neglect of those things which are unseen and eternal ;—a system, which never can coalesce with the feelings of those, whose hearts are warm with benevolence to the souls of men, and with zeal for their conversion ;—a system, which, if it should prevail, would prevent forever the pious efforts, which our blessed Lord and Redeemer requires his followers to make, to convey the gospel of peace to the ends of the world? This general aspect of Unitarianism appears very portentous. It excites my fears. And it is sufficient, by itself, to produce in my mind an honest and serious apprehension, that whatever plausible arguments may be used to give the system support and currency,—it is indeed *another gospel*.





LETTERS

ADDRESSED TO

TRINITARIANS AND CALVINISTS,

OCCASIONED BY

DR. WOODS' LETTERS

TO UNITARIANS.



BY HENRY WARE, D. D.

Hollis Professor of Divinity in the University at Cambridge.



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J. W. DAVIS,

Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.

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LETTERS

ADDRESSED

TO TRINITARIANS AND CALVINISTS.

LETTER I.

CHRISTIAN BRETHEREN,

THE Letters of the Rev. Dr. Woods to Unitarians, which have now been for some time before the public, suggest to me the propriety of addressing the few following pages on the same subjects, to Trinitarians and Calvinists. I feel the greater readiness to do it, and enter upon the task the more cheerfully, as the discussion of the interesting subjects, about which they are concerned, seems to be taking a character of moderation, temperance, and urbanity, which promises a favourable result. It assures us, that the great end, which, on each side, we propose to ourselves, will not be lost sight of in the ardour of debate, and the desire to maintain subordinate opinions, in which we differ from each other; and that we are not going to sacrifice the spirit of religion to any of its forms, or its dogmas.

I am far from thinking religious controversy to be universally an evil. It becomes so, only when it is improperly conducted. It is bad, and produces bad effects, only when the discussion of interesting questions of faith or duty is carried on with an intemperate spirit, or with sephistry: and when the

disputants, ranged on each side, manifest more of a spirit of party, than of the love of truth. So far indeed is the public discussion of those questions, about which Christians hold different opinions, from being a thing, that should be discouraged as hurtful; that we ought rather to rejoice in it, as an evidence of a prevailing interest in the subject of religion in general, as a symptom of religious life in the community, and as a means of preserving that life, of awakening a deeper interest, of turning the public attention still more to the subject, and thus furnishing opportunities for impressing upon the minds of men a sense, which they might otherwise not have, of its high value and importance. These desirable effects it may produce in a considerable degree, however imperfectly and defectively the controversy may be conducted, and although great faults of manner, and even of temper, may mingle themselves in the debate. But if there be a reasonable degree of exemption from bad passions, party views, the arts of controversy, and offensive personality; the effect of bringing the subject into view, in the various lights in which it may be presented, can hardly fail to be highly favourable to the cause of Christian truth.

The book, which has given occasion to the present pamphlet, and upon which some remarks will be made in the course of the discussions which follow, is entitled to more than common attention on several accounts. The subjects of which it treats are in themselves highly important; and being those, about which the Christian community is at the pres-

ent time much divided, they have excited a peculiar interest of late by being brought more frequently than common before the public mind. It comes from a gentleman of acknowledged talents and learning, and of high standing among his brethren as a scholar and a theologian. It professes to speak with authority, as it speaks in the name of that part of the Christian community, for whom it claims the very honourable distinction of "the Orthodox of New England," and is designed to explain and defend the opinions, by which they are distinguished, for the purpose of guarding them against misapprehension, and in order to do away the effects of misrepresentation.

The writer of the following sheets hopes to perform the duty he has assigned himself, whatever may be its defects in other respects, in a spirit, which shall not be liable to exception. It is his design to make such remarks, as occur to him, on the opinions and reasonings of the pamphlet before him, and to give a free exposition of his own views upon the several subjects treated of by Dr. Woods, together with the reasoning, by which he has been led into those views. But he wishes it to be understood, that they are his own views only. He is not authorized, nor does he profess, to speak in the name of any party or body of Christians. How far his opinions on the subjects in controversy, and his manner of explaining and defending them, may agree with those of his friends, he knows not. He is willing to avail himself of this opportunity of appearing before the public on these subjects, believ-

ing that the cause of Christian truth cannot fail of being promoted by unreserved freedom in the discussion of controverted doctrines ; and by individuals communicating the result of their study and thought, without any reference to the opinions of the party or sect, to which they may be considered in general as belonging.

With respect to the points at issue between those, who are called Unitarians on the one hand, and Trinitarians and Calvinists on the other, it is of some importance that you should know in what light they are viewed, and what degree of importance is attached to them by Unitarians. Upon this subject, there is probably with us, as with you, some diversity of opinion ; though I am persuaded that no intelligent Unitarian can think them unimportant, and practically a matter of indifference. It cannot be imagined, that the constitution of things is such, as to render truth and error on any subject perfectly indifferent, and equally salutary. And it is believed, as I shall have occasion to show in the sequel, that the doctrines for which we contend, and which are the subject of controversy between us, are calculated, as far as their effects are not prevented, nor counteracted by other causes, to have a better moral influence in forming the character, than the opposite doctrines ; and that their reception and prevalence cannot fail to have great influence on the reception and spread of christianity in the world. At the same time, it is not maintained, that any one of the doctrines, about which we differ, is fundamental in such a sense,

that the opposite is incompatible with the Christian character, and forfeits the Christian name for him who maintains it. It is not doubted, that all the best influences of Christian faith may be felt, and the Christian life acted out, and the consolations and hopes of the Gospel enjoyed by those, whose speculative opinions, upon each of the several points of controversy, which lie between us, are in opposition to each other.

LETTER II.

I SHALL confine myself to a few passing remarks on what is contained in some of the first letters of Dr. Woods, wishing to draw your attention chiefly to the important articles of doctrine, which are discussed in the remaining ones; since, with the exception of the doctrine of the divine Unity, they involve the most interesting questions, that lie between us and you.

With respect to what is implied in no equivocal manner in the beginning of the second letter, I would only observe, that as to the propriety of *having* a creed, no doubt, I believe, has ever been entertained. Unitarians have always claimed the right of every individual to have his own particular creed. What they have sometimes had occasion to object to is, not that each of the several sects and denominations of Christians should have its own creed, nor, that any individual should have one; but that

any, whether an individual or a body of Christians, should insist upon their creed being the creed of others; either as a title to the Christian name, or as a condition of their being admitted to the participation of any Christian privileges.

In the concluding part of the same letter, and in the two following, Dr. Woods proceeds to charge Mr. Channing with a gross misrepresentation of the opinions of the Orthodox upon two points, the Unity of God, and his moral perfection; and of injustice in claiming these as distinguishing articles of the Unitarian Faith. Now, in respect to the first of these, the Unity of God, it is to be recollected, that the question is not, whether the Unity of God be *asserted* by Trinitarians. This is not denied them; but the true question is, whether opinions are or are not held by them in relation to this subject, which cannot be reconciled with the divine Unity. It is with this, and not with the other, that they are charged by Unitarians. Full credit is given to their word, when they declare their belief in the Unity of God, and when they tell us "it is asserted in all their systems of Divinity, and all their Confessions of Faith." Nor is there any thing that I can perceive in Mr. Channing's Sermon, that contradicts this. But until more than this is done, and until something more satisfactory, than has yet been said, can be alleged by them to show, that the commonly received doctrine of the Trinity is reconcileable with the proper Unity of God, we must be allowed to consider the charge as still lying in its full force. Of this the most

respectable Trinitarian writers seem not to be insensible. How much they are pressed with this difficulty, and how impossible they find it to extricate themselves from it, appears in the variety of explanations which have been successively resorted to, and the dissatisfaction expressed with every attempt that has been made for the purpose. The last expedient, indeed, that of rejecting the use of the phrase "three persons," as applied to the Deity, and substituting for it that of "three distinctions," if by distinctions be meant any thing short of separate persons or agents, may be considered as restoring the divine Unity. But it reduces the Trinity to a mere unmeaning name, and were it not an abuse of language of mischievous tendency, would leave nothing on the subject, that need be thought worth contending about.

Professor Stuart (p. 23) expresses regret that the term *person* had ever come into the symbols of the churches, sensible, as it appears, that it cannot be used in any intelligible meaning, without infringing on the Unity, and running into palpable Tritheism; and the late President Dwight, though he contends for the propriety of the term, (vol. ii. p. 137,) as a *convenient* one for expressing the things intended by the doctrine, yet confesses, that if he is asked *what* it means, he must answer, I know not. But what is the particular convenience of the use of a term, which expresses no meaning, not even in the mind of him that uses it, we are left to conjecture.

Upon the other charge, which relates to the moral perfections of God, the course which Dr. Woods has pursued seems to me liable to objection. In his fourth Letter, in stating what was necessary on his part, and the mode of reasoning proper to be pursued, in order to relieve the system he has undertaken to defend, from the charge of inconsistency with the moral perfections of God, he says, "we have nothing to do with the inquiry, whether the common doctrine of depravity can consist with the moral perfection of God, nor with any difficulty whatever in the attempt to reconcile them." This is certainly a very extraordinary thought, that in defending his system against an objection to which it is thought liable, he should have nothing to do with the very objection itself, nor with the difficulty it involves. Did the question relate to the simple fact, whether the doctrine of depravity, as maintained by the Orthodox, were a doctrine of scripture or not, its consistency or inconsistency with the moral perfections of God would indeed make no part of the ground, on which the argument should proceed. But the question he had to consider was a different one from this. The doctrine of depravity, together with the associated doctrines, has a place in the system of Orthodox faith. It is upon the ground of these doctrines, as Dr. Woods expressly admits, (p. 25,) that Mr. Channing has used the language, which he understands as implying the charge under consideration, viz. "that the Orthodox deny the moral perfection of God." Now it certainly does belong to him, who would relieve

the system from that imputation, to show, not only that the doctrine of depravity, but that all the other doctrines connected with it in the Calvinistic system, are consistent with the moral perfection of God. This is the very point at issue, and the only point, so far as relates to this charge, with which he had any concern; and all that he has said to show, that he maintains many views respecting the divine government and purposes in common with Unitarians, and which are consistent with the moral perfections of God, will do nothing toward proving that he does not maintain other opinions, which are not reconcileable with it. He was required, therefore, in undertaking to repel this charge, not only to prove, which I shall afterward show he has not done, that the scheme of doctrine, which he defends, is taught in the scriptures, but also to prove that it is in itself consistent with the moral perfection of God. But this he has not attempted to do. He has, on the contrary, said that, which implies, that whatever the fact may be, the consistency demanded cannot be seen to exist. Now if he, who believes the doctrines in question to be taught in the scriptures, is yet unable to perceive *how* they are reconcileable with the moral perfection of God; ought he to be greatly surprised, or much disturbed, that another, who cannot find them taught in the bible, and who sees them therefore only as human opinions, without authority, should represent them as irreconcilable with that moral perfection, which he does find there clearly and constantly taught?

There is another consideration also, not to be overlooked, to show that he had something to do with this inquiry. If the doctrine of depravity, as it is maintained by the Orthodox, cannot be perceived by us to be consistent with the moral perfection of God, the presumption is very strong, that it is not true; since, if it actually be inconsistent, it certainly cannot be true. In proportion then to the difficulty of reconciling it, the proof of it from scripture and our experience ought to be clear, and not liable to objection. The neglect, therefore, to remove this fundamental objection to the whole system, you perceive, must have its influence upon all the reasoning employed in the direct proof of its several parts. Nothing but the most clear and satisfactory proof will be sufficient for the support of a doctrine, which labours under the weight of so much intrinsic incredibility, confessedly incapable of being removed.

I have one other remark to make in this place. Dr. Woods has stated correctly, (p. 26) "That independently of revelation, and well known facts, we are incapable of judging, what the goodness of God will require, as to the condition of man; or what man's character and state must be under the government of a being infinitely wise and benevolent." But the inference he would draw from this, I think you will perceive, is not warranted by the premises. For although it be conceded, that from the limitation of our faculties, we are incapable of saying what the goodness or justice of God would require: we *have* faculties capable of deciding with

certainty, what they will *not admit*. We can pronounce without hesitation with respect to some things, that they are absolutely irreconcilable with those attributes. To say that we have not faculties for this, is to say, not that our knowledge is limited and imperfect, but that it is actually nothing. There may be a thousand cases, like those stated by Dr. Woods, which, previous to experience, we could not have foreseen, nor should have expected, which when first proposed present difficulties, but which are yet capable of being accounted for in a satisfactory manner, and reconciled with that justice and goodness, with which they seem at first to be at variance. But other cases, it is evident, may be supposed, which would admit of no such explanation. And what I contend is, that the orthodox doctrine, as to the natural “character of man, and the manner in which God designates the heirs of salvation,” (p. 25) is of this kind; and that Dr. Woods’ assertion, (p. 27) “that the facts he has there stated, and which are known to all, are as far from being agreeable to what we should naturally imagine the infinite goodness of God would dictate, as the fact that men are subjects of moral depravity,” cannot be supported. There is no such analogy between the cases, as to warrant the conclusion. For we can see, with respect to the former, how they *may* be consistent with the moral perfections of God; but we can make no supposition, upon which we shall be able to perceive, that the latter *can* be so. The reason is, that, with respect to all the former cases, such as the promis-

cuous suffering and ruin brought upon men by plagues, hurricanes, and earthquakes,—the cruelties and horrors of the slave-trade,—and the darkness and ignorance to which so large a portion of the human race are by the inevitable circumstances of their condition subjected,—the evil is not final and remediless, but is partial or temporary, and may be considered as inflicted for the purpose of discipline; and the single consideration, that it makes a part of human probation, and that the subject of it may yet, by the manner in which he conducts under it, be an infinite gainer in the whole of his existence, relieves it from all objection arising from any supposed inconsistency with the justice or goodness of God. But the doctrine of the native depravity of man, taken in its connexion with the whole scheme of which it is a part; personal unconditional election, a complete atonement made for those, who are thus ordained to eternal life, and their regeneration by a special irresistible influence of the spirit of God; and what is the necessary and infallible consequence of all this, the equal unconditional reprobation and final and everlasting ruin of all the rest of the human race, certainly admits of no such reconciliation with any notion we can have of the moral perfection of the Author of our being.

As Dr. Woods, however, makes no attempt to show how they are capable of being reconciled; as he has virtually admitted that they are incapable of being perceived by us to be consistent with each other; and has contented himself with endeavouring to prove the several doctrines as matters of fact,

upon the principle, that if he can clearly prove them to be doctrines of scripture, he is not bound to show how they can be consistent with the divine perfections, it is unnecessary to say any thing more to show, that the imputation of which he complains is not removed. I shall therefore proceed directly to the consideration of the evidence upon which the several doctrines in question rest as matters of fact.

LETTER III.

THE discussion introduced by Dr. Woods in his fourth Letter, and pursued through the fifth and sixth, relates to "the natural character of man." As the question, "what is the natural character of man," lies at the very foundation of the controversy between Unitarians on the one hand, and Trinitarians and Calvinists on the other, it will prepare us for a fair discussion of it, to examine in the first place what is the precise difference of opinion between them on the subject.

Heretofore, those who claimed the title of Orthodox, and professed to follow the doctrine of Calvin, were satisfied with the language used by the Westminster Divines in the Catechism and Confession of Faith, in which the doctrines of that reformer are expressed with remarkable precision and distinctness. In them the doctrine, which respects

the natural state of man since the fall, and in consequence of that event, has two parts. They represent the first sin of our first parent, as *imputed* to all his posterity, who are said *to have sinned in him, and to have fallen with him*; and they teach the entire corruption of man's nature, *that he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil,—under the displeasure and curse of God, and liable to all punishments in this world and that which is to come.*

It seems that the first part of this account, though it was formerly reckoned one of the principal tests of Orthodoxy, more zealously maintained than any other, is now given up. It is wholly omitted in the Creed adopted by the Theological Institution in Andover. It is expressly given up by Dr. Woods. "The Orthodox in New England at the present day," he tells us, p. 44, "are not chargeable with the erroneous opinions held by their predecessors. The imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity, in any sense, which those words naturally and properly convey, is a doctrine which we do not believe." This change in the opinions of the Orthodox, and advance toward what we believe to be right views, we are glad to witness; and have no doubt that the same correct mode of thinking and reasoning, which has led to it, will lead also to the rejection of the other part of the doctrine, which has heretofore been considered as inseparably connected with it. We think that further reflection will convince them, that they *are*

inseparably connected—that if the imputation of Adam’s guilt is a solecism, and inconsistent with the moral character of God, it is equally so, that, in consequence of it, all his posterity should come into being with a nature so totally corrupt and inclined to sin, as to be incapable of any good.

I could have wished that Dr. Woods had given a more distinct and compact definition of the doctrine he meant to defend on this point, that there might be no mistake of the question between us. From scattered expressions, however, and from his having made no exception with respect to this part of the doctrine, I think we are to conclude, though he chooses to express it in somewhat softened and qualified language, that he holds it in its full extent. By such expressions as the following, (p. 31) “by nature men are subjects of an innate moral depravity;”.....“while unrenewed, their moral affections and actions are wholly wrong.” (p. 43) “All, without exception by nature, or in consequence of their natural birth, are in such a state of moral impurity, as disqualifies them for the enjoyments of heaven, unless they are renewed by the Holy Spirit.” And (p. 46) “Adam’s transgression had such a relation to his posterity, that in consequence of it, they were constituted sinners, and subjected to death, and all other sufferings, as *penal evils* ;” he means all that is meant by the following expressions in the Assembly’s Catechism and Confession of Faith. “The corruption of his nature, by which he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all

evil, and that continually—and that men are thus by nature, as they are born, under the displeasure and curse of God; justly liable to all punishments in this world and that which is to come.”

I am fortified in this by recurring to the Creed of the Institution with which he is connected, in which I find the following passage. “That in consequence of his [Adam’s] disobedience, all his descendants were constituted sinners: that by nature every man is personally depraved, destitute of holiness, unlike and opposed to God, and that previously to the renewing agency of the Divine Spirit, all his moral actions are adverse to the character and glory of God; that being morally incapable of recovering the image of his Creator, which was lost in Adam, every man is justly exposed to eternal damnation.”

The doctrine respecting the natural condition of man, which I shall now state, and endeavour to maintain in opposition to this, may be expressed in the following manner.

Man is by nature, by which is to be understood, as he is born into the world, as he comes from the hands of the Creator, innocent and pure; free from all moral corruption, as well as destitute of all positive holiness; and, until he has, by the exercise of his faculties, actually formed a character either good or bad, an object of the divine complacency and favour. The complacency and favour of the Creator are expressed in all the kind provisions that are made by the constitution of things for his improvement and happiness. He is by nature no more inclined or disposed to vice than to virtue, and is

equally capable, in the ordinary use of his faculties, and with the common assistance afforded him, of either. He derives from his ancestors a frail and mortal nature; is made with appetites, which fit him for the condition of being in which God has placed him; but in order for them to answer all the purposes intended, they are so strong, as to be very liable to abuse by excess. He has passions implanted in him, which are of great importance in the conduct of life, but which are equally capable of impelling him into a wrong or a right course. He has natural affections, all of them originally good, but liable by a wrong direction to be the occasion of error and sin. He has reason and conscience to direct the conduct of life, and enable him to choose aright; which reason may yet be neglected, or perverted, and conscience misguided. The whole of these together make up what constitutes his trial and probation. They make him an accountable being, a proper subject to be treated according as he shall make a right or wrong choice, being equally capable of either, and as free to the one as to the other.

That this, and not the scheme of innate moral depravity, is the truth, I shall endeavour now to show by arguments drawn

1. From observation and experience, and
2. From the Scriptures.

It is to my purpose, previous to entering on this discussion, to observe, what the Orthodox will not hesitate to admit, that judging beforehand, the scheme of total moral depravity, or of any original

bias to evil rather than good, is something different from what we should expect, and involves great difficulty in reconciling it with the moral perfections of God. This, as I have before observed, is implied (p. 29) by Dr. Woods himself. I admit, with him, that this is not a sufficient reason for rejecting it in opposition to the evidence of fact, and of scripture, and for the reason which he gives, viz. that we are finite, and cannot so comprehend the purposes and conduct of an infinite being, as to be certain, that what *seems* to us inconsistent with his moral character, is so in reality. But *it is* a good reason for yielding our assent with caution, not till we have examined with care, and not without very satisfactory evidence. It is a reason for suspending our assent, and reexamining, so as to be entirely satisfied as to the fact. I have another remark also to make. The doctrine, it is confessed, is repulsive. The mind naturally revolts at it. It *seems* at first, to all men, universally, to be inconsistent with the divine perfection. But the first impression is made upon us by the nature which God has given us; and I think we should be slow to believe that a nature, thus given to all, is intended to mislead and actually does mislead all, on so important a question. It is certainly an extraordinary fact, if a fact it is, that God should first give to man a corrupt nature, wholly averse to good and inclined to evil, and at the same time endow him with a moral discernment and feelings, which lead him instinctively to deny that God can so have made him, because inconsistent with justice and goodness; that is, that he has given him

a natural sense of right and wrong, which leads him to arraign the conduct of the Being who made him.

I proceed now to the inquiry, what observation and experience teach us, as to the fact of human depravity. And here we must not forget, that the question is, not whether there is a great deal of wickedness in the world, but what is the source of that wickedness ; not whether mankind are very corrupt, but how they became so ; whether it is a character born with them, or acquired ; whether it is what God made them, or what they have made themselves. All that is said of the prevalence of wickedness in the world may be true, and yet none of it the effect of an original taint, which men brought into the world with them ; none of it making a part of their original nature. I may acquiesce in the mournful and humbling representations given of the violence of human passions, the brutal excesses that follow the unrestrained indulgence of the appetites ; the intemperance and self-indulgence of individuals ; the wrongs, violation of the rights, and neglect of the duties of domestic life ; the injustice, and fraud, and violence, prevalent in every form in all the transactions of social life ; the pride, and selfishness, and regardlessness of the rights and feelings of others, appearing in a thousand forms ; the wars which desolate the earth, the abuses of government, and the oppression and tyranny, that are exercised by some over the rest of their fellow-beings. All these representations may be true, and no more than a just account of what actually takes place, and yet the whole be fairly accounted for.

without any original and natural bias to sin. All may be but the effect of neglect to restrain appetites, in themselves useful and good, to control and give a proper direction to passions designed to be useful and capable of the very best effects, and in general a failure to exercise properly, in temptations and trials, the powers of direction and resistance, which were in themselves sufficient.

But, although this reply may be made, were the representation usually given of the human character, and of the prevalence of wickedness, correct in its fullest extent; I am satisfied that I am not called upon by truth to make that concession. I insist, that the account usually given of human wickedness is exaggerated. It is a partial account, and such as gives a very wrong impression. Men are not the mere brutes and fiends, which it would make them. There is much of good as well as of evil in the human character, and in the conduct of man. Indeed, I hesitate not to say, that as much as there is of wickedness and vice, there is far more of virtue and goodness; as much as there is of ill-will, unkindness, injustice, and inhumanity, there is incomparable more of kindness, good disposition, pity, and charity. I insist, that if we take a fair and full view, we shall find that wickedness, far from being the prevailing part of the human character, makes but an inconsiderable part of it. That in by far the largest part of human beings, the just, and kind, and benevolent dispositions prevail beyond measure over the opposite; and that even in the worst men, good feelings and principles are predom-

inant, and they probably perform in the course of their lives many more good than bad actions ; as the greatest liar does, by the constitution of his nature, doubtless speak many truths to every lie he utters. One great source of misapprehension is, that virtues and good qualities are silent, secret, noiseless ; vices are bold, public, noisy, seen by all, felt by all, noted by all.

But whether this be so or not, the ground for rejecting the doctrine of innate original moral depravity will not be materially affected. It is not supported by observation and experience, as we have a right to demand of a doctrine so apparently inconsistent with the moral attributes of the Deity.

What I assert upon this point, and think to be very obvious and capable of being made out to entire satisfaction, is, that observation and experience are altogether favourable to the view I have stated of the human character and condition, and that without revelation there is nothing that would lead a reflecting man to the thought of an innate moral depravity.

It is easy to bring together into one picture, and place in a strong light, with exaggerated features, all the bad passions in their uncontrolled and unqualified state, all the atrocious crimes that have been committed, all the bad dispositions that have been indulged ; but the picture, though it contain nothing, but what is found in men, will be far, very far, from being a just picture of human nature. Let all that is virtuous, and kind, and amiable, and good, be brought into the picture, and presented in

their full proportions, and the former will be found to constitute a far less part of it, than we were ready to imagine.

Our most correct ideas of human nature will be drawn from the characteristics of infancy, and the earliest indications of disposition, tendency, and character in the infant mind ; and if the nature of man be corrupt, inclined to evil, and evil only, it will appear there with its unequivocal marks. But do we find it there, and is it the common, untaught sentiment of mankind, that it exists there ? Far from it. Innocence, and simplicity, and purity are the characteristics of early life. Truth is natural ; falsehood is artificial. Veracity, kindness, goodwill flow from the natural feelings. Duplicity, and all the cold, and selfish, and calculating manners of society are the fruit of education, and intercourse with the world. We have marks enough of a feeble, helpless nature, calling for sympathy, assistance, support, kindness ; but we see no proofs of depravity, of malignity, of inclination to evil in preference to good. How early does the infant discover affection, attachment, gratitude to those from whom it receives kindness ! How universally is it an object of interest to those about it ! Would it be so, if it manifested such tokens, as the orthodox doctrine of depravity supposes, of an inclination, disposition, and tendency, wholly directed to evil, and if it appeared to possess nothing good, and no tendency to good ? Instead of this, must it not naturally be the object of aversion and disgust, and especially so to pious and virtuous persons, who can only love and

approve those, whom God loves and approves ; and who therefore can see in little children, only objects of the divine displeasure and wrath, beings wholly averse to God and all that is good, and who deserve, not sympathy and affection, but all punishments of this world and the world to come ?

It is often said, that children are naturally inclined to falsehood and deception, and that they early lie and deceive, rather than speak the truth. But this charge needs proof ; and I apprehend it will be found that evidence is abundantly against it, and in favour of the natural veracity of children. It will rarely be found, that children disregard the truth, till by example, or bad education, or peculiar circumstances of temptation, they have learned to overcome and counteract the tendency of nature. That they are so proverbially simple, unsuspecting, and easily imposed upon, arises from their judging others by themselves. It is because they themselves are conscious of no thought of deceiving, that they never suspect others. Great differences of character in this, as in other respects, appear at an early age ; but what I have stated, I am persuaded is the general character, until the disposition and tendency of nature has been changed by education, example, and circumstances.

It is alleged, also, that children are naturally cruel ; and in proof of it, the pleasure they seem to take in torturing insects and small animals is sometimes mentioned. But the pleasure, which the convulsions and throes of a tortured insect or animal give to a child, arises from another source than

cruelty, or the desire of giving pain. It is wholly to be attributed to the love of excitement, and the pleasure it takes in rapid and violent motion ; and is wholly unconnected with the idea of suffering in the creature, with whose convulsions it is delighted. The same pleasure would be derived from the power of producing the same convulsive motions, and the same appearance in any inanimate substance. In proof of this, let a clear idea of the suffering of the insect be communicated to the child, and it will no longer take pleasure in its convulsions. A sentiment of compassion will be raised. It will be as eager to rescue it from its suffering, as before it was to inflict that suffering. This I am persuaded will usually, if not always, be the case. But if it were from native cruelty, the *love* of inflicting pain, or from any depravity of nature ; instead of ceasing from it the moment it was made acquainted with the suffering of the animal, that knowledge would be a new motive to proceed ; as it would give it the satisfaction of knowing, that its malignant purpose was effected, its cruel design accomplished. The same account is to be given of what is often called a mischievous disposition in children. It is not the love of mischief, but an exuberant love of activity. The mischief or inconvenience which they occasion to others is no part of the motive, but simply the love of action and strong excitement ; and it may be accompanied with the kindest feelings, the most sincere desire of giving pleasure to others, and as sincere an unwillingness to give pain or to cause uneasiness or displeasure.

Indeed I know not a single mark of early depravity, common to children in general, which may not, as these are, be fairly traced to causes, which imply no degree of depravity, and no fault of character, or of disposition. Individuals there may be, who give very early tokens of great perversity of mind, and corruption of heart. But these are exceptions from the general character of human nature, and, as such, have no place in the present argument; and if they had any, would be decisive, not in favour of the orthodox doctrine, but against it; as the *exception*, in its nature, proves the *opposite rule*. If great depravity is the exception, exemption from depravity must be the rule.

No man, I am persuaded, was ever led by personal observation and experience to the thought of an original depravity of human nature, according to which, by the bias of nature, all, without exception, who come into the world, are from their birth inclined wholly to evil, and averse to good.

And as little, I am persuaded, would any one be led to such an opinion by the general current of scripture. I am led to think so by a general view of the commands, precepts, exhortations, promises, and threatenings of religion, and by the whole history of the divine dispensations to men; and also by attending to a great number of particulars, each of which, separately, seems to me to imply, that mankind come into the world innocent and pure, the objects of the complacency of the Creator, and no more inclined, by the nature God has given them, to sin, than to virtue; no more disposed to hate and

disobey, than to love and obey their Maker. I shall instance only in one, but that alone, in my opinion, is decisive of the question. I refer to the manner in which little children are, on two occasions, spoken of by our Saviour, and on one by the Apostle Paul. (Matt. xix. 14) “Suffer little children to come unto me—for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” These appear to have been infants, or at least very small children, for he took them into his arms and blessed them. There is no intimation of any thing peculiar in them; no evidence that they were a few, selected from among many; nothing to suggest that they were different from other children; but rather, that they were like other children. There is not the slightest intimation that these particular children had become the subjects of any great moral change. But if they were depraved, destitute of holiness, averse from all good, inclined to all evil, enemies of God, subjects of his wrath, justly liable to all punishments, could our Saviour declare, respecting them, “of such is the kingdom of God?” And could he, on another occasion, say, (Matt. xviii. 3) “Unless ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God?” And again, (Mark x. 14. Luke xviii. 16) “Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein?”

Could the Apostle Paul recommend to the Corinthians, (1 Cor. xiv. 20) “Be not children in understanding, but in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men;” that is, in understanding, in the power of distinguishing right and wrong, and

perceiving the truth, show yourselves to be men ; but in your dispositions, in your moral characters, manifest the gentleness, and mildness, and purity of children ? I know not how these passages are to be explained, so as to consist with the doctrine of innate depravity, rendering those who are the subjects of it enemies to God, &c. until renewed by the special influence of the spirit of God. I have never seen them satisfactorily explained upon that supposition, nor do I believe that they admit of such explanation. They most clearly imply, until turned from their obvious meaning, that young children are objects of the Saviour's complacency and affection ; that their innocency, gentleness, and good disposition are the proper objects of imitation ; that they are, what men are to become by conversion or regeneration.

But there are, as I have said, a few texts, from which the doctrine I am considering is inferred ; and these have been brought forward, and placed in all the strength of which they are capable, by those who believe and defend the doctrine, and particularly by the able advocate it has found in the author of the pamphlet before me.

It is not pretended, I believe, by any of the defenders of the native, hereditary depravity of the human race, that the doctrine is, any where in scripture, expressly asserted. It is not a matter of direct assertion, but of inference. It is considered as implied in several passages. Now I admit that a doctrine, no where expressly taught, may yet be so clearly and constantly implied, may so enter into the whole texture of the sacred writings, and appear

in every part, as to be as reasonable an object of our faith, as those doctrines, which are the most distinctly and formally enunciated. But examples of this kind are usually (I will not affirm always, but usually) such as are presented, not a few times only, and then in a doubtful form, but such as appear constantly, and enter as it were into the very substance of the whole. Such, for instance, is the being of God, no where asserted, but every where implied. Such is the moral freedom of man, upon which rests his accountability as a moral being; and such, in my apprehension, is the doctrine, that men become sinners, guilty before God, and objects of his displeasure only by their personal acts, and not by the nature with which they came into being.

The first text adduced, as implying innate total depravity, is Gen. vi. 5. A few remarks will show how little it is to the purpose, and how far from supporting what is made to rest upon it. For, in the first place, it relates not to mankind universally, but to the degenerate race of men of that age, so remarkably and universally corrupt, beyond all that had gone before, or have followed since, as to call for the most signal tokens of the vengeance of heaven. In the second place, were it said of all men in every age, instead of being confined, as it is, to the inhabitants of the earth at that particular time, it would still be nothing to the purpose, for which it is brought. There is no assertion of native derived depravity, none of a corrupt nature, no intimation of hereditary guilt, no reference to innate aversion to good and inclination to evil. It is the

mere assertion of a state of great corruption and wickedness, which no one denies ; and not only of external actions, such as “the world being full of violence,” but of purposes and dispositions of the heart, implying deep-rooted and radical wickedness, expressed by “the imaginations of the heart.” But this is all perfectly consistent with their coming into being, innocent and pure. It is not what they are by nature, but by habit ; not what they were as they came from the hands of the Creator, but what they have become in the use or rather abuse of his gifts, and of the condition in which he placed them.

It is said that the language here is universal, as also when it is used again in the viii. chapter ; and that its application to *man universally* in all ages and nations, is confirmed by the passages quoted by Paul, in the iii. chapter of Romans from Psalms xiv. liii. v. xli. x. xxxvi. and Isaiah lix. where he describes Jews and Gentiles of that age, in passages borrowed from the Old Testament, and applies them as descriptive of the character of mankind without exception. But in each case the argument wholly fails of proving what it is brought to prove ; because it depends for its force on an interpretation of language, which cannot be adopted without leading to consequences, which the advocates of universal original depravity would be as slow to admit, as its opposers.

It goes on the supposition that the sacred writers used words, as no other writers ever did use them, with perfect philosophical exactness, instead of the popular sense ; and that their writings were to be

interpreted by rules, to which no other writings will bear to be subjected.

Universal expressions, like those in the texts in question, are so far from being always used in their strict literal sense, that they are *usually relative*, to be understood and interpreted in relation to the subject and occasion. Thus when it is said, (1 Tim. ii. 4) “God will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth,” it relates to the question, whether any class or nation of men are excluded from the favour and good-will of God, and therefore ought to be excluded from a share in the benevolent regards and prayers of Christians ; so that *all men* means, not every individual, but all ranks, descriptions, and conditions of men. In the unlimited sense of the words it is not true. It is not true that God wills every individual to come to the knowledge of truth, i. e. of the Gospel ; for thousands are precluded from the possibility of it by the circumstances of their being. Nor is it true, that he wills all men to be finally saved ; but only all of every rank, and every nation, who are penitent, obedient, and faithful. He wills none to be excluded from having the truth proposed, and salvation offered to them. And that *all*, who receive and obey it, shall actually obtain the salvation offered. So also (Tit. ii. 11) when it is said, “the grace of God bringing salvation hath appeared to *all men*,” the meaning cannot be, *every individual*, for it never has been published to *all* in that sense. But, as in the other case, to men of every nation, age, rank, condition, and in the

same sense in which Paul (Col. i. 23) spoke of the Gospel, as “preached to every creature under heaven.”

It is in a similar, popular, qualified sense, a sense never leading men into mistakes upon other subjects and common occasions, that Moses, speaking of the general wickedness and corruption of manners, which were the occasion of the flood, uses language, which in its strictly literal import might be understood to mean, that there was no virtue remaining on the earth; though he immediately tells us, that Noah was an exception to the prevailing wickedness, that “he found favour in the eyes of the Lord, (ch. vi. 8, 9) being a just man, perfect in his generations, and one who walked with God.”

The same remark occurs with equal force in respect to the passage so much relied on in the xiv. Psalm. Not only is there no intimation as to the origin and source of the evil, no intimation of an inbred, innate, hereditary depravity, but only of great and general corruption of manners; but, though a verbal universality is expressed, the very Psalm itself takes care to teach us with what qualifications it is to be understood. For while it asserts, in the strong language of emotion and eastern hyperbole, “that all were gone aside, all together become filthy, none that did good, *no, not one,*” the writer seems wholly unconscious of a design to have his language understood according to its literal import; for he immediately goes on with expressions absolutely incompatible with such a meaning. He goes on to speak of a “people of God, a generation

of the righteous, whose refuge was God." The same is the case with each of the other Psalms, quoted by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans.

But it is of little comparative importance, whether the authors of the Psalms, or the Apostle in quoting them, meant to be understood as expressing a general truth in popular language, or as expressing themselves with literal philosophical exactness. Understand them in the most unlimited, unqualified sense, of which their words are capable, they express only what no one will deny, that all men are sinners. The question will still be open, as before, how this universality of sin and great corruption of manners are to be accounted for. Whether, as the advocates of Orthodoxy contend, men come into the world with a corrupt nature, prone only to wickedness, and utterly incapable of any good thought or action, till renewed by an influence of the holy spirit, which they can do nothing to procure; or as Unitarians believe, this corrupt nature is not what they received from God, but what they have made for themselves. That they were not made sinners, but became so by yielding to temptations, which it was in their power to resist; by obeying the impulse of the passions, and the calls of appetite, in opposition to the direction of reason and the notices of conscience; by subjecting themselves to the dominion of the inferior part of their nature, instead of putting themselves under the guidance of their superior faculties.

Questions may be asked upon this statement, which cannot be answered, because we have not

faculties which enable us in any cases to trace things up to the first cause and spring of action. But no difficulty so great and insurmountable meets us, as, on the opposite theory, is the moral difficulty in which it involves the character of the Author of our being. When we have traced back the wickedness of men, as it actually exists, to the voluntary neglect, and perversion, and abuse of the nature God has given them, we can go no farther.

It is asserted, (pp. 38, 39) “that when we read in the Bible the highest descriptions of human wickedness in the old world, in Sodom, in Canaan, in Jerusalem : or of the wickedness of individuals, as Pharaoh, Saul, Jeroboam, and Judas ; it is perfectly just and natural for us to reflect, *such is human nature, such is man* ; and orthodox writers reason in an unexceptionable manner, when they undertake to show, what *human nature* is, from the description which is given of the wickedness of man in the Old Testament.”

The writer, I think, must perceive that he has expressed himself rashly or carelessly, when he considers clearly the force and bearing of what he has said in the above paragraph. Are we to consider those places, which, singled out and distinguished from all others, are expressly declared to have been destroyed for their enormous and incorrigible wickedness, as fair representatives of the usual state and character of the human race ? People, who were ordered to be wholly extirpated for the very purpose of stopping the contagion of their vices, preventing the spread of the infection, and

serving as a warning to other nations to prevent their becoming like them? Are Pharaoh, Jeroboam, and Judas, fair examples and representatives of human nature? Men, singled out in a history of two thousand years, as instances of uncommon wickedness, visited with as uncommon tokens of retributory justice? Let it be asked, why the cruelty and obstinacy of Pharaoh, rather than the humanity, and piety, and meekness of Moses; why the idolatry, and unprincipled ambition, and selfishness of Jeroboam, rather than the piety, tenderness of conscience, and public spirit of Josiah; why the single wretch, who was so base and sordid as to sell and betray his Master, rather than the eleven, who were true and faithful to him, should be selected as specimens of the race to which they belong, and the great community of which they make a part?

Would you select the period of seven years' famine, as an example of the usual fertility of Egypt? The desolating pestilence in the days of David, as a fair specimen of the salubrity of the climate of Israel? Would you go to a lazar-house or hospital, rather than to the fields, the wharves, and the factories, to know what is the usual state of human health and activity? Is an idiot or a madman a just specimen of the human intellect? Or are we to find in our prisons, and at the gallows, in highwaymen, pirates, and murderers, a true index to point out the general morals of the community?

It is unnecessary to multiply remarks on the next text brought to prove human depravity. (Jer.

xvii. 9) “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” Admit that it relates to a prevailing trait in the human character; do we not well know, that, in the common use of language, such general expressions are seldom to be understood as universal in their application? They are to be understood in a limited and popular sense. What is more than this, though the text were intended to express a trait of character absolutely universal, it has no more relation to the question respecting the source of human wickedness, whether it be natural or acquired, than any other descriptions of prevalent wickedness in the world. But the total irrelevancy of the text to the purpose, for which it is brought, appears best by considering the subject matter, about which it is introduced. The prophet is stating the safety of trusting in God, and the insecurity of trusting in man. The reason is, that men are deceitful, and not to be depended on. Now this reason would be good, and support the prophet’s conclusion, though deceit and treachery were not the universal, though they were not even the general character of men. Were there many to be found, who would deceive and betray, it would be sufficient to justify the prophet, in withdrawing men from their confidence in man, and teaching them to place it in him, who can *never* fail, and will *never* deceive. And it would sufficiently account for his adding in the next verse, “I the Lord search the heart.” However deceitful men may be, and able to impose on men, there is

one, who is able to detect, and will not fail to punish.

From the New Testament, the first passage selected, as implying the doctrine under consideration, is the answer of Christ to Nicodemus, (John iii. 3) "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is contended, (pp. 42, 43) that the universal necessity of regeneration, expressed in this text, implies universal depravity. "That this necessity of a moral renovation arises from the character man possesses in consequence of his natural birth; that all must be born again, because, and only because, all without exception are, by nature, or in consequence of their natural birth, in such a state of moral impurity, as disqualifies them for the enjoyments of heaven, unless they are renewed by the holy spirit."

A single consideration convinces me, that the inference is without foundation, and that the universal necessity of regeneration may consist with original innocency, and exemption from any prevailing tendency, as we are born into the world, to vice rather than virtue. By their natural birth men only become human, reasonable, accountable beings. "What is born of the flesh is flesh." They receive by their natural birth only the human nature. They receive no moral character, but only the faculties and powers, in the exercise of which a moral character is to be formed. The formation of this character introduces them into a new state of being, and by whatever means, and at whatever time it takes place, it may be called, by no very remote

or unusual figure, a new birth ; and those, who have thus acquired a moral character, and received the principles of a spiritual life, in addition to the natural human life, may be said to be born again. Now if this was what Jesus meant in what he said to Nicodemus, it will no more imply original sin, than original holiness. It will only imply the absence or want of that, which was necessary to becoming a subject of the kingdom of God. The terms *new birth, born again, born of the spirit, renewed, become a new man*, are applied with as much propriety to those, who receive the influences of the Gospel, and acquire the character, which it is intended to form, on the supposition of original innocence and purity, as upon that of native depravity and original sinfulness. In each case alike, it expresses a great moral change, and implies the formation of a new character, not possessed before. On the supposition, therefore, that this passage refers, as is generally supposed by interpreters, to that great moral change, which the religion of the Gospel is to produce on those who embrace it, in order to their being fit members of the kingdom of heaven on earth and in glory ; it will be seen to be nothing to the purpose of those, who attempt to build upon it the doctrine of a moral depravity, with which all men are born into the world. It will only imply, that they do not possess by birth that character of personal holiness and positive virtue, which is necessary to their being Christians, fit subjects of the present and future kingdom of God.

The passage, (Rom. v. 12) "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," is of another kind, and to be shown to have no relation to the subject by other considerations. The whole force of this passage, (if it have any, as relates to this subject,) lies in the last clause, "For that all have sinned." Now if this clause be understood in a sense, which shall prove any thing to the purpose, it will prove the genuine old Calvinistic doctrine, the imputation of Adam's sin. It leads back to the notion of a federal head, of Adam's acting not only on his own responsibility, but for all his posterity; acting in their stead, so that his action was theirs, and they "sinned *in him* and fell *with him* in his first transgression." They are all sinners by the sin of him, their representative, federal head. The myriads who die in earliest infancy, before it is possible for them to perform any act, or to have any volition, either sinful or virtuous, yet die because they are sinners. They are sinners then by the sin of another, by the imputation of sin to them; and this is the true doctrine of Calvinism; and this, it seems to me, is also the doctrine of Dr. Woods, notwithstanding his explicit rejection of it, as stated in words. For, besides that he acquiesces in the qualified statement of Stapfer, (p. 45) (which, after all, must mean the doctrine of imputation in its full extent, if it have any intelligible meaning; since God's giving Adam a *posterity* like himself, if it mean any thing to the

purpose, must mean *sinner*s like himself;) besides this, he asserts, that the Apostle's reasoning goes on the ground, that (p. 46) "Adam's transgression had, in the plan of the divine administration, such a relation to his posterity, that in consequence of it, they were *constituted sinners*, and subjected to death and all other sufferings, as *penal evils*." Now if the posterity of Adam being *constituted sinners*, and subjected to all sufferings, as *penal evils*, that is, as punishments, in consequence of his transgression, mean any thing to the purpose for which it is introduced, and yet short of the common Calvinistic notion of imputation, I am unable to perceive what it is, and it needs explanation, and a more definite statement, than I have seen.

But I am persuaded the passage has no such meaning. It is a single phrase taken away from its connexion, and what is more, out of the middle of an argument. Did it therefore, as it does not, express distinctly our original native depravity, it would give very little satisfaction alone; for there is no sentiment so absurd, that it may not be supported by single sentences, thus detached from the connexion in which they are used. But I have observed that in its most obvious sense it expresses no such native corruption. Understood literally, the only assertion it contains with certainty is that of a fact, which none will deny, the universality of sin, that *all* have sinned. Now the nature of the universality intended to be asserted, in this, as in every case, is to be learned from the circumstances of the case. All who are *capable of sinning*, all as

soon as they are capable of it, all as soon as they are *moral agents*. Such limitations of the sense of universal expressions in other cases are constantly occurring. Were all the inhabitants of a country required to take an oath of allegiance to the government ; the requisition would be considered as complied with, though no infants and small children had taken the oath, and all would be considered as included under its obligation. But there is another consideration, which ought to prevent this text from being considered of any weight on the subject. The whole passage in which it stands is one of the most intricate and difficult in the New Testament. The phrase,* on which so much is made to depend, admits equally well of several different translations, each of which will give it a different meaning ; and its connexion with the passage in which it stands is not such, as to help us, to any degree of certainty, in determining by which version its true sense is expressed. Dr. Woods himself, “ allows it to be in some respects very obscure.” He will doubtless admit then, that the support derived to a doctrine,

* Εφ' ἧς, in our translation, “ *for that,*” has been rendered by the several phrases, *because, inasmuch as, as far as, in whom, unto which, after whom, on account of whom*. When meanings so various are assigned to this text by Schleusner, Elsner, Taylor, Doddridge, Whitby, and Macknight, I am justified in attributing to it a degree of obscurity and uncertainty, which should prevent it from being alleged with much confidence in proof of any doctrine, which it may be supposed to express.

depending on any particular translation of this text, or any particular meaning assigned to it, will be of very little value ; of none indeed any farther, than it receives support itself from other plainer passages.

Ephesians ii. 3, “ And were by nature children of wrath, even as others.” The connexion and circumstances of the case show the meaning of this verse, and that it furnishes no proof of inbred moral corruption, but only of corrupt and wicked habits. It refers to the former state of Jews as well as heathen, before their conversion to Christianity. In that state, they were all alike children of wrath, deserving of wrath, not as they came into the world, not as they came from their Maker’s hand, but as they became by the habits, and customs, and practices of that state into which they were born ; which was a state of nature, as compared with the state of grace, into which they were introduced by Christianity. What they were before they became Christians, they were by nature ; what they became afterward, was by the grace of God, which appeared bringing salvation. The state of nature was that, into which they came by their birth ; as distinguished from the state of grace into which they came, when they embraced Christianity. When they received Christianity, they were born again, born of water by their baptism, born of the spirit by receiving the spirit of Christianity, by being renewed in the temper of their mind. Then they were no longer children of wrath, when the new

birth was completed, and their religion had produced all its moral effects.

According to this view of the subject, the state of nature has no reference to what a man brings into the world with him, but it stands opposed to a state of grace. It is that state in which all are, Jews as well as Gentiles, before they become Christians. This language of the Apostle, like much of that in the Epistles, referring to the same subject, relates to men, as bodies of men, not as individuals. It compares them together as bodies, not as individuals. It speaks of them *generally*, as in their heathen and Jewish state, and then in their Christian state. In the former "dead in sin," in the latter "quickened, and raised up," and (v. 5, 6) "made to sit together in heavenly places."

The former, (12, 13) "Strangers, aliens, without God, without hope, afar off;" the latter, "made nigh by the blood of Christ."

The former, (19) "Strangers and foreigners;" the latter, "fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God."

The former, (3, 1) "children of wrath, having their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, dead in trespasses and sins;" the latter, (4, 5, 10) "by the rich mercy of God, quickened, saved by grace, created by Christ Jesus unto good works."

The whole of this refers to the same thing; not to the personal condition of individuals as such, but to that of the whole body of Christians, as quickened and raised from the moral and spiritual death of

their original Jewish and heathen state ; as delivered from the state of wrath, in which they had lived from their birth ; and, by the rich mercy of God and the faith of the Gospel, made to sit together in heavenly places, that is, to enjoy all the privileges and hopes of Christians.

It has no reference therefore to the state in which persons are born into the world in all ages. Those now born into the world, in Christian lands, are not in the same sense that these Ephesians were, *children of wrath by nature*, but as these same Ephesians were, after their conversion to Christianity, *saved by the grace of God, quickened, raised from the dead, made nigh by the blood of Christ, fellow-citizens with the saints, of the household of God.*

All this language was applied to the Ephesians universally after their conversion, and all of it is as applicable universally now to those, who are Christians by birth, as distinguished from those, who are heathen by birth.

The phrase we are considering then must be seen to be wholly inapplicable to the purpose for which it is alleged.

We are called upon by the advocates for the doctrine of depravity to show, that it is inconsistent with the moral perfection of God ; that it is not taught in the scriptures ; and that all the wickedness in the world may be accounted for without admitting the doctrine.

With respect to the first, I might satisfy myself with saying, that it belongs to those, who maintain

the doctrine, to prove its consistency with the moral perfection of God. But I have no wish to avail myself of the right, which every one has, who is called upon to prove a negative, of throwing back the burden of proof. It is one of the cases in which the negative is susceptible of satisfactory proof.

When we charge the common doctrine of depravity with being inconsistent with the moral character of God, it is, as taken in connexion with the rest of the system, of which it makes a part. It is the whole system together, that we maintain is incapable of being defended in consistency with the moral attributes of the Author of our being. Whatever the nature of man be, it is such as he received at the hand of his Maker. Whatever tendency and proneness to evil there may be in him, as he is born into the world, it is no greater than his Maker gave him. We assert then that no guilt, no fault can be attributed to him by his Maker for such proneness. If God be a just being, he cannot be displeased with him for being what he made him. If he be a good being, he cannot punish him for it. To subject him to *penal evils* for a propensity to sin, born with him in consequence of his descent from a sinful ancestor, is not the less cruel and unjust for his being *voluntary* in following that propensity, unless he had also the natural or communicated power to resist it. If he have that power, then he becomes guilty and deserving of punishment, so soon as in the indulgence of the propensity he actually becomes a sinner, but no sooner. Till then, even on the supposition above, no guilt is incurred. The

propensity itself is no sin, and implies no guilt. And afterward the justice of his subjection to penal evils depends on his power of being and acting otherwise than he does. Had he no power to be, to feel, and to act otherwise than he does, he could not be guilty and deserving of punishment for continuing in his present state. But according to the scheme, which assumes to be that of Orthodoxy, those who are the subjects of this innate moral depravity, inclination to evil, and wholly “wrong state of the moral affections and actions,” (p. 31) are utterly incapable of doing any thing toward producing in themselves a moral change, or which shall be a reason with God for granting to them that grace, which is necessary to their regeneration and sanctification. It is only the irresistible influence of the spirit of God, which can renew and change their nature. Now we assert, that until this grace has been imparted and resisted, there can be no blame-worthiness. Beings so situated may be the objects of pity to the Author of their being, and his pity may be manifested in bringing suffering upon them in the way of discipline, for the purpose of promoting their renovation, and bringing them to a state of holiness : but it cannot be inflicted by a just being as punishment. Now, if I rightly understand the scheme of Calvinism, divine punishments are not, according to that scheme, disciplinary, but vindictive. God punishes his offending creatures, not to reform them, but to vindicate his authority. The sufferings of the wicked have no tendency to reform. but rather to

harden and confirm them in their opposition to God and their duty.

Now, however consistent with justice may be the infliction of vindictive punishment, where it is in the power of the subject of it to be different from what he is, and to act otherwise than he does ; it is contended that it cannot be so, where the guilt to be punished is inbred, a part of man's original nature, such as he came from the Creator's hands ; where, in fact, the sinner is as his Maker sent him into the world, not as he has made himself by his own act, by the abuse, or neglect, or perversion of his power, and his faculties and affections.

That the doctrine is not contained in the scriptures I have endeavoured to show, by showing the insufficiency of the several texts from the Old and New Testament, on which Dr. Woods relies for its support ; and that they admit of a satisfactory interpretation, which gives no countenance to it. I know very well, that these are not the only texts which are supposed to relate to the subject ; but I do not know that any others are thought to have more weight, or to present greater difficulties. I have limited myself to these, solely from a wish not to extend the discussion beyond what was rendered necessary, by the course pursued by Dr. Woods ; and presuming that the texts, which he has selected, were those on which he would place his chief reliance.

When the extent and prevalence of wickedness in the world are urged as indicating an original inherent corruption, and we are called upon to ac-

count for it in a satisfactory manner, without admitting the orthodox doctrine of depravity, I shall think it sufficient to refer you to the account which I have given of our moral constitution, and the state of trial in which we are placed. Being, by the whole of our nature and condition, equally capable of virtue and of vice, of a right and of a wrong course ; it is no more difficult to account for the actual existence of the highest, than of the lowest degree of either. But I have also another consideration to suggest. It will not, I suppose, be pretended, that our first parents were, previous to their fall, subjects of the same moral depravity, which is attributed to their descendants. It will be admitted that they were created innocent and pure, “in the image of God in righteousness and holiness ; yet they became sinners. Now it belongs to him, who urges the wickedness of mankind as a proof of innate original depravity, to account for the sin of our first parents, who are admitted to have been created, not only in a state of innocence, but of positive holiness.

I have one only remark more, which I wish to make in conclusion upon this subject. The doctrine, which I have been considering in this letter, Dr. Woods styles, (p. 31) his “humbling conclusion.” In this he intimates, what is often more distinctly expressed by orthodox writers, that the doctrine is of a more humbling nature, more expressive of self-abasement, and of a sense of human demerit and unworthiness, than that which declares our nature to be originally pure, innocent, free from enmity to

God, and from an inclination only to evil. But with how little justice this is claimed, I am persuaded you will be convinced, by a moment's reflection. Can that be thought a more humbling doctrine, which traces all our wicked actions up to an original constitution, given us at first by our Maker, and a depravity of nature which he gave us when he gave us being ; than that which attributes all our sins to our own neglect, and abuse, and perversion of the gifts of God ? We have certainly no cause to feel ourselves humbled under a sense of any thing that we are by nature. We have occasion to be ashamed only of what we have become by practice. For the nature God has given us no sentiment but that of gratitude is due. Humility and self-condemnation should spring only from the consciousness of a course of life not answering to the powers, and faculties, and privileges of our nature. What God has made us, we should think of with unmingled satisfaction ; what we have made ourselves, we cannot think of with too deep regret, and sorrow, and shame.

LETTER IV.

IN the system of Orthodoxy defended by Dr. Woods, the doctrine of Election stands in immediate and close connexion with that of the total depravity of human nature, and is brought forward by him the next in order. He seems to enter upon the discussion of this subject with the impression, that he has strong prepossessions to encounter, and that these prepossessions are not without foundation. "I acknowledge," he says (p. 52) "that orthodox writers and preachers of high repute, but deficient in judgment, have, in some instances, exhibited the doctrine in a manner, which has given too much occasion for these prepossessions; and too much occasion for this author [Mr. Channing] to think, that the doctrine is inconsistent with the moral perfection of God." Again, (p. 63) "orthodox writers have not unfrequently made use of expressions, which, at first view, may seem to furnish occasion for some of the heavy charges brought against us by our opposers. But for the rash, unqualified expressions of men, who have become hot and violent by controversy, we are not to be held responsible. We here enter our solemn protest against the language, which has sometimes been employed, and the conceptions which have sometimes been entertained on this subject by men, who have been denominated Calvinists." Again, (p. 79) "I am willing to concede, that *those views* of the doctrine of Election, against which Whitby and

many other respectable writers direct their principal arguments, are *justly liable to objection.*" From these passages one might be led to suppose, that those, whose opinions Dr. Woods professes to represent, maintain the doctrine of Election in some qualified sense, and not as it is to be found in the popular writers, and confessions. And in this he would be confirmed by the statement at the close of the discussion. (p. 81) "You now see what we mean by the doctrine of Election, and in what manner we believe it. *As the result of his own unsearchable wisdom and grace, and for reasons which relate to the great ends of his administration, God eternally purposed to save a great number of our race, and purposed to save them precisely in the manner in which he actually does save them.*" From this form of the doctrine, I presume no Unitarian would dissent; and were there nothing in the Letters of Dr. Woods to show that the orthodox faith is something more than is here expressed, one would have supposed he might have been spared the labour of any formal defence of it against objection, and all that solicitude which he seems to have felt, "in disclosing to his readers with the utmost frankness his inmost thoughts upon the subject." (p. 82.)

If this is a complete statement of the doctrine of Election, as it is understood by the Orthodox, and if Dr. Woods and those whom he represents, and for whom he professes to speak, do not maintain the opinions against which the Sermon of Mr. Channing is directed, there seems to have been no good reason, why he should feel himself concerned at all

in the charge. *Calvinists* only, who *do* maintain them, can fairly consider their opinions as attacked, and themselves called upon to defend them.

But Dr. Woods has no where informed us, who those “orthodox writers of high repute” are, who have exposed the doctrine to objection by their injudicious exhibitions of it; nor has he told us in what respects they have given a false representation of it. It is to be regretted that he did not think it necessary to do this, as he must perceive how much it is calculated to perplex, and how much it may mislead, his readers. For, as a simple statement drawn from the several parts of his letters will show, it cannot have been his design to express his dissent from the *doctrine* of Election as expressed in the strongest language of orthodox writers; but only to guard against *the impression*, which he supposes the strong and naked statement of it may be likely to make.

The following is the statement of this doctrine by the Westminster Divines, as it stands in their Confession of Faith, and more briefly in the Assembly’s Catechism.

“God did from all eternity freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass.”

“By the decree of God some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.”

“These angels and men, thus predestinated and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.”

“Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing, in the creature, as conditions or causes, moving him thereunto.”

“As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, &c. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, &c. but the elect only.”

“The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin.”

I will now place before you, in the best manner I am able, such a view of Dr. Woods' opinions upon the subject, as is to be found in scattered passages through his seventh and eighth letters.

“The Father has given to Christ a part of the human race, and those, who have thus been given to Christ, are the persons, who shall have eternal life ;” (p. 54) and this, he goes on to prove at large, “denotes *all who shall finally be saved.*” (p. 55.)

“In every case, a person’s being given to Christ *secures* his coming to Christ ; and, when Christ speaks of those, who were given him of the Father, he includes the whole number that shall be saved.” (p. 56.)

“God has a *purpose, choice, will, and good pleasure*, respecting those who are saved ; a *purpose or choice*, which was in the mind of God before they existed ; a purpose, which does not rest upon any personal merit in those, who are its objects ; of grace, excluding *all works of righteousness* from having any concern in this subject.” (p. 57.)

“Nothing is effected by the efforts of man, but every thing depends on the mercy of God.” (p. 59.)

“The sovereign purpose of God relates to man’s eternal interests, to their religious character and salvation.”.....“I could, as I think, make it appear, that the doctrine of God’s sovereign Election is the only doctrine, which accounts satisfactorily for *the actual difference, which exists between true believers, and the rest of the world.*” (pp. 61, 62.)

“We hold it as a fact, universally, that impenitent, unrenewed sinners do no good work, which God regards as a condition of their being renewed, or on account of which he has promised them regeneration : that, in all cases, he calls and renews them according to his own purpose and grace.” (pp. 67, 68.)

“We believe that those, who are chosen of God to salvation, are not chosen because they were, in themselves, more worthy of this blessing than

others, that God looked upon their moral feelings and conduct with the same disapprobation, and had the same view of their ill desert, and that he chose them, as we may say, *for reasons of state* ; for general reasons in his government, which he has not revealed."...."The purpose and administration of God are, in this respect, different from what our wisdom would dictate, or our affections choose ; they cannot be accounted for by any principles known to us, but result from the infinite perfection of God, and are conformed to reasons, which he has concealed in his own mind." (p. 74.)

If you will compare these passages with those before quoted from the Westminster Confession, you will find that they differ from each other only in the degree of clearness and explicitness, with which the same doctrine is expressed.

I shall now endeavour to show, that the "method of designating the heirs of salvation," which this doctrine implies, can neither be reconciled with our natural notions of the moral character of God, derived from the use of the faculties he has given us, and our observation of his conduct in the government of the world ; nor with what he has made known to us of his character, and purposes, and government in the christian revelation.

How repugnant this doctrine is to our natural reason, Dr. Woods himself seems to be fully sensible. "If it were put to my natural reason," he says, (p. 54) "to judge by its own light respecting what is called the doctrine of Election, my judgment

might agree with the judgment of those, who reject the doctrine. If the question were, what difficulties attend the doctrine, I might perhaps bring forward as many as others.”

Now, as God is the Author of our being, and as that portion of reason, which we have, was given us by him for our guide, it is certainly very remarkable, and what we should not expect, that instead of indicating to us truly his character, and dispositions, and purposes, so far as it gives us any information, it should universally mislead us respecting them. Following the light of our reason, and the natural impulse of our feelings, we find it impossible to imagine, that the Author of our being, the common Parent of all, can regard and treat his offspring in the manner, which the doctrine in question attributes to him. That, without any foreseen difference of character and desert in men, before he had brought them into being, he should regard some with complacency and love, and the rest with disapprobation, and hatred, and wrath ; and, without any reference to the future use or abuse of their nature, should appoint some to everlasting happiness, and the rest to everlasting misery ; and that this appointment, entirely arbitrary, for which no reason is to be assigned, but his sovereign will, should be the cause and not the consequence of the holiness of the one, and of the defect of holiness of the other. A man, who should do what this doctrine attributes to God, I will not say toward his own offspring, but toward any beings that were dependent

on him, and whose destiny was at his disposal, would be regarded as a monster of malevolence, and cruelty, and caprice. It is incredible that the Author of our being should thus have formed us with an understanding and moral feelings to lead us without fail to condemn the measures and the principles of the government of him, who so made us.

Will it be said that this repugnance which we feel to the doctrine in question is one of the proofs of the corruption of our nature? Yet whatever that nature may be, it is such as he gave us. And however imperfect our reason, it is what he gave to be our guide. It is the only immediate guide he has given us; and it is that, which must be the ultimate judge of the evidence, and of the nature and value, of any notices which he may give of his will and purposes, by his providence or his word. Can it have been the design of the Apostle to put down our reason, our moral feelings, and natural conscience, as seems to be intimated in the pamphlet, “*by the appalling rebuke, Who art thou that repliest against God?*” But who is the man, that in the truest sense is chargeable with replying against God? Is it not he, who would set aside, as false and dangerous, the guide he has given to all for the direction of life? Is it not he, who refuses to listen to the voice, by which he speaks to all? Who calls in question the notices he gives of himself and of the principles of his government, in the only universal revelation that he has made of himself? He, it seems to me, *replies against God*, who

rejects or undervalues the notices, which he has in any way given us, of himself or of the principles of his government. Not less he, who refuses to follow reason and natural conscience, than he, who will not submit to the demands of a written revelation. Not less he, who turns his back upon the works of God, than he, who closes his eyes against his written word.

But my objection to the orthodox doctrine of Election is grounded not solely on its being irreconcilable with our reason and moral feelings; I find it not more easy to reconcile it with the instructions of the holy scriptures. I look to the general scope of the sacred writings, as regards the disposition of the Author of nature toward his creatures, and the principles of his government; and I find nothing to support this doctrine, but much with which it seems to be wholly incompatible. I ask how this sovereign appointment of the everlasting condition of men, “excluding all works of righteousness, as having any concern in it,” and with reference to which “nothing is effected by the efforts of men,” can be shown to consist with all that we find in the scriptures so clearly implying, that something is depending on the exertions men will make, and the part they will act; for, according to this doctrine, what they are to be and how they are to act is determined beforehand, without any reference to such exertions; with all that implies the influence of motives, since it is no such influence of motive, but “God’s sovereign election, that is to account for the actual difference between true believers, and the

rest of the world ;” with all that implies guilt, ill desert, blame-worthiness in the unholy, disobedient, and impenitent ; for how can men be guilty of being what they were made to be ? How are they deserving of blame for remaining in that moral state, in which it was determined by the sovereign appointment of God, that they should remain ? With all those promises, threatenings, warnings, admonitions, exhortations, and entreaties, which imply in those, to whom they are addressed, a power of being influenced ; with all that implies, that men are capable of duty and obligation, and are the proper subjects of praise and blame, and of reward and punishment ?

This charge of inconsistency with the general scope of the scriptures, and the doctrine every where taught or implied in the sacred writings, has never been removed ; nor can it be, I am persuaded, but by violating the plainest principles in the interpretation of language.

There is another view, in which this doctrine is at variance with what the scriptures every where present to us. I mean the righteous and benevolent character of the Author of our being. It represents him to us as a cruel and unjust being, exacting endless punishment for sins committed in following the nature he had given, and acting in pursuance of his decree. It represents him, as arbitrary and partial in his distributions ; making a distinction the most momentous that can be imagined in his treatment of those, between whom there was no difference of character or of desert as the ground of the

distinction ; from his mere sovereign will and good pleasure, ordaining *these* to eternal blessedness and glory, and appointing *those* to endless and hopeless misery. That it is the *righteous* only, who will thus be raised to glory, and the *wicked* only, who will be the subjects of condemnation, will make no difference in the case ; since, according to the doctrine we are considering, it is not merely an absolute appointment to salvation on the one hand, and to condemnation on the other ; but also to the different dispositions, character, and course of life, which are to have these opposite results. Those, and those only, who are ordained to eternal life, are also ordained to be effectually called, to be regenerated by irresistible grace, and thus to be brought, not by any thing they do, or can do themselves, but solely by the immediate power of God, out of that state of sin, in which they are by nature, to that holiness, which is to qualify them for salvation. The rest of mankind, “ passed by, and ordained to dishonour and wrath for their sins,” have that effectual and irresistible grace withheld from them, which was necessary to their regeneration, and without which it was impossible for them to attain to holiness and salvation.

To say, that those who are appointed to salvation, are chosen from among mankind “ *for reasons of state,*” (p. 74) is to say nothing that is intelligible. But to say, that they are chosen (ib.) “ for reasons, which God has not revealed ;—reasons, which he has concealed in his own mind ; such as cannot be accounted for by any principle known to us.” is something more.

It is a position, I think, unsupported by proof, and confuted distinctly by what we constantly meet with in the New Testament. In the appointment to privileges, means, and external condition, God has indeed given no account of his motives; nor assigned his reasons for the infinite variety that appears. He has exercised an absolute sovereignty, of which no account is given, and the reasons of which we are not competent to understand. But it is clearly otherwise as to the final condition of men. So far is that from being determined *by reasons of state, which he has not revealed*, that the reasons, upon which the final salvation or condemnation of every man is to take place, are distinctly assigned by our Saviour and his Apostles; not once only, but as often as they have occasion to speak of the final distinctions that are to be made between men. Those distinctions, we are again and again told, are to be wholly according to the difference of moral character. It is that *these* are righteous, and *those* wicked; *these* have done well, and *those* have done ill; *these* have been faithful, and *those* unfaithful. So far are the reasons of the final distinction to be made between those who are saved, and those who perish, from being concealed in the divine mind, that nothing is more distinctly made known. The New Testament is full of it.

Nor is it with any better reason said, that, “in this respect, the purpose and administration of God are different from what our wisdom would dictate, or our affections choose.” They are precisely what the wisdom and the affections of every man in their

uncorrupted, unperverted state, would approve and concur in. And they are accounted for by principles well known to us ; principles of eternal and immutable justice. Not reasons which he has concealed in his own mind, but such as he has made us perfectly capable of understanding ; and such as he has clearly revealed to us in his word.

But, though the general tenor of scripture seems so foreign from the doctrine we are considering, and not easily reconciled with it, there are particular texts in which it is thought to be expressly taught, or so clearly implied, that their force cannot be evaded.

The first text alleged by Professor Woods, in the pamphlet before me, is (John xvii. 2) “ That he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him,” and (John vi. 37, 39) “ All that the Father giveth me shall come to me, and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. And this is the Father’s will, who sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.”

With respect to the first of these, it cannot have been our Saviour’s intention to declare, that a certain, definite number of mankind were appointed by the Father to receive the benefit of his mediation and sacrifice, and obtain salvation, exclusive of all others ; and without any thing in them, as the ground of this preference and choice, for the reasons that follow.

In the discourse with his disciples, (ch. xv.) which stands in immediate connexion with the

prayer, of which this text is a part, he addresses the same persons, of whom he here speaks as “given him of the Father,” in language implying, that they might “abide in him, and bring forth much fruit,” or, failing to abide in him, might be “taken away, cast forth, cast into the fire and burned.” As those who, though chosen and ordained, might or might not keep the commands, and abide in the love of him, who had thus chosen and ordained them. But, according to the doctrine in question, there could be no such contingency in the case. All who are thus given, chosen, ordained, and those only, are to bring forth fruit, to keep his commands, to abide in his love, to have eternal life.

In this same discourse, again, (ch. xvi. 27) we meet with the following sentence. “For the Father himself loveth you, *because ye have loved me*, and have believed that I came out from God.” Here the love of God is represented, not as the cause, but the consequence, of the faith and love of the disciples, and the plain and obvious meaning of the texts in question, in their connexion with this is, that they were given to Christ, not by an arbitrary selection of them from the mass of Jews, without any thing in their character and disposition leading to the choice; but, because they were seen to be fit subjects for the kingdom of God, ready to receive the faith of the Gospel when offered to them, having already something of the christian disposition and character, already manifesting an obedient temper, as expressed (ch. xvii. 6,) they were already children of God, and were given to Christ, and

came to him, because they were God's in a sense, in which the rest of the world were not; and were then chosen, and ordained to partake in the final benefits of the Gospel, because of their faith and fidelity. This interpretation renders the whole discourse, and the following prayer, consistent throughout in the several parts, and consistent with the moral character of God, and the moral state of man, as a free and accountable being. With the other interpretation, I do not perceive how the texts that have been mentioned can be fairly reconciled. If, by *those given to Christ*, we are to understand, as Dr. Woods asserts, (p. 54) "a certain part of the human race, who are to have eternal life, and those, denoting *all*, to whom Christ will actually give eternal life," and as his argument requires, and as he elsewhere states with sufficient distinctness, this choice and appointment to Christian faith, obedience, and eternal life, is wholly independent of any thing in them as the ground of this distinction from the rest of the world, it is impossible to see with what propriety it could be said, that "God loved them, because of their faith and love to Christ," for his distinguishing love was, by that supposition, the cause of their faith, &c.; or how any intimations could be given, that something was yet depending upon themselves; that it yet depended on themselves, whether they should abide in Christ, keep his commandments, continue in his love, and share in the great salvation; for the appointment to all this was absolute, and without any condition on their part, as the ground of it. Besides.

I observe that other language of our Saviour in the discourses recorded by this same Evangelist, is equally favourable to the supposition, "that coming to Christ, believing on him, and having eternal life, are events, not flowing from a sovereign unconditional appointment, but the result of a faithful use of means, in the exercise of a right disposition; and that the difference of character thus appearing between them, and others who neglect to come, who refuse to believe and obey, and fail of eternal life, is the ground and not the consequence of their being chosen, given to Christ, and ordained to eternal life. Thus, (John iii. 19) the ground of men's condemnation is, not an irrelative decree of God, "but their hating the light, loving the darkness, because their deeds are evil." It is their being in character and disposition opposite to those, who escape the condemnation, because they do the truth, and willingly come to the light.

Thus it is, that the reason assigned, and, as is clearly implied, the *criminal reason* why the unbelieving Jews rejected the Gospel (John v. 40) was, not that they were ordained to this condemnation without any thing in them, by which they were distinguished from those, who accepted the invitation; but because they wilfully rejected the Gospel, and refused the eternal life it offered. "Ye *will* not come unto me, that ye might have life." Again, the same great moral ground of distinction appears in the declaration, (John vii. 17) "If any man *will do his will*, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Those, who are given to

Christ, chosen, ordained, who are to know of his doctrine, to believe in him, and thus to obtain eternal life, are those, who are well disposed to it, who have an obedient temper, who are *willing to do his will*.

The observations which have been applied to this text are equally applicable to the other text under consideration. (John vi. 27) "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" that is, those only are given to him of the Father, those only are to receive the final blessings of the Gospel, who come to Christ. It was so when the Gospel was first promulgated. The humble, the pious, the teachable received the Gospel; all those who were of God. The proud, the irreligious rejected it; those who were not of God, but of the world. It has been so in every subsequent age.

And none of those who thus come, bringing with them the spirit of the Gospel, abiding in it, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, none of these will he cast off. Of all those, thus given to him, thus coming to him, thus abiding in him, thus bringing forth fruit, it is the Father's will that he should lose nothing.

From this expression in the text, however, as well as the other, an unwarrantable inference is probably drawn; that of the absolute certainty of the final salvation of all those persons, concerning whom it is spoken. But this form of words was evidently intended to express, not the particular decree, but the general purpose of heaven; not the specific effect, which is without fail to be produced,

but the object and design of the divine dispensation ; to be understood with similar limitations with those, which we apply to the expression, (1 Tim. ii. 4) “ who will have all men to be saved.” Not that every human being will be actually saved, in the sense in which *saved* is here used, but that the salvation of all was the object and design ; that the offer of it was made to all, an offer which yet might be rejected. Again, (Col. i. 23) “ the gospel, which was preached to every creature which is under heaven.” Here the literal meaning of the sentence is not the true meaning. The Gospel had not been preached to every living creature. But the direction of the Saviour to his disciples was to preach it to every creature, that is, to *all men*. It was intended in general for all. None were excepted in the commission ; none were passed by in the execution. As far as the design of the commission had been accomplished, it had been done agreeably to the direction of the Saviour. To these instances many others might be added to show, that expressions of *universal* import are often, as in the text in question, to be interpreted only in a *general sense* ; and that they are frequently used to express, not an absolute decree, but a purpose or design depending on contingencies, and which *may in fact* be either universal or only general. And that the example we are considering is clearly of this kind, and that it does not warrant the use, that has been made of it, we have the farther positive proof in this circumstance ; that notwithstanding this unqualified expression, *one* of the persons given to Christ had been lost. “ Those

that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition." The son of perdition, it is here clearly implied, had been given to Christ in the sense of the passage, and yet had been lost. The declaration then, "It is the Father's will that he should lose nothing," is manifestly designed to express, not a specific personal decree, but the general purpose and design.

The next passage quoted by Dr. Woods to prove an absolute personal election to salvation is Ephesians i. 3—11. "Blessed be the God and Father," &c. To all the observations made by Dr. Woods on this passage, I give my entire concurrence; yet have no hesitation in asserting, what I hope satisfactorily to prove, that it has no relation to the doctrine, which he has brought it to support.

It refers not to individuals as such, but to the Christian community. Not to final salvation, but to Christian privileges. In the first place, the Epistle is addressed to the whole Christian community at Ephesus, without any intimation, that any expressions in it are applicable to some and not to others. The terms *saints* and *faithful in Christ Jesus*, (ver. 1) are applied alike to all, and are evidently to be understood as terms which designate the whole company of believers, and external professors, without any reference to the personal character of any, as individuals. It is again, in the name of the whole Christian community, Jews and Gentiles, that the Apostle speaks, when he says, that "God hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings, chosen us in *him* [that is. Christ] before the

foundation of the world, predestinated us to the adoption of children, predestinated us according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (ver. 3, 4, 5, 11) That this choice or predestination was not that of individuals to eternal life, but of all, who received the christian faith, to the profession and privileges of the Gospel, (besides its being thus generally addressed, and in the name of Christians at large and universally) appears still further from other expressions, addressed in the same manner. It is for these same persons, saints, faithful, chosen, predestinated, that the Apostle thought it needful very devoutly and earnestly to pray to God, "that they might be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, that they might be rooted and grounded in love;" very suitable to be addressed to professed believers as a promiscuous body: but such as we should hardly expect, if the persons designated were by the very designation understood to consist only of persons certainly chosen to eternal life, and were already certainly grounded in love, were already strengthened in the inner man, had already Christ dwelling in their hearts by love.

Further, these same persons, he thinks it proper to exhort, (ch. iv. 1) "to walk worthy of the vocation with which they were called," "to walk henceforth, not as other Gentiles walk," (ver. 17) "but to put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of their mind,

and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," and "not to grieve the holy spirit of God." (ver. 22, 23, 24, 30.) Implying that they are liable to retain still their heathen character, notwithstanding their Christian profession; that they *may* still pursue the former conversation, which, by their profession, they have renounced; that they are in danger of failing to put off the old man, and to be, as their Christian profession requires, "renewed in righteousness and true holiness;" that they finally may, instead of following the guidance of the spirit of God, grieve it. Very suitable, therefore, to be addressed to the promiscuous body of professing Christians; very suitable if by *saints, chosen, predestinated*, this only were meant; but certainly not so, if by these terms were designated persons chosen from eternity to final salvation, and already saints and faithful in the highest and literal sense of the words. *Such*, as distinguished from the rest of the world, are not the proper subjects of exhortation to walk worthy of their Christian vocation; for the very terms applied to them imply that they cannot fail to do so; being certainly predestinated to life, they are as certainly predestinated to that character and state, to which life is promised. They cannot be exhorted to be renewed and to put on the new man;—for by the supposition against which I am contending, their renewal is already certain. It is what they have no power, either to prevent, or to bring about, or even to accelerate. Their renewal has indeed already taken place; for they are ad-

dressed, not only as chosen and predestinated, but as saints and Christians, which, according to the scheme under consideration, they were not, till they were renewed. And with what propriety can such be exhorted “not to grieve the holy spirit of God?”

The next, and only other passage, to which Dr. Woods has referred for the direct proof of the doctrine of sovereign personal election to eternal life, is that contained in Romans ix. 11—24. A similar method of investigation to that, which was applied to the passage in Ephesians, will convince you, I think, that this is as little to the purpose as the other; and that it has no relation to an election to eternal life, but only to the privileges of the Gospel.

This will appear to you in the first place by an attention to the general scope and design of the Epistle, the subject of which was suggested by the great controversy of that age, respecting the extension of Christianity to the Gentiles, and their admission to its privileges and hopes, without being subjected to the observance of the Mosaic ritual. The Apostle combats the exclusive spirit of his Jewish brethren, by showing them, that those distinctions, on which they so valued themselves, as the chosen people of God, were done away; that Gentiles were admitted to the same rights, and to the opportunity of securing the final favour of Heaven on the same terms with them.

The Jews, as descendants of Abraham, disciples of Moses, children of the covenant and of the promises, enjoyed a high distinction and valuable privi-

leges. But these privileges were no security of their final acceptance with God. They were disciplinary and conditional. The knowledge of the law would be of no avail to those, who did not faithfully observe it. The sign of the covenant would not save those, who should violate it. The oracles of God, which were committed to them, would but enhance the guilt and the condemnation of those, who, with all their superior light and motives, lived no better than ignorant heathen.

On the other hand, the Gentiles, without the light of the written law, and without the sign of the covenant, the external mark of being the people of God ; if, guided by the light they had, (Rom. ii. 26, 27, 29) they fulfilled the law by a virtuous life, thus showing practically “the work of the law written in the heart,” (ver. 15) would secure that acceptance of God, of Him, “with whom is no respect of persons,” (ver. 11) and “who will render to every man according to his deeds,” (ver. 6) which the Jew must lose, who being “a Jew outwardly” only, (ver. 28) and relying on the letter and circumcision, was emboldened to neglect its moral design, and to live as a heathen. The final condition of every individual, whether Jew or Gentile, was to depend on individual personal character. (ver. 5—10) “Indignation and wrath to every soul of man that doth evil : glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew, and also to the Gentile.”

Now with this general scope and design of the first part of the Epistle, that interpretation of the

ix. ch. which refers “the purpose of God, according to election,” (ver. 11 et seq.) to an unconditional election of individuals to eternal life, seems to be wholly irreconcilable : whereas, that, which refers it to an appointment, free and unconditional, to the participation of privileges, not only comports well with the general design of the Epistle, but makes the latter part of it a continuation of the former, and a completion of the design, that prevails in the whole preceding part.

This appears again not less clearly, when we come to a separate examination of the passage itself.

The first instance mentioned of the accomplishment of “the purpose of God according to election,” is that of the appointment of Isaac, and pretermis- sion of Ishmael and the other children of Abraham. But what purpose of God was accomplished by this? Not the salvation of Isaac, but the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham in the whole series of dispensations for promoting the knowledge of God and true religion in the world ; and especially in raising up one from among his descendants, in whom “all the families of the earth were to be blessed.”

The next instance is the choice of Jacob in preference to Esau, a choice which preceded their birth, and could therefore have no respect to their good or ill desert. And this, the whole reasoning of the Apostle assures us, is applied, not to Jacob personally, but to the race descending from him ; and not to them in their personal character, but solely to their designation, as a people, to a certain part in accomplishing the great purposes of heaven.

In this appointment, the same free, sovereign, uncontrolled will was exercised, which is seen in the appointment of all the other circumstances, which make up the state of trial of every human being. It is “the power of the potter over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour.” Upon this interpretation there is room for the appeal, (ver. 20) “shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?” Upon that interpretation, which supposes a reference to the final lot of individuals as determined by a decree that has no respect to different desert, the appeal could not be sustained.

In each of these cases we perceive a peculiar propriety in the expressions, which the Apostle applies by way of reflection, (ver. 16) “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” It was the wish of Abraham, that the blessing might be given to his eldest son Ishmael. It was the desire of Isaac, that it should descend with his eldest son Esau. But the will of neither of them was permitted to prevail; nor yet the prompt obedience of Esau, by which he hoped to secure it to himself.

I am ready to admit, with Dr. Woods, that this reflection of the Apostle implies a general principle; but it is a principle to be applied to similar cases only, not those that are dissimilar. Now similar cases are those, and those only, which relate to privileges, opportunities, blessings, which are disciplinary in their design, temporal in their duration, and make a part of human probation. That which

relates directly to final salvation is dissimilar, and the same principle is not to be applied.

The case of Pharaoh is as little to the purpose as either of the others. For when it is said, (ver. 17) “For this same purpose I have raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth ;” whether by the phrase, *raised thee up*, be meant, as some suppose, *his recovery* from the effects of the preceding plague, which had been inflicted *on his person* and his people ; or as others understand it, his being exalted to high power, and placed in a situation to act so important a part ; in either case, there will be no reference to his final personal destiny. For how did God actually show his power in him, and make him the instrument of his glory ? It was by giving him the opportunity to act out his character, by allowing full scope for displaying the incorrigible obstinacy of his disposition, and by then inflicting upon him exemplary punishment, for the instruction and warning of mankind ; thus making him the instrument of promoting some of the best purposes of heaven, in the free and voluntary exercise of his power.

I should have passed by what is said (p. 72) on the doctrine of Reprobation, as expressing no other sentiment than what all Unitarians, as I believe, hold on the subject, but that I think it calculated (unintentionally I am persuaded, as respects the writer) to mislead the reader, as to the opinions of the Orthodox on that point. Dr. Woods has in fact given us, not as he professes to do, the *doctrine* of

the Orthodox, as to the decree of Reprobation ; but only his *opinion of the character of the doctrine*. He says, “it is the determination of God to punish disobedient subjects *for* their sins, and according to their deserts.” Now this, I observe, is not a statement of the orthodox doctrine, but his opinion of the character of that doctrine. What it belongs to him to state and defend is, not an opinion upon the subject, which he holds in common with all Christians, but that, by which the system he defends is distinguished from others. That opinion I will now state in the language of one of the most approved symbols of Calvinistic faith ; and it is such as follows very clearly from his own statement of the counterpart of the doctrine. “The rest of mankind,” i. e. all but the elect, “God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his *glorious* justice.” Again, “Others, not elected, though they may be called by the ministers of the word, and may have some common operations of the spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved ; much less can men, not professing the christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion, which they do profess : and to assert and maintain that they may, is very

pernicious, and to be detested.” (*Westminster Confession.*)

I am very willing to believe that the doctrine, as thus stated in the orthodox confessions, does not make a part of Dr. Woods’ faith; though I am unable to perceive with what consistency he can reject it, while he retains the other parts of the system that are connected with it.

If the doctrines of original hereditary depravity, absolute personal election, effectual calling, and special irresistible grace be true, that of reprobation, as stated above, follows of course, and must be true also. Whether it be that Dr. Woods, with a fair and inquiring mind, actually shrinks from this doctrine, because he finds it cannot be defended consistently with the moral character of God: or only thinks it desirable to keep out of view a feature of Calvinism, which shocks our moral feelings more than any other; in either case, I deem it an auspicious circumstance, a favourable omen. Men will not long continue to hold an opinion, after it has got to cause a painful struggle with their moral feelings, such as to dispose them to endeavour to keep it out of sight. They will not suffer themselves to be long encumbered with that, which they are unable to defend or unwilling to avow. Besides this, it cannot fail to open the eyes of men to the difficulties of the other parts of the system, which are intimately connected with this, which necessarily flow from it, and are in fact no better supported by scripture nor by reason than this.

LETTER V.

FOLLOWING the arrangement adopted by Dr. Woods, the next subject to which I am to call your attention is that of the Atonement. It is a doctrine on which great stress is laid by orthodox writers generally. The author of the Letters addressed to Unitarians says, "If there is any one doctrine of Revelation which the Orthodox distinguish in point of importance from all others, it is the doctrine of Atonement." It must accordingly be thought, that the importance of having clear conceptions and just views on the subject will bear some proportion to the importance of the subject itself. After such an introduction, therefore, to a letter devoted expressly to the discussion of that subject, it was certainly reasonable to expect a distinct statement of the orthodox explanation of the texts of scripture, in which it is supposed to be taught, and a defence of the interpretation by which those texts are understood to express the meaning that is assigned to them. More especially was this to be expected of one, who complains that the opinions of the Orthodox are misrepresented, and who, in their name, disclaims the opinions, which are attributed to them. But in this expectation I am disappointed. There is much complaint of misrepresentation, but I find no distinct statement in what the alleged misrepresentation consists, nor what are the precise opinions maintained by the Orthodox on this subject. I am able to collect but a very imperfect and indistinct

idea, what the scheme, which claims to be Orthodox on this subject, is. It is asserted, that the language used by orthodox writers on this subject, like that used by the sacred writers, is highly figurative, (p. 86, &c.) that it is not to be understood literally, that it does not mean, what it seems to express. It would have greatly assisted us, and possibly put a period to all controversy on the subject, had the writer seen fit to explain the figures, and give the true interpretation of the metaphors, which it is complained have been so misunderstood, and have thus laid the foundation for misrepresentation.

The first charge of misrepresentation is, that the author of the Sermon makes it a part of the orthodox system, “that God took upon him human nature, that he might pay to his own justice the debt of punishment incurred by men, and might enable himself to exercise mercy”—“that he might appease his own anger toward men, or make an infinite satisfaction to his own justice.” The unfairness alleged in this representation is, that it does not recognize the distinction of persons in the Deity, which is maintained by the Orthodox, and it is implied, that if no such distinction do exist, the representation would not be liable to objection, for no objection is made to it on any other ground. It was incumbent then on Dr. Woods, not merely to assert this distinction as an article of the orthodox faith, but to explain *what* it is, and to show its foundation in the language of scripture. The former he has declined. as not being within the scope of

our limited minds (p. 84), the latter, as not falling within his purpose (p. 85), in the discussion of the subject. But until both are done, I can see no ground for complaining of the absurdity charged upon the doctrine. It is a legitimate and necessary consequence of the orthodox faith, that Jesus Christ, whom the Father sent into the world, is the same being with the Father who sent him ; that Christ, who interposed and made an atonement for sinners, is the same being with that God, who, it is alleged, (p. 65) “ would never have saved them without such an interposition.” It was the same God, the same being, who sent, and was sent, who made the atonement, and whose anger was appeased by the atonement, who made satisfaction to offended justice, and whose justice was satisfied. It is not enough to assert, (p. 64) that “ the Father and the Son are *two* as *really* as Moses and Aaron, though not in the same sense, nor in any sense inconsistent with their being *one*.” It belongs to him, who asserts this, to state intelligibly, what is the nature and import of the distinction here intended ; to explain in what sense *two*, and in what sense *one*. No man knows better than Dr. Woods, that until he has done this, he has done nothing to the purpose. He uses words without meaning, and merely casts a mist, where he is bound to shed light.

The next imputation on the orthodox faith, which Dr. Woods endeavours to remove is, that it conveys to common minds the idea, that “ Christ’s death has an influence in making God placable. or

merciful, in quenching his wrath, and awakening his kindness towards men." Now to vindicate the system, and those who support it, from this charge, it was necessary to show, that the language, in which the doctrine is expressed and enforced by the Orthodox, is not calculated to produce this impression. But has this been done? By no means. The contrary is frankly admitted. It is conceded that the literal sense of the orthodox writings amounts to this. It is *asserted*, indeed, that the doctrine of the Orthodox is the very reverse of this, "that the mercy of God, not the interposition of Christ, was the origin and moving cause of the work of redemption;" (p. 68) "that the mercy or placability of God could neither be produced nor increased by the atonement of Christ." These are noble, correct, scriptural views. We are delighted to find on this point an opinion so highly important, in exact coincidence with that of Unitarians, and one to which they attach a very high degree of importance. We are glad too to find a strong sensibility expressed to the honour of the divine character, and horror at the thought of an opinion, so derogatory to it, as that which is attributed to the influence of the language they use on the subject. But why then does he go on to defend the use of that language, instead of correcting it? Since it is admitted not to be the language of scripture, and that understood literally it does convey the ideas objected to; that it does make the impression at which so much horror is expressed, does express a

doctrine acknowledged to be false and unfounded ; why is it not given up ? Especially as it would, on this point, put an end to all controversy. And why complain that the opinions of the Orthodox are misrepresented, when it is acknowledged that the opinions attributed to them are the literal and obvious meaning of the language they employ ?

It is to little purpose to say, that the figurative language used on this subject, though not the same, resembles that employed by the sacred writers in reference to the same subject. Dr. Woods admits that the language of the sacred writers is highly figurative. He admits too that such boldness of metaphor is peculiar to the Eastern, and particularly to the Hebrew idiom ; (p. 88) and that it is not so contemporaneous to our language. (p. 99) Why, then, will orthodox writers use it without explanation, when it serves to mislead readers and hearers who are not aware of this character of the Eastern languages ; and lead them into so great an error ? And if orthodox writers, instead of explaining the metaphors, so that their true meaning may be understood, “for the purpose of strong impression,” use them as if they were to be understood literally ; and not only so, but further sanction that interpretation by the use of other similar language of the same literal import ; especially if they charge Unitarians with denying or explaining away the doctrine for the very reason, that they explain the language in question as figurative ; can he be surprized that the Orthodox should be supposed to hold the

opinions, which the language literally expresses? Could it be imagined by a plain, honest man, under these circumstances, that while this strong impressive language is constantly used and insisted on, something very different is all the time meant from that which strikes the ear? And, let me ask, does it enter into the minds of common hearers of such language, that, correctly interpreted, it expresses no ideas, which would be “objected to by Unitarians?” (p. 92) It is to be hoped that in future the opinions of Unitarians on this part of the subject will be viewed with less aversion, when we are told from so high authority, that “the language used by orthodox writers is to be understood as highly figurative; that, taken literally, it would impute a character to God, which would excite universal horror; but understood according to the legitimate principles of interpreting metaphors, it teaches the simple truth, that the death of Christ was the means of procuring pardon, or the medium, through which salvation is granted.” (p. 93) Dr. Woods is right in supposing, “that no objection will lie in the minds of Unitarians,” against the doctrine thus expressed. It is the very manner of expressing the influence of the Atonement; which has been adopted by unitarian writers.

Dr. Woods proceeds to the notice of several other modes of expression, the use of which by the Orthodox he supposes to have been misunderstood, in a similar manner, and from the same cause, the misinterpretation of figurative language. When

it is said that Christ bought us, redeemed us by his blood ; when he is said to have paid our debt, to have satisfied divine justice, to have redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, and that our sin was imputed to him ; when these and other figurative forms of expression are employed to set forth the design and influence of Christ's death, we are told " they are to be interpreted as metaphorical language, according to the nature of the metaphors used, and that against the literal sense, there are many objections." (p. 95) So far there will be no controversy on the part of Unitarians, and it gives us no small satisfaction, that we have here a ground upon which we can stand together. And we are not without hope, that agreeing in this principle on which to proceed, we shall gradually approach nearer together in the result, till there shall no difference remain worth contending about.

But when Dr. Woods proceeds to explain the figures, he seems to have fallen into the same error " of mixing a degree of the literal sense with the metaphorical," which he afterwards mentions, and to which he traces some important mistakes, into which other writers have been led. To perceive this, you have only to compare together the passage (p. 94), in which he professes to explain what is meant by our being bought, redeemed, our debt paid, and divine justice satisfied ; with that (p. 96), in which " the notion, that if Christ has made a perfect atonement and satisfied divine

justice, those for whom he has done this are no longer under the same obligations to obey the law, and punishing them for their sins would no longer be just, is attributed to something of a literal sense being applied to the figurative language of Scripture and of orthodox writers. And it is admitted, that “if Christ paid our debt, or the price of our redemption literally, as a friend discharges an insolvent debtor, or purchases the freedom of a slave by the payment of money ; it would certainly be an unrighteous thing for us to be held to pay our own debt, or to suffer the evils of servitude.” For in the passage referred to, this is the very representation that is made. “As the debtor is freed from imprisonment by the friend who steps forward and pays his debt, so are sinners freed from punishment by the Saviour who shed his blood for them.” The payment is as literal in the one case as in the other ; and I see not how the consequence, consistently with what is admitted above, is to be avoided. The same may be said with respect to the other terms. The consequence is not to be evaded, if our redemption by Christ means, as is there stated, “his delivering us from the punishment of the law by suffering an evil which, so far as the ends of divine government are concerned, was equivalent to the execution of the curse of the law upon transgressors.” (p. 94) The ends of the divine government are answered, the demands of the law are fulfilled. It has no farther demands. When Christ has done and suffered

that which answers the ends of justice in the divine government, the necessity of punishment, so far as those ends are concerned, is superseded. The sinner then is free ; exempt alike from obligation, and from danger of punishment. The debt is paid ; justice is satisfied ; the ends of government are answered by the voluntary substitute. These consequences certainly follow from the manner which Dr. Woods has adopted of explaining the figurative language of the sacred writers.

But the language in question certainly does admit of a fair and unstrained interpretation, which leads to no such consequences. We are declared to have “ redemption, the forgiveness of sins, by the blood of Christ.” It will help us to the true interpretation of this language to attend to the use of the word *redemption* by the sacred writers in other analogous cases. Literally to redeem is to relieve from forfeiture, or captivity, or slavery, or to rescue from punishment by the payment of a price, and the price thus paid is the ransom. When, by a price paid by some friend, a captive is restored to liberty, or the punishment of a criminal is remitted, whose life was forfeited to the law ; in each of these cases there is a redemption in the original meaning and literal sense of the word. In the same manner also, if “ Christ delivers us from punishment by suffering an evil, which was equivalent, so far as the ends of the divine government are concerned, to the execution of the curse of

the law upon transgressors," (p. 94) that is a literal redemption, and that and the other correspondent terms, such as *bought* and *ransomed*, are applied, and are to be understood, not in a metaphorical but a literal sense. And here I cannot but observe, that the error complained of, that of mixing a literal with the metaphorical sense of such phrases, consists, not as intimated, (p. 95) "in the manner of reasoning upon them," but in the interpretation of the language itself.

Now it is not difficult in this case to trace the passage of the term in question from its original literal meaning to its metaphorical use. For as the deliverance from captivity or punishment was the principal thing, and the price paid as a ransom only a secondary consideration in making up the complex idea of redemption, it is easy to see how the term came to be used to denote the principal thing alone, where this accessory circumstance was wanting; and thus any kind of deliverance, by a very common change in the use of language, was called a redemption. Examples occur in the sacred writings as well as in our constant use. The deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage is called a redemption, and God is said on this account to be their redeemer, to have redeemed them from the house of bondage, and out of the hand of Pharaoh the king of Egypt.

But how was this redemption effected? Was a ransom paid as the price of their deliverance, as an equivalent for their services, as a consideration,

for which their oppressors were to let them go? Let the sacred historians and prophets answer this question. (Exod. vi. 6) "I will redeem you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments." (Deut. ix. 26) "Destroy not thy people, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand." (Neh. i. 10) "Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power and thy strong hand." The nation of Israel then was redeemed, not by a ransom paid to their former oppressors, as the price of their emancipation, but by the mighty power and strong hand of Jehovah, stretched forth in those signs and wonders in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness, by which the Egyptian monarch was compelled to suffer their departure, by which they were protected and avenged, when pursued by their oppressors, and were conducted in safety to the promised land.

The term is applied also in a similar manner to the deliverance of that nation from the Babylonian captivity. (Micah iv. 10) "Thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the Lord shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies." It is applied in many instances also to the deliverance of individuals from danger, captivity, slavery, or any great calamity; and the propriety of the term is sufficiently maintained, where something important is done, though nothing is literally paid, to procure the deliverance.

These examples of the use of this term may lead us to some just notions of its meaning, as applied to

express the benefit we receive, when it is said we have redemption by the blood of Christ. It is not, that his death was a price literally paid, either to God, to satisfy the demands of vindictive justice, or to the enemy of God and man, as the purchase of our release from his power. He was our redeemer in the same sense, in which God was the redeemer of the children of Israel; and he redeemed us by his blood, as they were redeemed by the mighty power, and the strong arm of the God of Israel. As God was the redeemer of Israel by the miracles of Egypt, so Christ was our redeemer by those miracles which proved him to be a messenger and teacher from God; by those instructions and that example, which were to remove our ignorance, and deliver us from the slavery of sin, and bondage of corruption; by those high motives to repentance and holiness, which are found in the revelation of a future life and righteous retribution; and especially by the confirmation his doctrine and promises received, and the persuasive efficacy given to his example, by his sufferings, his voluntary death, and his resurrection. He was our redeemer by doing and suffering all, that was necessary to effect our deliverance from the power of sin, to bring us to repentance and holiness, and thus make us the fit objects of forgiveness and the favour of heaven.

This view of the subject will enable us to correct an error, into which we are liable to be led by language, which we frequently meet with; as when it is said in the Letters to Unitarians, that "when Christ is said to pay our debt, it is simply signified, that

It is wrong

by means of his sufferings, he delivers us from punishment." (p. 94) Christ delivers us from punishment not *directly* by his sufferings. It is not that his sufferings are in any sense a substitute for ours. It is not that satisfaction is made by his sufferings to divine justice, so that the sinner escapes, because "there is no further need of punishment." It is not that our sin was so *imputed to Christ*, that he "suffered, in some sense, as he would have suffered if our sin had been really imputed to him," and that we are directly in consequence of this vicarious suffering exempted from the punishment. But his sufferings are the means of delivering us from punishment, only as they are instrumental in delivering us from the dominion of sin. They are the grounds of our forgiveness, only as they are the means of bringing us to repentance, only as they operate to bring us to that state of holiness, and conformity to the will of God, which has the promise of forgiveness, and qualifies us for it.

There is another term also used by the sacred writers to express the efficacy of Christ's death, which admits of a satisfactory explanation somewhat similar to that which has been given of *redemption*, and is to be understood as having passed to a similar metaphorical sense. The whole of *that*, by which the benefits of redemption are procured for us, whether it be the active obedience, or the sufferings and death of Christ, or both together, is spoken of as *a sacrifice*. (Heb. ix. 26) "He appeared to put away sin by the *sacrifice* of himself."

The meaning of this is rendered perfectly intelligible, and is freed from the insuperable difficulties that attend any explanation, in which is contained “a mixture of the literal with the metaphorical sense,” by attending to a change from a literal to a metaphorical sense of the term *sacrifice*, similar to that, which has been noticed in the terms *redeem* and *redemption*.

A *sacrifice*, in its primitive meaning, is an offering made to God, as an acknowledgment of dependence, as an expression of gratitude, or for the expiation of sin. It is thus applied to the various offerings appointed in the Jewish ritual. But as the effect to be produced is the principal thing, and it is of little comparative importance in what manner it is produced, and by what circumstance or act it is brought about; any other act, by which a similar effect is produced, though no proper sacrifice be offered, is familiarly called by the sacred writers *a sacrifice*. We find the term thus applied to prayer and thanksgiving. (Psalm cxli. 2) “Let my prayer be set before thee as incense, and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.” (Psalm cxvi. 17) “I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving.” (Heb. xiii. 15) “By him let us offer the sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of our lips.” It is applied to a holy life. (Rom. xii. 1) “That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.” It is finally applied to an act of kindness and relief. (Phil. iv. 18) “I have received the things which ye sent, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing

to God." It is by a use of the term similar to what we find in these examples, that sacrifice is applied to whatever was done by Jesus Christ for our benefit, especially to the labours and mortifications of his life, and the sufferings that attended his death; and that he is said to have "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

It may further help us to correct notions on this subject, to be reminded of what a change the word Atonement itself has undergone. This term is now more used than any other to express the popular doctrine of an expiation for sin procured by the death of Christ, a satisfaction made to divine justice, the Deity thus rendered propitious, his anger appeased, his mercy conciliated, and forgiveness obtained for those, for whom this atonement was made.

But it is evident, I think, that this was not the original meaning of the word. It occurs but once only in the New Testament, (Rom. v. 11) "By whom we have now received the atonement." And in that case it is translated from a word, *καταλλαγή*, which in every other instance is rendered *reconciliation*. The same is undoubtedly the meaning of the word also in this place. And we have reason to think, that it was understood to be its meaning by the translators, and that they meant to use the word *atonement* in that sense only. This is rendered probable by the formation of the word itself. It is a compound word, and in some early English writers the composition of the word is indicated, and thus its meaning pointed out in

the manner of writing it, *at-one-ment*, *at-one*. Atonement then expressed the condition of being at one, in a state of agreement, reconciliation; and to atone was to produce reconciliation, to bring parties to agreement, so that they shall be at-one.

Dr. Johnson has mentioned two instances of this use of the word in a writer of the next age preceding that, in which our translation of the Bible was made.

“He and Aufidus can no more atone,
Than violentest contrariety.”—*Shakspeare’s Coriolanus*.

That is, can no more agree, be reconciled, be at one. Again,

“He seeks to make atonement
Between the Duke of Gloster and your brothers.”

That is, to produce a reconciliation between them, to bring them to agreement.

Now, when we thus consider the change of meaning, which this word has undergone, from expressing simply the state of agreement, the fact of a reconciliation, to express that, by which the agreement is produced, the reconciliation is effected; we find in the use of the word itself no support of the doctrine it is usually understood to express. The term has evidently a different meaning as used by St. Paul, and probably as understood by his translator, from what it has in modern books of controversial theology.

According to the explanations which have now been given, of the language of the New Testament

on this subject, it will be seen, that those Unitarians who reject the popular doctrine of the Atonement, yet attribute an important efficacy to the sufferings and death, as well as the instructions and example of Jesus Christ, in procuring pardon and salvation. But this efficacy consists, not in their appeasing the anger of God, and disposing him to be merciful, but in their moral influence on men, in bringing them to repentance, holiness, and an obedient life, and thus rendering them fit subjects of forgiveness and the divine favour. The sufferings and death of Christ are thus represented as being not in our stead, but for our benefit; and intended to render the forgiveness of sin consistent with “the honours of the divine law, the character of the lawgiver, and the interests of his moral kingdom,” (p. 102)—not by satisfying justice, but by subduing the spirit of rebellion, restoring the authority and power of the law, and making men obedient subjects.

And these explanations meet in a satisfactory manner the true meaning of the two texts, which Dr. Woods has introduced for the purpose of illustrating (p. 101) the “bearing which the death of Christ has on the moral government of God, and *how* it secures mercy to penitent sinners.” According to this view of the subject, “Christ was made a curse for us,” not in our stead and as our substitute, but for our benefit. And his being made a curse for us redeemed us from the curse of the law, from the punishment due to us as transgressors of the law, by its influence in bringing us back to repentance

and subjection to the law. And when this was done, the sinner reconciled to God, brought to repentance, subjection to the law, and a life of holiness, the purposes of God's moral government are answered, its authority is supported, his law is vindicated, "God is justified, is seen to be just, is perceived to have a regard to justice, in justifying him, who believes in Jesus." It is seen that in extending pardon to the penitent believer, he has not yielded up the authority of his law, nor subjected his government to contempt.

The question which Dr. Woods here asks himself, (p. 102) "what hindrance there is in the way of God's showing the same favour to transgressors as to the obedient," is incorrectly stated, so as to give a deceptive view. The question is not, whether God can consistently with his character of moral governor, and the honour and safety of his government, show favour to *transgressors*, but whether he can extend forgiveness to the *penitent*, to those who have ceased to be transgressors, and have returned to their allegiance. The answer to this question would be very different from what the other requires. None of the consequences, which it is readily admitted must follow on *that* supposition, would have any place on *this*. God's readiness to show favour to those who repent and return to virtue, does not show, "that the authority of the law is set aside, and that no distinction is made between virtue and vice." Nothing indeed can show in a stronger light than this, God's love of virtue, and desire to encourage it by encouraging

the first return to it. No other expedient, which the wisdom of God could devise, certainly not that which consists in an atonement by the substitution, either literal or figurative, of the sufferings of an innocent person in the place of the guilty, will show better than the necessity of repentance and holiness and their efficacy in order to forgiveness and the divine favour, "that God does and for ever will make a distinction between holiness and sin."

I have next to make some remarks on the defence of the orthodox faith against the objection, that it "lowers the value of Christ's sacrifice, and robs his death of interest;" because consisting, according to this scheme, of a divine and human nature united together, the human nature only could suffer and die. So that, instead of the infinite atonement made by the sufferings and death of an infinite being, it is in fact only the sufferings and death of a man. The defence is made on the common ground of the "human and divine nature in Christ constituting but one person, so that all his actions and sufferings belong to him *as* one person." As this is the only defence that is, and the only one that can be, set up, let us examine a little its value and force. It is admitted, that if the premises are true, the conclusion does follow; if Jesus Christ is both perfect God and perfect man in one individual person, the defence is complete.

But in the first place I remark, that the possibility of two distinct intelligent natures making but one person, has never been shown to the smallest degree of satisfaction; especially of two natures so

distinct and distant as the divine and human, a finite and an infinite mind. No Trinitarian can deny, that in Jesus Christ are two perfectly distinct minds, two perfectly distinct, intelligent natures, as distinct as any two intelligent beings can be. But two distinct minds, two distinct intelligent beings, with each its separate consciousness, knowledge, capacity, will, and action, cannot be other than two distinct persons. But all these the trinitarian doctrine attributes to Jesus Christ. Separate consciousness, for the divine nature by the supposition was not conscious of any of that suffering, by which the atonement was made ;—separate knowledge, for it is alleged, that the divine person knew that, of which the human person was ignorant ;—separate capacity, for the human nature of Christ could increase in wisdom and knowledge, while the divine nature, being omniscient, was incapable of increase ;—separate will, for the human person most earnestly prayed for that to take place, which it could certainly be no wish of the omniscient mind should take place ;—separate action, for while the human nature of Christ was limited to the labours only of a man, and confined to a narrow space, the divine nature was extending its influence to all beings and events, and producing its effects over worlds and systems throughout the universe. It is impossible for any reasoning to show more clearly, than this simple statement, the absolute incredibility of this. But this is not all. The identity of person is not only shown to be impossible, upon the trinitarian hypothesis. The only ground upon which

some of the strongest objections to the trinitarian doctrine, that part of it, which consists in the supreme Deity of Jesus Christ, can be evaded is. by the assumption of two distinct persons in Jesus Christ: by assuming that he spake, and acted, and suffered, and was spoken of in two different characters. And this assumption has been made, as far as I have seen, universally by trinitarian writers, not in words indeed, but in fact. “*Here*, it is asserted, no argument lies against his divinity, for he is speaking not as God, but as man. Of *this* indeed he was ignorant as man, but he knew it as God, and *this* he might truly say he was unable to do as man, though as God he could do all things.” This, I observe, is the answer on which Trinitarians have rested, and it is the only one they have offered to all those texts, and they are very numerous, in which inferiority to the Father, limited knowledge, and limited power are expressed or implied. And this goes on the supposition of two distinct persons, and is utterly absurd on any other supposition. It is indeed a palpable contradiction to say, that the same person knows and does not know the same thing at the same time; can do and cannot do the same thing at the same time. And this contradiction, and worse than trifling, is attributed to the Saviour in some of his most solemn declarations, by the supposition in question. With these brief hints I am willing to leave the reader to make up his judgment, “how far the views of the Orthodox in this case are capable of being defended in a satisfactory manner.”

I would gladly have passed unnoticed what I find on the last page of the Letter respecting the Atonement, as it is unpleasant to be obliged to express the censure, to which I think a charge of so serious a kind, as is there brought against those, who reject the doctrine of the Atonement, is entitled to. This subject, it seems, is one, which it is dangerous to discuss, and on which it is not safe even to inquire. For certainly, if the rejection of the doctrine is in itself “a plain indication of the disposition of the heart, and a proof of a temper of mind, which is in total contrariety to the humble spirit of Christian faith,” it is not a subject on which it is safe to trust ourselves in speculating. The only safety is in believing without inquiry, receiving implicitly without examining. For if we allow ourselves to inquire, the result *may* be, that we shall reject, and rejection will indicate “a disposition of heart, inconsistent with the humble spirit of Christian faith.”

But this, I am persuaded, cannot have been the intention of the author of the Letters. The expressions must have been used in haste, without well considering their import and bearing. It cannot have been his design, to deter those whom he addresses from examining the evidences of a doctrine, respecting which Christians have been so little agreed, and which has been so variously understood and explained, by those who receive it.

A doctrine which we cannot deny, without incurring the charge of wanting the humble spirit of Christian faith, and about which it is therefore

unsafe to allow ourselves to inquire, we have certainly a right to demand to find either distinctly and intelligibly expressed in the scriptures, or clearly stated and explained in the writings of those, who propose them as essential parts of the Christian doctrine. But where, I ask, are we to look for a clear and distinct statement of the orthodox doctrine of Atonement? The genuine doctrine of Calvinism is indeed stated by the early writers of that school in a manner sufficiently clear and intelligible. But every feature of that is denied as a misrepresentation of the orthodox faith. We are told that the language of the orthodox, like that of the scriptures, is metaphorical, not to be understood literally; and I in vain seek for such an explanation of the metaphors, as to enable me to understand what is the distinct doctrine, which is intended to be maintained. A fleeting and shadowy image is presented to the view, which eludes every attempt to fix its shape, and dimensions, and features. And can it be, that my inability to receive a doctrine, expressed in words, of which I am only told what they do *not mean*, and not what they do, is to be regarded as “an indication of a disposition of heart and temper of mind, which is in total contrariety to the humble spirit of Christian faith.”

There are some other sentiments in this paragraph also, which must not be passed without notice. It is asserted, “that God, having sent his Son to be a propitiation, has told us, that we must rely upon his atoning blood, as the *sole ground of forgiveness.*” I would ask where God has told us,

that “the atoning blood of Christ is the *sole* ground of forgiveness.”

I find the prophet Isaiah, without any reference to any kind of atonement, referring the forgiveness of sin solely to the mercy of God, by which he is ready to accept reformation and a return to virtue. (Is. lv. 7) “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” I find David, in the depth of his sorrow and distress in the consciousness of deep and aggravated guilt, by which he had incurred severe tokens of the divine displeasure; in pouring forth his humble supplications for pardon, placing his hope, in no sacrifice, or atonement, but solely in the mercy of God, and the evidence he should give of true repentance. (Psalm li. 1, 16, 17) “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions.”....“Thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.” I find John the baptist announcing the approach of the kingdom of heaven, with the call to repentance, and intimating nothing else as requisite, preparatory to being the fit subjects of it, but that men should “repent” and “bring forth fruits meet for repentance.” (Matt, iii. 2, 8) I find Jesus Christ himself declaring, (Matt. vi. 14) “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive

you.” And I find it the object of one of his most beautiful and touching parables (Luke xv.) to teach his followers, not that God demands with unrelenting severity full satisfaction “in the atoning blood and perfect righteousness” of another, as the foundation of hope, and ground of forgiveness; but proclaiming the essential mercy and placability of our heavenly Father, and his readiness, not only to receive and restore his penitent children, but to meet with joy the first workings of ingenuous sorrow and a sense of guilt, and the first symptoms of a disposition and wish to return to duty. “When he was yet a great way off, the father had compassion on him, and ran to meet him.” To this compassion and reconciliation he was solely moved, as far as we are informed, by the return of the penitent to a sense of his guilt and his duty; “Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.”....“This, my son, was dead, and is alive again, he was lost and is found.” I find it was the prayers and alms of Cornelius that “came up into remembrance with God,” and that “in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is declared to be accepted with him.” (Acts x. 4, 35.)

These declarations, and numerous others of the same import, must surely have been out of the mind of the writer, when he asserted, in the words I have before quoted, “that God has told us, that we must rely on the atoning blood of his son, as the *sole* ground of forgiveness.

I must take leave also to correct some other expressions, standing in close connexion with this. It is implied in a manner not to be misunderstood, in the paragraph in question, that Unitarians, or those who reject the doctrine of the atonement, "hope for heaven on the footing of their own virtue or good works," (p. 105) that they "think themselves entitled to future happiness on their own account, and rest their hopes of heaven on their own goodness." But is there no alternative between "relying on the atoning blood of the son of God, as the *sole* ground of forgiveness," and relying on our own merit, as the *sole* ground of acceptance? Unitarians, as far as I know, and as far as I can learn from their writings, are equally distant from each of these extremes. Their dependence is wholly on the mercy of God, for they believe that all men, on account of their actual sin, stand in need of mercy, and are wholly incapable of meriting salvation, and claiming it as a matter of right; *that* mercy, they believe, is promised to all who repent: yet that the salvation of the best of men is of grace, and not of debt, what they cannot demand as a right, yet may claim on the ground of the divine promise. A promise, too, not in consideration of satisfaction having been made by the vicarious suffering of a substitute, but originating in free sovereign mercy, and contemplating the change of character implied in repentance, as alone a sufficient reason for this exercise of it.

But though Unitarians, in rejecting the orthodox doctrine of atonement, do not maintain the

opinion attributed to them of the worth and sufficiency of human merit; yet they will certainly not acquiesce in the opinion, so strongly expressed by the author of the Letters, of the entire worthlessness of all the works of righteousness and good dispositions of men. They think such expressions equally inconsistent with truth, and of pernicious tendency. For if human virtue be thought of no value, and of no estimation in the sight of God, the motive for its practice is weakened, if not destroyed. We shall feel little interest in seeking high attainments in that, which is of so little consideration, or is so offensive, that it must not be named in the presence of God. But let me ask, where we are to find the inhibition so confidently asserted. Where “has God taught us, (p. 105) that no works of righteousness which we have done, and no accomplishments or dispositions which we possess, must ever be named in his presence?” I find instances innumerable, in which the reverse of this is expressed in a very clear and unequivocal manner. It is expressed by Paul, when he said, (Rom. ii. 6, 10) “God will render to every man according to his deeds,” and has prepared “glory, and honour, and peace, for every man that worketh good.” And as he thus believed that the good deeds of good men were regarded with approbation and complacency by their Maker: so he was certainly not aware that it was either criminal or improper to *name them in his presence*, when he so exultingly appealed to the course of his past life, and expressed his so strong assurance of the future rewards of virtue; (2 Tim.

iv. 7) "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day."

Such a thought must have been far from the mind of our Saviour, when he directed his disciples to plead their good deeds in their supplications to God for his mercy; (Matt. vi. 12) "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," with the express assurance, that this plea will not be disregarded, "for if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Such a thought seems wholly inconsistent with the declaration, "That the son of man will come in the glory of his Father, and will then reward every man according to his works;" (Matt. xvi. 27) for such a declaration implies, that the works of men are of some account in the mind of Him, who will be their judge, are to be brought into solemn account, and to furnish the grounds of the decisions of the great day.

I would request you also to compare with the assertion under consideration, "that God has taught us that no works of righteousness which we have done, and no accomplishments or dispositions, which we possess, must ever be named in his presence;" the parable of the talents in the xxv. chap. of Matthew, and the representation of the final judgment in a more direct form, which immediately follows it. To whom and upon what ground, in the former case, was the eulogy pronounced, and the reward assigned; "Well done

good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things?" And in the latter, to whom was addressed the welcome, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?" It was in each case the faithful, the humane, and the obedient; and in each case it was the good deeds they had done, "the good dispositions they had manifested, the fidelity with which they had used the talents entrusted to them, the kindness with which they had conducted in the relations in which they were placed, that recommended them to the approbation of the judge, and procured for them the rewards he had to distribute. No allusion is made to a "perfect righteousness, which God has provided for them" to supersede their own personal righteousness, or to render it valueless. Indeed nothing can be more clear, than that if it be of no value, of no account, and not to be named in the presence of God, it is not worth our pursuit, and those are the truly wise, who place their whole dependence on the worthiness of Him, who was righteous for them, and trouble not themselves about the attainment of personal righteousness, which being of no account, can be of no use.

I know that this consequence will be rejected with abhorrence by every serious believer in the doctrine; but I know, too, that it does not follow with the less certainty from it.

LETTER VI.

THE subject to which I would next call your attention is that of *divine influence*; the discussion of which occupies the tenth letter of Dr. Woods. Upon this subject we must keep carefully in mind the distinction between the general doctrine, and that which is peculiar to Calvinism. It is with the latter only that we are concerned as a subject of controversy. To the indistinctness and obscurity, which arises from confounding them together, we owe much of the difficulty, in which this subject is usually involved.

As to the general doctrine of divine influence, I observe, there is no controversy. It is implied in the government of providence, in the acknowledgment of dependence on God, and in every prayer. We may suppose it to be direct and immediate, or only such as reaches us through the instrumentality of those means, by which common effects are usually produced, and thus not distinguishable from the common course of nature. None, I suppose, will deny the possibility of a direct access to the human mind by him, who gave being and all its powers to that mind; and the reality of it will always be a fact, depending like every other fact upon evidence; to be received or rejected as the evidence is perceived to be satisfactory or not.

It will not, I presume, be pretended, that the direct influence of the spirit of God upon the mind is of such a nature, that men can be conscious of it at the

time, so as to distinguish it with certainty from the natural operations of the mind under the influence of external circumstances, and the variety of motives, which are presented to it. There can then be no evidence of it in any particular instance. Our proof of the doctrine must be drawn, not from experience or observation, but solely from those texts of scripture, which are supposed to assert it; and those are to be subjected to just rules of interpretation, in order to ascertain, whether that, and that only, can have been the meaning of the spirit that dictated them.

But without any immediate and direct influence upon the mind, the most important effects may be produced, and changes brought about within us, by a variety of instruments and means, in a manner analogous to that, in which all the great purposes of God are accomplished in the natural and moral world. God is to be acknowledged, his hand is to be seen, the operations of his spirit appear in all the events that take place. Yet not a direct and immediate agency is to be perceived. Instruments and means are employed, but the hand that employs them is unseen. Not seldom a long and circuitous train of them, the connexions and combinations of which it is not in our power to trace, conceals from our view the spirit that guides, and the power that effects the whole.

Nor is it only great events, and the accomplishment of great purposes, that we are to trace to the agency of the spirit of God. It extends not less to the common provisions and constant occurrences of

life ; to the food by which our life is supported, and every provision by which it is made comfortable. These are the gift of God ; not directly, not independently of our exertions, nor without the exertions of others, but by employing them both. God is also the preserver of our lives, and is to be so acknowledged in all the common, as well as the uncommon exigences of our being. Not, however, by immediate acts of power, and a direct agency, is this done, but by the instrumentality of an infinite variety and complicated system of means. Of these means, our own exertions, and the assistance of others, constitute an essential, and a principal part. If they are neglected or withheld, the protecting care of heaven is withheld. We perish. A miracle is not wrought to save him, who takes no care to save himself.

It is in a similar manner, by instruments and means, not by a direct action upon the mind, that the spirit of God produces its great effects in bringing men to repentance, holiness, and virtue. Among these, the most important are the instructions of the holy scriptures. “The word of God (1 Pet. i. 23) is the incorruptible seed, by which men are born again.” Whatever good influences are produced by it, are influences of the spirit of God. The same may be said of Christian institutions, religious assemblies, public worship. The usual course of providence, but especially deviations from it in remarkable events and uncommon phenomena, are means for accomplishing the same purposes. The same also is to be said of the priest-

hood, religious rites, and prophetic office under the former dispensation, and the Christian ministry, and the whole system of written and oral instruction under the present. And those who are thus employed in "converting sinners from the error of their ways, and turning many to righteousness," are represented as "ambassadors of Christ." They are his agents, act in his stead, and, whatever effects are produced, they are the proper fruits of the spirit, and may be considered as the work of that spirit, which projected the great scheme, and which provides for and directs its execution.

Now, were there nothing more direct and immediate, than those influences, which have now been mentioned, there would be enough to answer to most of the language of the Bible on the subject; enough to give a fair and important meaning to all the texts alluded to by Dr. Woods. (p. 107) Those are the instruments and means by which God is constantly "working in men both to will and to do; creating in them a new heart and a new spirit; opening their eyes, drawing, turning, renewing, strengthening them, helping their infirmities."

All that is said to show, that a divine influence upon the mind *may* be consistent with human liberty and proper activity, is to no purpose; for neither the reality of a divine influence, nor its consistency with human liberty and activity is denied. That is not the question in dispute between Unitarians and Calvinists. The question is, whether the doctrine of divine influence, in the peculiar sense in

which it is held by Calvinists, is consistent with human liberty and activity. Nor is it whether they affirm it to be so, but whether it can be shown to be so in reality.

It is in vain that Dr. Woods has blended together and confounded the general doctrine of divine influence, which is held by Christians in common, with the peculiar doctrine of Calvinism respecting special irresistible grace. In vain has he softened down the offensive features of the system, and explained away, or endeavoured to give an unexceptionable meaning to the terms *irresistible*, *overpowering*, *invincible*, used by the Orthodox in relation to the subject. The import of these terms is to be found in the known and avowed doctrines of Calvinism, as they are stated by the most approved writers, and in the Confessions of Faith deliberately drawn up by Councils, and received by churches, which profess to make the Calvinistic faith their standard.

Now, according to these, “all those, whom God hath predestinated to life, *and those only*, he is pleased in his appointed time, effectually to call by his word and spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ.”—“This effectual call is of God’s free and special grace alone; not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened and renewed by the holy spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call.”—“Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, so also are all other

elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.”—“Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved. Much less can men, not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess.”
(Westminster Confession.)

In the above extracts from an instrument of high authority, we have a clear and distinct statement of the orthodox doctrine respecting that influence of the spirit, by which regeneration is effected; and by which alone men can be brought out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, and brought into a state of salvation. It is an influence confined to the elect; granted exclusively to those, who are predestinated to eternal life; granted to them also in a perfectly arbitrary manner; not being on account of any thing foreseen in them, still less on account of any thing already in them; since, until it takes place, they are, according to this scheme, in a state of sin and death, wholly inclined to evil, and indisposed to all good. In those, upon whom this influence is exerted, its effects take place without any agency or cooperation of theirs, for they are wholly passive in it. It is the irresistible and unaided work of the spirit of God, which man can do nothing either to assist or to prevent. In all those, who are the subject of it, it is effectual, and

their regeneration and final salvation are sure. Those to whom this influence is denied, or from whom it is withheld, are not elected; and they can never be regenerated, and consequently their salvation is impossible.

It will be objected, perhaps, that the Orthodox, though they receive in general and substantially the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechism, yet they are not satisfied with them in all respects, and do not subscribe to all their language.

To this objection they have an undoubted right, and Dr. Woods, as their representative, has a right to be judged upon a fair construction of the language, which is used in the Creed of the Theological Institution with which he is connected; and that which he has himself used, as far as he has proceeded in giving a statement and explanation of the doctrine.

But little, I think, will be gained by this toward relieving the doctrine, which he means to maintain, from the charges which are brought against the orthodox system on this point.

In the following extracts from the Creed of the Theological Institution at Andover, I think you will find every important idea expressed or implied, that is to be found in the passages before given from the Westminster Confession. “By nature every man is personally depraved, destitute of holiness, unlike and opposed to God, and previously to the renewing agency of the divine spirit, all his moral actions are adverse to the character and glory of God; being morally incapable of recovering the image of his

Creator, which was lost in Adam, every man is justly exposed to eternal damnation ; so that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God ;God, of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity elected some to everlasting life....no means whatever can change the heart of a sinner, and make it holyregeneration and sanctification are effects of the creating and renewing agency of the holy spirit.”

A cursory reading of Dr. Woods’ Letter on this subject might lead to an impression of something short of the doctrine expressed in these extracts ; but the following sentence, taken in the connexion in which it is used, and in connexion with the other doctrines defended in his Letters, will be found, I think, to express or imply all that is contained in the fuller and more naked and undisguised statement of the Westminster Divines. He is speaking of the meaning of the words *irresistible, overpowering*, as used by orthodox writers, in reference to the divine influence upon the minds of men, when he says (p. 116,) “ What the nature of the disorder is, God knows, and is perfectly able to apply a suitable and efficacious remedy. Now, when this almighty Physician kindly undertakes the cure of our souls, the obstinacy of the disorder yields ; its resistance is taken away : that is to say, the heart is effectually cleansed from its pollution ; love of sin, enmity to God, pride, ingratitude, and selfish, earthly desires are subdued, and man is induced to love God, and obey his commands.” He had before explained the orthodox faith in general by saying (p. 108,) “ We believe, that all virtue or holiness in man is to be

ascribed to the influence of the divine spirit, and that without the effectual agency of the spirit, man would have no holy affections, and perform no acts of holy obedience.”

Now what is the disorder, to which the efficacious remedy is to be applied; and for which, as we shall see, there is no other cure? If we look back to the fifth and sixth letters of Dr. Woods, we shall find it described. It is a state of entire moral corruption, in which every man is born into the world, and in which every man continues until he is renewed by the holy spirit. It is, that men are by nature, that is, as they came first from the hand of the Creator, destitute of holiness; not only so, but subjects of an innate moral depravity, from the first inclined to evil, and while unrenewed, their affections and actions wholly wrong. This is the disease, as to its nature and extent.

Passing to the next letters, seventh and eighth, we are told to whom, and on what ground, a cure is applied. Those, who are to be delivered from this moral bondage, this original state of depravity, to be regenerated, renewed, and saved, are selected from the mass of mankind by a sovereign act of the divine will, without any thing in them, as the reason why they were chosen, rather than the others, who are passed by, left to remain in sin, and to perish for ever.

Being thus elected, thus predestinated to eternal life, they become the subjects of the efficacious, renovating influence, under consideration. And when this “almighty Physician undertakes the cure,

the disorder yields." He cannot be defeated. He cannot be resisted. The fact then is, that all, whom God undertakes to renew, all to whom he applies that effectual influence, which is to subdue the obstinacy of the disorder, are in fact renewed. The love of sin and enmity to God are subdued, and they are brought to the love of God and obedience. And this effect is produced, because he who knows the disorder has known how to apply a remedy ; and has applied one, which must produce a cure.

It follows, then, that this remedy has been applied to *no others*. Those who are not renewed have none of this influence employed upon them ; for if they had, they also would have been renewed, since this influence is efficacious, cannot be resisted, cannot be defeated. Their failure then is for the want of that, which is granted to the others, and without which it was impossible for them to be renewed and saved. "All virtue, all holiness in man is to be ascribed to this efficacious influence ; without it man would have no holy affections, and would perform no acts of holy obedience." (p. 108) Those, then, who have holiness and virtue, have it solely in consequence of their having this influence, which makes them, and cannot fail to make them holy ; and those who have none, but remain unholy, sinful, enemies to God, are destitute of it solely because they have not that influence, which, if they had, could not fail to produce the same effect in them, which it has produced in others. This is but a fair and full, unexaggerated development of the

doctrine, according to Dr. Woods' own statement of it. And whether it be not in every point the same as that which is more clearly stated in the Westminster Confession, every one can judge.

From the doctrine, thus stated, Unitarians, I believe, generally dissent, and maintain a very different opinion on the subject. They dissent, because they think it inconsistent with all the representations we have in the scriptures of the moral character of God, and with the condition of man, as a free and accountable being ;—inconsistent with all those texts, which complain of the sins of men ; because, by the supposition, they act only according to the nature given them, and could not act otherwise without assistance and influence, which are not given to them ;—inconsistent with all the commands of the Gospel to believe, repent, be renewed, and to love God with the whole heart ; since they have no ability to do any part of this, till almighty power is exerted to make them willing ; and it is equally impossible for them not to do it, when this power is exerted ;—inconsistent with the sincerity of all exhortations, encouragements, and promises to the exertions of men, since it supposes them incapable of willing to perform either of these acts ; that it is not of themselves to will any thing good, but they depend for it on an influence, over which they have no control, and which they can do nothing to procure.

Taking this doctrine of an efficacious influence, without which there can be no holy affection, and no act of holy obedience, in connexion with the

whole scheme of doctrine, of which it makes an essential part; we are unable to reconcile it with the paternal character of God, or a righteous government, or to perceive how it can consist with a moral accountability. We are unable to see how the character of God can be vindicated, in creating beings with a nature totally depraved, inclined only to evil, demanding of them holiness, which they are utterly unable to exercise, without an irresistible influence in renewing their hearts, and giving them right dispositions and desires; which influence he grants to some, and denies to others, without any difference in them as the ground or reason of the distinction; and punishing those for not exercising this holiness, to whom he had never granted the assistance, without which it was never possible to them. And we are equally unable to see how those could be accountable for their actions, and the subjects of reasonable blame for their unholy and wicked lives, who were brought into being with hearts totally corrupt, inclined to evil, and evil only, and from whom that efficacious renovating influence has been withheld, without which it was never possible for them to be renewed, to “have any holy affections, or to perform any acts of holy obedience.” The sinner seems upon this scheme to have a perfect apology to offer for his continuing in sin; a complete and satisfactory excuse for every defect and for every crime, however numerous, and however great.

It may be useful to give you a distinct statement of the several points, in which our views upon this

subject are at variance with those, which we find advocated by Dr. Woods. In the first place, a different account of the moral nature of man, and his character and disposition, as he comes from the hand of the Creator, leads to a different opinion correspondent to it, of what is necessary, in order to his becoming holy, and a fit subject of the approbation and favour of the Author of his being. Not seeing in him a nature wholly corrupt, inclined only to evil, and an enemy of God, we perceive no necessity for an almighty, irresistible influence to be employed for the purpose of producing an entire change of nature, opposite inclinations, dispositions, and course of action from those, to which he was directed by his natural constitution. Believing him to possess faculties and affections, equally capable of a right and a wrong direction, neither morally good nor bad by nature, but equally capable of becoming either, we see a moral discipline under which he is placed, adapted to such a nature, such capacities, and such dispositions. The influence and agency of the spirit of God is to be acknowledged in the whole of that discipline which is intended to improve, exalt, and perfect our nature, or to correct any wrong tendencies it may have acquired, and restore it to a right direction, and its previous purity.

In this light are to be viewed all the means and the motives of religion, the institutions of society, the course of providence, events calculated to lead to reflection, to produce seriousness, to give us just views of our nature, condition, duty, prospects,

and hopes ; what we are, and what we ought to be, or are designed to be. Whatever is adapted to subdue the power of sin, to control the bad passions, and to bring us to the love of holiness, and the practice of every virtue. In all this the agency of God is to be acknowledged, as the purposes of God are to be perceived. Not a direct and immediate agency, but such as we see exercised in every thing else through the universe ; God bringing about his ends by a variety of means, and employing in them the subordinate agency and instrumentality of his creatures.

It is by such means, that the spirit of God produces its great moral effects, operates on the minds and hearts of men, reconciles them to God, works in them to will and to do his good pleasure. These influences are distributed to men in very unequal measure, and with infinite variety, as to kind and degree. The impartiality of the common parent is manifested, not in employing the same means with all, and exerting upon all the same influence, but by rendering to all according to the manner in which they act under the influence that is employed upon them, whatever that may be, as to kind and degree ; not in giving to all the same number of talents, and of the same value, for use ; but rendering to all according to the use they make of their talents, whether few or many. And here they find room for the particular and perhaps direct and immediate influence of the spirit upon those, who have made a good use of common privileges, upon the principle, that “to him that *hath*, more shall be

given." More shall be given to him, who has made a good use of that which he has, whether much or little.

Accordingly, Unitarians generally do not reject the notion of a direct and immediate influence of the spirit of God on the human mind. They believe that there may be circumstances of great trial, strong temptation and peculiar difficulty, that call for extraordinary assistance, and that those who have manifested a disposition to make a good use of the ordinary means afforded, will have further aid suited to their exigences, and sufficient by a proper use to answer to their necessities. They suppose also that any extraordinary assistance will be granted only to those, who ask it; that it will be granted to previous good disposition, and a sense of need and dependance. That God will give the holy spirit to them who ask, to them who have already right feelings, are sensible of their weakness and wants, and ask the mercy of God to supply them.

LETTER VII.

I now follow Dr. Woods in calling your attention to a few remarks on *the influence and moral tendency* of the Unitarian compared with the Trinitarian and Calvinistic scheme; premising however the caution, that we must not confound, in our examination, as is too apt to be done, the moral tendency with the effects actually produced; and that even when this error is not committed, too much weight is not to be given to any argument drawn from such a comparison on either side. The reason is, that mankind are less influenced in their conduct by their speculative opinions, and the character of their faith, than we are ready to imagine. Were we purely intellectual beings, governed wholly by reason, there would be no such uncertainty or fallacy in our deductions. We could calculate with certainty how men would act, by knowing what they believed; and on the other hand, what was the character of their faith, by their course of life. But men have also passions and affections, on the one hand; and these not only serve to corrupt and pervert the understanding, but where they fail to do this, they yet are able to overpower the will, so as to lead them to act in opposition to reason and faith;—and on the other hand they have conscience and a moral sense, which, however the understanding may have been blinded, or misled, or perverted, will sometimes preserve them in a right course of conduct, in defiance of an absurd or

a corrupting faith. Still there is a general influence of right views and a pure faith, which is not inconsiderable, nor uncertain.

But when we come to speak of the practical influence of different forms of christian faith, we are to take into our consideration, that there are certain great principles, and those the most fundamental, and influential upon the conduct of life, which the several sects of Christians hold in common. So that great as the difference is between the Unitarian and the Trinitarian faith; on account of the fundamental principles held in common, the difference of their practical tendency is less, probably, than ardent and zealous partizans on either side are ready to imagine. Still, however, it is believed that the difference in several respects cannot be very small.

I am ready to accede to the statement implied in what is said by Dr. Woods, pp. 135—141; that the practical influence of a scheme of faith will bear some proportion to the exhibition it gives, “of a being of infinite perfection as the object of worship; a moral government marked with holiness and righteousness throughout; and the manner in which mercy is exercised toward offenders under this government.”

These are the great points, upon which the Unitarian and Calvinistic doctrine are at variance, and with this difference in view, Dr. Woods endeavours to show the favourable influence of the latter above the former in several respects.

In the first place, with respect to *love to God*.

Now it will be sufficient to remark on this point, that the practical influence of a doctrine will depend, not on the words in which it is expressed, but on the images, which are presented to the mind. However we may speak in words of the perfect justice, benevolence, and mercy of God; our feelings and affections will wholly follow the images in which he is presented to us in the dispositions towards his creatures, and the actions respecting them, which are attributed to him. If those are such, as in any other being would be thought arbitrary, or unjust, or cruel; it will be in vain for us to speak of them in words, that express all the kindness and benignity of the paternal character. The question then will be, not what are the epithets which the two systems apply to God, for they both apply the same; but what are the actions they attribute to him, what the images, under which they present him, what the principles and measures of his government? In these respects enough has before been said to show how the comparison will stand.

Love to Christ, and the value at which we estimate the benefits we receive through him, will depend on our view of the nature and value of those benefits, and not at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being. Unitarian views indeed ascribing to him only what he claimed himself, derived excellences, and a subordinate agency, will not allow us to give him the supremacy of affection, any more than the glory, which was due to God only. It teaches us to love him, to be grateful to him, and

trust in him, as him who was appointed by the Father to execute his purposes of benevolence; and who voluntarily did and suffered all that was necessary to procure for us the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, and eternal life. These are benefits, with which nothing that is done by any other finite being can bear any comparison; they are such as entitle him to affection, and gratitude, and trust; such as we owe, and can owe to no other being, but to "his Father and our Father, his God and our God."

Unitarians are unable indeed to express these sentiments in the language applied by Dr. Woods, p. 145. Such expressions of confidence and trust they can apply to God only. They have but one object of supreme trust and dependence. Were they to make Jesus Christ that object, they would fear to incur the rebuke, which the prophet received from the angel before whom he fell down to worship, "See thou do it not, I am thy fellow-servant, worship God." I am ready therefore to answer to the questions, with which Dr. Woods closes the paragraph which relates to faith in Christ, (p. 155) "Does the Unitarian system teach any thing like this? Does such a faith spring from the principles which it inculcates?" to say no! Most of what is there said, Unitarians would apply to God, but not to Christ. We find nothing in the Bible to justify us in transferring our supreme confidence and trust from God to Christ. It is accordingly the power and wisdom and goodness of *God*, which inspire us with humble and joyful hope; and which put

our hearts at rest respecting the important concerns of the creation. It is to *his* care, that we cheerfully and entirely commit our interests, temporal and eternal. It is in *him* that we trust for all that is necessary to purify our hearts, to guide and protect us during our pilgrimage, to comfort us in affliction, and to give us peace and triumph in the prospect of death. In these great interests and concerns, we cannot consent, and we do not find ourselves taught, to leave our heavenly Father wholly out of the account.

The tendency of any scheme of doctrine to produce *the dread of sin, and a watchful care to obey the divine precepts*, will depend essentially on the view it presents of the rewards and punishments prepared for men in another life, the heaven it provides, and the hell it reveals. Now it is not a little remarkable, that Dr. Woods should claim an advantage, in point of moral influence to the orthodox faith, on the ground that “it contemplates a state of higher perfection and purer and more elevated enjoyment, than the Unitarian describes.” (p. 146) And “that the contemplation of a future reward, *to be obtained by virtuous efforts*, must evidently tend to excite those efforts, very much in proportion to the greatness and excellency of that reward.”

For, besides that the claim of higher perfection and greater purity is without any foundation to justify it; upon what ground can he speak of a future reward to be obtained “*by virtuous efforts?*” The reader has not forgotten, that the sinner has no encouragement to virtuous efforts: “That no

works of righteousness, and no accomplishments or disposition must ever be named in the presence of God....that the only righteousness, which is to be the foundation of hope to men, is a perfect righteousness which God has provided....that we must rely on the atoning blood of Christ as the sole ground of forgiveness.”

Unitarians may be allowed to speak of the motives to virtuous efforts arising from the future rewards to be obtained by them; but with what propriety can the *Calvinist* do this, who believes, that the future condition of men is determined from eternity by an irreversible decree; that by nature they are totally depraved and inclined only to evil; that they remain so till brought out of that state by regeneration, and that regeneration is effected only by the special irresistible influence of the spirit of God, granted only to the elect, and to them, not on account of any disposition or efforts of theirs, which have any tendency to produce or to procure it?

And as to the influence of the different views of future punishment;—it might at first be thought, that the advantage were on the side of those of Calvinism; but there are two considerations that convince me to the contrary. For, in the first place, the punishments, as well as the rewards provided by that scheme, are administered on the principles of a sovereign, unconditional election; the desert of punishment, and consequently the punishment itself, not being subject to any human efforts, but following necessarily the divine decree. Bad men may be expected to avail themselves of

the plea of a moral inability, which, to all practical purposes, is in fact the same as a natural inability, or physical coercion. They may be expected to go on quietly in the course of vice in the persuasion, that if they are not predestinated to holiness and eternal life, no efforts of theirs can avail them; and if they are, God will, in his own time, draw them to him by his effectual, irresistible grace; that nothing, which they can do, till thus regenerated, will have any tendency to bring about this effect, or prepare them for it; on the contrary, that they are as likely, I believe they are sometimes told more likely, to be thus arrested by sovereign grace in the full career of wickedness, than when using endeavours to recover themselves out of the hands of Satan by their own strength. This reasoning, and I cannot see that it does not proceed fairly on the acknowledged principles of Calvinism, must check, instead of encouraging the efforts of wicked men to disentangle themselves from the snare of the devil.

In the second place, we are to look for the efficacy of punishment and its moral influence in preventing sin, or reclaiming men from it, not to the degree of its severity and duration only, but to its certainty, and the evidence brought home distinctly to the minds of men of its certainty. Now, if you endeavour to enhance the fear of punishment, by representations of its severity, or of its duration far disproportioned to what can be the apprehension of the demerit, to which it is to be applied; if you carry it beyond the bounds of probability, that the threat will be executed; if it be such, that to a

reflecting mind it is impossible it should be executed by a just, and good, and merciful being, the Parent of the creation ; you weaken its effects as a motive, you lose in probability, and the firmness of faith, more than you gain in the force of fear. You excite a vague and indistinct terror and dread ; but so mingled with incredulity, arising from a natural and unconquerable sense of the essential kindness and benignity of the Author of nature, as to impair, if not destroy its practical effects.

The surest and highest, the purest and most permanent influence will be that, which arises from such views of the future punishment awaiting the wicked, as are consistent with the character of a Sovereign of the world, who has nothing vindictive in his nature, who adjusts punishment to the degree of demerit, who inflicts it solely for the purpose of promoting holiness, and accomplishing the purposes of his moral government, and only to the degree which these purposes require, and so long as they require it.

From these considerations, I am persuaded that the moral influence of the views of future reward and punishment, maintained generally by Unitarians, is far more certain, and powerful, and salutary, and purifying, than that which is the result of the orthodox views on this subject. And I am persuaded of this by another consideration still. It is this :— the virtue that is produced by cheerful views, and by the contemplation of kindness, benevolence, and mercy in God, is of a more pure, generous, and elevated kind, than that which arises from cold,

austere, and gloomy views, and the contemplation of severe, unrelenting, vindictive justice, and the execution of eternal wrath.

Unitarians believe that the representations in scripture of the future punishment of the impenitent wicked are, for the purpose of impression, highly figurative; but they believe that the figures, like all others used by the sacred writers, are intended to mean something, something of vast moment; that in degree and duration it will be such, as is calculated to produce the highest practical influence. In either respect we can have clear and distinct conceptions only to a certain degree. All beyond that, therefore, can add nothing to the effect.

Dr. Woods proceeds to a comparison of the different influences of the systems in question, as respects *reverence for the word of God*. To show that Unitarians have little reverence for the scriptures, and treat the sacred writings with little respect, he asserts (p. 148,) that, “the grand maxim of the Polish Socinians was, that *reason is our ultimate rule and standard*, and that whatever in religion is not conformed to this, is to be rejected. This maxim, as they understood it, gave them perfect liberty to alter or set aside the obvious sense of the bible, whenever it did not agree with the deductions of reason. Unitarians, in general, have, with more or less decision, adopted the same maxim.” The impression intended here to be made on the reader must be, that “Unitarians, generally, think themselves at perfect liberty to

alter or set aside the obvious sense of the bible, whenever it does not agree with the deductions of reason." Dr. Woods has not seen fit to refer us to his authority for the assertion, as respects the Polish Socinians. This it was his duty to do, in laying against them a charge of so serious a nature, that the reader might be able to judge of its justice. What authority he may be able to produce, I know not. But I presume it must have been derived from a passage, which I shall subjoin, which is found in the Racovian Catechism, which contains a summary of the Socinian doctrines, as drawn up by the celebrated Polish Divines. But if this passage be the only authority to which he will appeal, the charge is made with less care, than were to have been expected of one, so frequent and loud, as he is, in his complaints of the misrepresentations and unfairness of adversaries. The passage is this—

“By what means may the more obscure passages of scripture be understood ?

“By carefully ascertaining in the first instance the scope, and other circumstances, of those passages, in the way which ought to be pursued in the interpretation of the language of all other written compositions. Secondly, by an attentive comparison of them with similar phrases and sentences of less ambiguous meaning. Thirdly, by submitting our interpretation of the more obscure passages to the test of doctrines, which are most clearly inculcated in the scriptures, as to certain first principles ; and admitting nothing that disagrees with these. And, lastly, by rejecting every interpretation, which is

repugnant to right reason, or involves a contradiction.”

The reader is now requested to compare this with the assertion of Dr. Woods, and to judge of the fairness of the representation. The principles of interpretation, as here stated, are such, as no Divine of any school will at the present day call in question. They are such as Dr. Woods himself, I will venture to affirm, continually applies in practice. The difference between him and the Polish Divines is only as to the cases, to which the principle is to be applied, and not as to the principle itself. A thousand instances may be brought, in which Dr. Woods will apply the principle without hesitation. No one will reject with more decision than Dr. Woods the obvious meaning of all those passages, numerous and frequent as they are, in which bodily organs and human passions are ascribed to God. He will exercise his reason in the interpretation of all those passages, which will teach him to set aside, as inadmissible, the plain, obvious, and literal meaning of the words that are used.

Luke xiv. 26. Our Saviour says, “If any man hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” Dr. Woods, I trust, will be slow to insist on the plain and obvious sense of this text, as the true meaning of it. He will doubtless make reason his guide, in its interpretation; and applying his knowledge of oriental idioms. will set aside, as utterly inadmissi-

ble, the literal and obvious meaning of the words ; not suspecting that he is thus exposing himself to the harsh censure from some less enlightened and liberal interpreter of scripture, of taking the liberty to alter or “set aside the obvious sense of the Bible.”

Matt. xxvi. 26, 28. Our Saviour says, “This is my body,—this is my blood ;” and John vi. 53. “Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” Dr. Woods, I suppose, will be as much shocked as any Polish Divine of the whole Socinian school, or any English or German Unitarian, at the idea of adopting the obvious sense of these expressions, as the real meaning of him who uttered them. Nor will he much regard the honest Catholic, who, pressing him with the literal meaning of the words, charges him with perverting the scriptures, and destroying their authority by thus subjecting them to reason in their interpretation. But why thus shocked, and why not adhere to the literal sense with the Catholic, unless the principle be admitted, that reason is to be employed in the interpretation of scripture? Unless calling to its aid all the resources of learning, experience, and common sense, it may authorize us to set aside the obvious sense by supplying us with proof, that, in any given case, the obvious sense cannot be the true sense? This is quite a different thing from such an arbitrary alteration of the word of God, or setting aside its true meaning, as is implied in what Dr. Woods has laid to the charge of the Polish Socinians and modern Unitarians.

But who, let me ask, is the man that manifests the truest reverence for the word of God? Is it he, who indolently and carelessly takes the meaning that first presents itself, however absurd, or contradictory, or even impossible that may be; or he, who, when the meaning that first presents itself is attended with difficulty or doubt, sets himself with patient and laborious study to ascertain, whether it be the meaning intended by the writer; a meaning, which, if it be the word of God, will certainly contain neither an impossibility, a contradiction, nor an absurdity? Is it he, who, without suffering his reason to judge in the case, accepts the meaning, which has been assigned to it in an age of ignorance and superstition, and which ecclesiastical authority has sanctioned, enforced, and perpetuated; or he, who, using his own reason, instead of trusting that of another, applies all the helps that time, and industry, and learning, have furnished, to the discovery of its true meaning?

We not only avow the principle, that reason is to be our guide in the interpretation of scripture, but we declare that we know not a higher act of disrespect and irreverence to the word of God, than he is guilty of, who, rejecting the free use of reason in its interpretation, exposes it to contempt by attributing to it communications, which could not have been made by the same God, who is the Author of our reason. We profess none of that loyalty of faith, which consists in implicit subjection to the creed of a master, which is expressed by degrading and undervaluing our reason, or refusing its use,

and thus becoming prepared to receive absurdities, contradictions, and impossibilities for divine instructions. We think it to be doing no honour to our sacred books to be ready to believe both sides of a direct contradiction, because we think that we find them there. We are satisfied, from the very circumstance that it is a contradiction, or an absurdity, that we must have misunderstood what we there read. We suspend our faith, and apply ourselves with all the aids that reason, learning, industry supply to ascertain the source of our error, and to discover the truth. We believe that Unitarians, by doing this, have done much toward relieving our religion from articles of faith, and the scriptures from opinions attributed to them, which they never taught, which have been a reproach to our religion, and the occasion of its being rejected by many; who would gladly have received all that it has taught, had it been presented to them unmixed with the absurdities and impossibilities, with which they have seen it associated in popular creeds.

In order to estimate the relative tendency of the two systems, as respects *benevolent action*, whether in relation to the common interests of life, or that highest kind of it, which is directed to *the spread of the Gospel, and the salvation of men*, we have only to compare together the views which have been given of the leading doctrines of the two systems; particularly as they relate to the character and dispositions of the Author of nature, his moral government, and the moral nature of man, and his condition, as a state of trial and probation for an

endless being.—To this comparison I confidently invite you, in the assurance that no further illustration is necessary ; and that you cannot fail to be convinced, that no opinions on these subjects can be better calculated, than those which we maintain, to purify and exalt our best affections, and to strengthen the motive to every kind of benevolent exertion.

I am persuaded too, that upon a fair comparison Unitarians will not be found in fact to be behind other Christians in their benevolent exertions. Neither in Europe nor America are they liable to any peculiar reproach for the want of activity and engagedness in promoting humane and benevolent designs. In accomplishing all the great purposes of christian charity, as relates both to this and another life, it is believed they have taken their full share of interest, and have contributed their full share of exertion with their persons and their property.

In proportion to their numbers, no denomination of Christians has furnished more distinguished examples of ardent and disinterested zeal, personal sacrifices, and active exertion in the cause of truth, for the advancement of pure religion, and to promote humane and benevolent objects. None have contributed more largely to some of the most valuable institutions, by which the present period is distinguished. They have taken an active and leading part in promoting the great ends of the Bible Society, and the Peace Society. In each of these they have united together with Christians of all

other denominations. Their exertions and their contributions to the purposes of christian charity have been less the subject of public notice, than equal and similar exertions of others, for reasons which are obvious. They have not been exclusive. They have not been made separately. They have usually been thrown into a common stock. They have had no desire to be distinguished from other Christians,—have been willing to act with them, and wherever the object proposed, and the means for attaining it were such, as they could approve, to unite with others in promoting it. They have done what every one, who regards the great interests of religion more than personal reputation, or the advancement of a party, ought to do. They have exercised their judgment in selecting the objects to which they should lend their aid; not always choosing those, which would excite the admiration of the world, or contribute most to give consideration or power to a sect, or serve to distinguish them from others. They have accordingly been less engaged than some other denominations of Christians, in projecting and supporting foreign missions, which, though the most splendid and imposing, they have thought to be one of the least useful of the achievements of christian charity. For this apparent backwardness and lukewarmness, with which they are sometimes reproached, reasons may be assigned, which are not inconsistent with their taking as deep an interest in the cause of Christianity, and the salvation of their fellow-men, as others; and being ready to

contribute as much, and as cheerfully to extend the knowledge, the influences, and the blessings of our holy faith to all lands and to every people.

The imaginary cases, which Dr. Woods has allowed himself to state, (pp. 154, 155) are wholly gratuitous. He would have spared himself and the reader, had he reflected for a moment, that a Unitarian might invert the picture he has drawn, and it would be entitled to the same consideration as that, which he has presented; that is, to none at all. Were it even in his power, instead of a mere supposition, to produce an example, he must perceive, that it would prove nothing to the purpose, for which it was alleged; since that would not be inconsistent with an opposite example at the same time. Were it a fact, *instead of a mere imagination*, that an individual Unitarian by becoming orthodox had become more zealous and engaged, both in personal religion and in benevolent exertions; and that an individual Calvinist, on the other hand, had lost much of his piety and zeal in becoming a Unitarian; it would not prove that others might not experience an equally salutary change of character in passing from the orthodox to the unitarian faith, —or one equally unfavourable by passing from the unitarian to the orthodox. I may have as good reason for believing that the one event would take place, as Dr. Woods has for the probability of the other. And our opinions are each alike of no value.

I have observed that satisfactory reasons could be assigned, why Unitarians are not seen, as distin-

guished from others in those “remarkable movements,” which in Dr. Woods’ opinion “present the only prospect we have of the salvation of the world.” (p. 153.) Some have had the opinion, in common with intelligent and pious Christians of other denominations, that little hope was to be entertained, of any important benefit from missionary exertions in heathen countries. So little success has attended all endeavours in modern times to extend the bounds of Christendom by missions for the conversion of barbarous pagan nations, that some have been ready to think, that no hope was to be entertained from human exertion, until it should be accompanied, as it was in the apostolic age, with some visible supernatural aid; until those, who are sent forth to carry the Gospel to the heathen, should have the power given them to propose its doctrines with the same authority, and accompanied with the same miraculous evidence, as it was when presented by its primitive teachers. Nor has this opinion been confined to Unitarians.

Others again, who have had more confidence in the efficacy of human exertions, and who believe that Christianity will finally triumph universally through the instrumentality of ordinary means; have yet not been satisfied with the means they have seen employed. They have believed that direct endeavours for the conversion of the heathen to Christianity have been premature; and have been wasted by being ill-timed and misapplied. They have thought that no permanent or extensive good was to be expected, except where the arts and

some of the habits of civilized life, and some of the human literature of Christendom have been first carried, to prepare the way for its reception. They have thought that those, to whom the Gospel is sent, must be prepared to understand it and to feel its value by some previous education; and some have been disgusted, no doubt unjustly, by thinking that they saw, in the *remarkable movements* alluded to above, too much of ostentation and worldly motive; too much that seemed like a call upon an admiring world, “*Come and see my zeal for the Lord.*”

By some it has been thought, that to bring men from the grossness and absurdities of paganism to pure Christianity, the progress must be gradual. The transition is too great, and would give too violent a shock, to take place at once. They must pass to it through several intermediate steps. Light must be thrown in gradually, as they are able to bear it. Christianity is more likely to be received, if it be first introduced in forms mingled with considerable degrees of superstition; with pomp, and form, and ceremony, and even with corruptions of doctrine, which bring it nearer to the faith to which they have been accustomed. Polytheists, for example, it has been supposed, may be more easily reconciled to Christianity, and more ready to embrace it in that form, which leaves them a threefold God, or three Gods, (for they will be able to understand none of those nice distinctions, which exercise the wits of learned theologians and acute metaphysical divines on this subject,) than that, which reduces the object of human worship to a perfect unity.

With such views and such impressions, they have seen their duty, so far as respects exertions in the Christian cause, lying in a different course ; not in sending Unitarian missionaries into barbarous nations, but in studies, and labours at home to purify the Christian doctrine, and restore it to its primitive state. They have believed, if the Unitarian doctrine is to be sent any where abroad, it is to the Jews, and the followers of Mahomet, among whom all attempts to introduce Christianity have been defeated by the corruptions, with which it has been accompanied ; and where better success may be reasonably expected, when it shall appear stripped of those appendages, which constitute their objection to it.

Other reasons also are to be assigned for that appearance of apathy, want of interest and want of exertion, with which Unitarians are sometimes charged. As has been said before, they have never been forward to distinguish themselves as a sect from the rest of their fellow Christians. They have never united their exertions together for the purpose of establishing a separate interest. They have felt no separate interest. They have been willing to remain, as long as they were allowed to remain, mingled together with their fellow Christians, undistinguished from the general mass, throwing in their contributions both of money and of personal exertion with theirs. They have thus contributed to swell the amount of charities and exertions, for which they have had no share of the credit.

To this course of conduct they have been induced in part by the love of peace, a desire to escape odium, and to avoid disturbing the public tranquillity and order. But neither the purity of their motives, nor the peaceful and silent course they have pursued, was sufficient to shield them from reproach. This very quiet and silence were brought against them, as an evidence of lukewarmness, and heartlessness, and indifference to the cause of religion; and their alleged inactivity was attributed to an opinion, that Christianity was of little value, and that men might do well without it.

They have accordingly found, that the reasons for their former course no longer continued; and they have changed that course. They have been convinced, that the state of things called upon them to use those exertions in the maintenance, defence, explanation and propagation of their opinions, from which only a regard for peace had hitherto restrained them; since the same peaceful and silent course could no longer shield them from reproach, nor prevent the mischiefs that they wished to avert. And now what is the consequence of this change of measures? They are reproached with that very activity and zeal, with those very exertions, which but a short time since, it was their reproach not to make.

These exertions are accompanied with the happiest effects. They have awakened a spirit of inquiry, which will go on and increase. They appear not yet, and it may be long before it will

be proper that they should appear, in some of those particular things, in which they are reproached with being deficient. They have much to do at home, before it will be in their power advantageously to the Christian cause to extend their exertions abroad. They have to awaken a livelier interest in the cause of Christianity and the progress of rational and just views of its doctrines in their own body; to excite a deeper tone of religious feeling in that part of the Christian community, to which they have access, whether from the press or the pulpit; to engage the wealthy to cooperate with them, by bringing home to their feelings, the great good they have it in their power to do, and to their consciences the solemn responsibility connected with every talent, and every opportunity and power of doing good. They have to excite literary men to give more of their studies and labours, and more of their zeal to the promotion of so great and desirable a purpose. They have to induce enlightened and liberal men, who by their professions or public stations have an opportunity of exciting a salutary influence in the community, to a more open and manly avowal of their opinions, and to unite with them in all fair, and moderate, and temperate measures, with the Christian spirit, yet with ardour and lively interest, to promote and extend them.

It is not doubted that throughout our country, a very large proportion of those men, who for their talents, and learning, and virtues have the most influence in the community, and have it in their power to do the most toward giving a right direction

to the public feeling or public sentiment, are dissatisfied with the Calvinistic and Trinitarian form, in which they have had religion presented to them; and if they have been led by circumstances to free inquiry on the subject, are Unitarians. But various causes prevent them from making a public avowal of their opinions. Among these, not the least is, usually, an unwillingness to encounter opposition and obloquy, and the loss of confidence, and of the power of being useful. It is among the encouraging prospects of the present time, that the reasons for reserve are ceasing to operate with all the force they have done in times past, and that the reluctance to an undisguised avowal of Unitarian sentiments is in a great degree overcome.

It is asked, by what motives Unitarians are influenced in their endeavours to disseminate their peculiar opinions. The answer is easy, and I think such as to justify at least all the zeal and earnestness they have yet discovered in the defence or the publication of their views of Christianity. They are earnest and active then, because they have a firm faith in the truth and the importance of their opinions, and that it is their duty to bear their testimony to the truth, and to leave no proper means untried, to cause it to be attended to, and understood, and respected. And they are fully persuaded, that the course they are pursuing in this respect is in fact attended with very salutary effects. One, to which they attach no small importance, is the well known fact, that, wherever the unitarian doctrine prevails, and the rational views with which it

is accompanied, a very important portion of society, the most elevated, intelligent, and enlightened become serious and practical Christians, who, in catholic countries, or where Calvinism prevails, are oftener unbelievers and sceptics, and treat Christianity with neglect at least, if not with disrespect.

The reason of this is obvious. Men of cultivated minds and enlarged views are often so engaged in the business, and engrossed by the interests and cares of the world, as to depend for their views of Christianity wholly on what they hear from the pulpit, and what they find in the popular creeds and catechisms, which, they take for granted, exhibit fairly to them the Christian doctrine. Finding the system, as it is thus presented to them, such as their understanding and moral feelings will not admit of their receiving, they reject Christianity without further examination; not thinking themselves bound to inquire into the evidence of a system of faith, which carries in itself, in their view, intrinsic marks of incredibility. When to persons of this character and in such circumstances unitarian views of the christian doctrine are afterward presented, their attention is arrested by their reasonableness, and their consistency with what the light of nature teaches of the character and government of God. They are induced to examine the claims of a religion to their faith, which is presented to them in a form, so agreeable to the reason God has given them, and to the natural notions that arise from what they see of his character and dispositions in the government of the world; and the effect of examination is a firm

conviction, that the new views, in which Christianity has been presented to them, are the result of a fair and just interpretation of the scriptures in which it is contained ; and that the religion itself is as well supported by evidence, as it is worthy of the faith, and approbation, and affection of a wise and enlightened mind.

The time has been, within the memory of men now living, when in that class of society now alluded to, the most elevated, enlightened, and influential in giving the tone to the public sentiment, and the direction to the manners and practice of society, infidelity and contempt for religion were far more prevalent in this vicinity, than they are at the present day ; and at that time the religion which issued from the pulpit, and which was the only faith that reached them, was Trinitarian and Calvinistic. I hazard nothing in asserting, that in proportion as those views of religion, which are generally adopted by Unitarians, have become prevalent, infidelity and contempt of religion have become less and less frequent ; and our most enlightened men, with scarcely any exception, are among its most efficient friends and serious and practical professors.

I have now said all that I meant to say upon the doctrine of Christianity, as held by Unitarians, its comparison with the Trinitarian and Calvinistic faith, and its tendency and moral influence. I have endeavoured to express myself with the most perfect freedom and plainness ; yet with the decorum and respect due to the solemn and interesting subjects which have come before me, to the author of the

book which I have had so much occasion to notice, and to those fellow-christians, who may dissent from the opinions and views which I have expressed.

For the declaration made with emphasis by Dr. Woods at the close of his book, “that in his honest and serious apprehension, the Unitarian system *is indeed another Gospel*,” I was not wholly prepared; though it is one which we have before been accustomed to hear in different forms from other sources, for which we have less reason to feel respect. We are consoled, however, with the thought, that an excommunication, though pronounced *ex cathedra*, carries not with it now the terror, which it once did. Christians will venture to judge between the rival systems, and will take the liberty to decide, each one for himself, whether the gospel, as it is held by Unitarians, or as it is held by Trinitarians and Calvinists, be *the Gospel of Christ*.

ERRATUM.

P. 47, l. 3, for “by Christ,” read in Christ.

A

REPLY

TO

DR WARE'S LETTERS

TO

TRINITARIANS AND CALVINISTS

BY LEONARD WOODS, D. D.

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INTRODUCTION.

WHEN I wrote the Letters to Unitarians, I meant to treat the subjects of the present controversy so explicitly, and to extend my remarks to such a length, that I might, in any case, have a full apology for declining a rejoinder. I then had, and have still many and weighty reasons against being a party in any religious controversy. In the first place, it is not the way in which I have generally supposed I could best labour for the promotion of the cause of Christ. The duties imposed upon me by my office are sufficiently extensive and important, to occupy all my time and my powers of action; sufficiently diversified, abundantly to satisfy my love of variety; and so congenial to my inclinations, as to afford all the enjoyment which can be expected by any man, oppressed with the cares of public life and the imperfections of human nature. But for my reluctance to engage in controversy, I have had another reason. In the regular course of my official duty, though I have much to do with all the controverted subjects of religion, and though I never impose any restraints upon the freedom of discussion, but those of decency; it has still cost me no effort, to keep my mind free from agitation. But as to public religious controversy, I have observed its unhappy influence upon so many men of distinguished excellence; I have seen that it has so often marred the best natural temper; that it has so often occasioned the offensive boast of victory, or that which is no less offensive, the sullen mortification of defeat; that

it has so often injured the beauty of men's characters, cooled the ardour of their piety, and detracted much from their comfort, or at least from the comfort of their friends, that I have earnestly wished to avoid the danger. I have wished also, if possible, to avoid the sufferings of controversy; the unhappiness of being exposed to the charge of bigotry or party spirit, of ambition or meanness, of arrogance or imbecility; the unhappiness of being reproached or despised by my opposers, or the greater unhappiness of feeling any disposition to reproach or despise them. Besides, I have thought, that, at least so far as I was concerned, truth and piety might be more successfully promoted by more silent, gentle means. I have feared that an attempt even to advance the cause of pure religion, in a controversial way, would kindle a fire which would endanger the most precious interests of the church, and which Christians, possessing the strongest attachment to Christ, and blessed with the largest portion of his spirit, might in vain try to extinguish.

These and other like considerations may seem trifling to men on both sides, who cherish a disputatious spirit, who pant for the noise and strife of controversy, and who have never soberly considered the evils likely to result from it. But in my mind, such considerations, as I have suggested, are of no ordinary importance; and for a long time they produced in me a resolution against controversy, which, till of late, I thought could never be overcome. But as it is, I must now go forward, hoping to derive benefit to myself from the kind and amiable temper of my opponent, and no less benefit to my cause, from the frankness with which he declares his opinions, and the zeal with which he attacks mine.

I do not come to this task with an expectation of producing, generally, any material change in the views of confirmed Unitarians. I should be a poor proficient in the science of the human mind, could I not foresee, that my arguments will be likely to appear as inconclusive to them, as theirs do to me. My age and experience have somewhat cooled the ardour of feeling, which might once have led me to indulge different expectations, and to think that my opponents and all others might easily be convinced of the truth of my opinions. I have lived long enough to learn, that arguments have a different weight in the judgment of different men, and that something besides argument is concerned in controversy. In the present case, the facts, which are the principles of reasoning, are different; just as might be the case with two philosophers, who, making use of instruments not agreeing together, or using the same instruments in very different ways, might come to a different judgment respecting the phenomena of light, or any other material substance; in consequence of which, both of them might reason correctly on the ground of what they had discovered to be the properties of that substance, and yet be conducted to different and opposite conclusions. In the controversy respecting depravity, the facts, which are admitted by the two parties, as the foundations of their respective systems, are not the same; nor is the method of ascertaining what facts really exist, the same. Now it is very natural for us to suppose, that the habits of thinking, and feeling, and judging, which have led men to embrace the Unitarian creed in regard to this subject, will give them but a poor opinion of our arguments. If we were exactly in their case, we presume our judgment would be like theirs. Did not our own experience,—did not a faithful comparison of our heart and

life with the rule of duty, fully convince us of the fact, that our own nature is the subject of an original, deep-rooted corruption; no external evidence could easily induce us to believe the fact in relation to others.

It may be asked then, what good I hope to accomplish by pursuing this controversy? One good purpose, perhaps the principal one, which I hope to effect, is, to satisfy the serious friends of orthodoxy, that, after all the attacks which have been made upon their religion, it rests on an immoveable basis; that it has as much solid argument to support it, as they have ever supposed. I hope also to convince those who, not being yet settled in their belief, are candidly inquiring, *what is truth*, that the system of orthodoxy, at least in its principal features, so far corresponds with the word of God, and with sound experience, and that its moral tendency is in so high a degree salutary, that they ought to make many a serious pause, before they reject it. And finally, I should be glad to do something towards convincing candid Unitarians of that, which has indeed always been sufficiently proved, that those who embrace the scheme of orthodoxy, do not necessarily resign all claims to manly strength of understanding, nor show themselves enemies to freedom and fairness of investigation.

There are many passages, of a taking plausibility, in Dr. Ware's Letters, against which a charge of incorrectness might easily be sustained, but which, as they relate to matters of small consequence in the controversy, I shall pass over with little or no attention. I say this to guard my readers against supposing, that my silence on any part of the Letters is to be interpreted as a sign of approbation. My purpose is to fix on the main points of the controversy, and to dwell upon those arguments, on which all who will bring themselves to patient

and thorough inquiry, must lay the greatest stress. If we can defend the general principles which have governed our reasoning; if we can, by legitimate arguments, support the chief doctrines of our system, and vindicate them from the chief objections of opposers, the work is done. Let the strength of the foundation be made to appear, and we shall not doubt the building will stand. And as to the scheme which we feel it to be our duty to oppose,—if we can succeed in taking away its foundation, we shall deem it sufficient, without either making a violent attack upon the superstructure to hasten its fall, or standing by to exult in its ruins.



CHAPTER I.

TO PREPARE the way for an useful investigation of the subject of human depravity, I shall present in one connected view the opinions which Dr. Ware has advanced in different parts of his third Letter.

“I insist,” he says, “that the account usually given of human wickedness is exaggerated.”—“Men are not the mere brutes and fiends it would make them. ‘There is much good as well as evil in the human character;’” (meaning the natural character.) “As much as there is of wickedness and vice, there is far more of virtue and goodness.”—“If we take a fair and full view, we shall find that in by far the greatest part of human beings, the just, and kind, and benevolent dispositions prevail beyond measure over the opposite; and that even in the worst men, good feelings and principles are predominant, and they probably perform in the course of their lives many more good than bad actions; as the greatest liar does, by the constitution of his nature, doubtless speak many

truths to every lie he utters.”—“Man is by nature—or as he is born into the world, innocent and pure; free from all moral corruption, as well as destitute of all positive holiness; and until he has formed a character either good or bad, an object of the divine complacency and favour.”—“He is by nature no more inclined to vice than to virtue.”—“In early life, we see no proofs of depravity, of malignity, of inclination to evil in preference to good.”—“What I have stated I am persuaded is the general character, until the disposition and tendency of nature has been changed by education, example, and circumstances.”—“I know not a single mark of early depravity common to children in general, which may not be fairly traced to causes which imply no degree of depravity, and no fault of character or disposition.”—“No man, I am persuaded, was ever led by personal observation and experience to the thought of an original depravity of human nature.”—“Young children,” (he means in their natural state,) “are what men are to become by regeneration.”—“Those now born into the world in christian lands, are, as the Ephesians were after their conversion to Christianity, *saved by the grace of God, quickened, raised from the dead, made nigh by the blood of Christ, fellow citizens with the saints, of the household of God.*”—“All this language was applied to the Ephesians universally after their conversion, and all of it is as applicable universally now to those who are Christians by birth, as distinguished from those who are heathen by birth.”

The scheme more briefly is this. Man is born into the world free from corruption of nature, or propensity to evil. We see no proofs of depravity in childhood, no proofs of inclination to evil rather than good. All who are now born into the world in Christian

lands are saints, saved by grace, as the converted Ephesians were. Every mark of depravity common to children may be traced to causes which imply no depravity at all. Even in the worst of men good feelings and principles are predominant.

It may be useless for me to stop here to express the astonishment that good men must generally feel, at such a description of the human character. For myself, while I have the Bible, and my own heart, and the world before my eyes, it is as impossible for me to admit the truth of the system above stated, as the truth of a system of philosophy which denies the principle of gravitation; and for the same reason.

Dr. Ware says he is persuaded, that "no man was ever led by personal observation or experience to the thought of an original depravity of human nature." I have no doubt he has such a persuasion; but it is a little remarkable that he should have it, when by conversing either with authors, or with living Christians, he might so easily have discovered its contrariety to fact. Thousands and millions of enlightened Christians have declared, and multitudes of them in writing, that personal observation and experience have led them to believe in the moral depravation of man, or in his native propensity to evil. They have said it when they have had no motive to say it, but the strength of their own conviction. They have said it in their most solemn devotions; and they have said it most frequently, and felt it most deeply, when *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ has shone in their hearts* with the greatest clearness. And I will add what has been remarked by many writers, that those who have most carefully studied human nature, even among pagans, have acknowledged, and that in very strong terms, an inward

depravation and corruption of man, rendering the mind averse to good and inclining it to evil.

In reflecting on this subject, I am led to inquire how it can be accounted for, that any man of sober judgment should entertain such views respecting the human character. Now so far as reasoning is concerned, I am satisfied, that the principal error in the scheme of Unitarians and Pelagians generally, lies in this, that *they judge of man's character by a wrong standard*. This controversy respects man, not as an animal or intellectual being, nor as a member of domestic or civil society, but as a subject of God's moral government. Viewed in this light, he is required to conform to the *moral law*. This is the only rule of duty, the only standard of right feeling and right action. If we would know whether any subject of God's moral government is holy or sinful, or in what degree he is so, we must compare his moral character with the divine law. So far as he is conformed to that law, he is holy. So far as he is not conformed, he is sinful. And as we are taught, that love to God and love to man is the sum of what the law requires; it is perfectly safe, and often very convenient in our reasoning, to make use of this summary of the law, as standing for the whole. This then being our rule of judgment, what will be our conclusion respecting the moral character exhibited by human beings in early life? Let the inquiry relate to the first character they exhibit, *as moral agents*; so that we may not unnecessarily perplex the subject, at the outset, by looking after the moral affections or actions of men, either before they are moral agents, or before the divine commands can be applied to them. Is it the general character of men, that, as soon as the divine law is declared to them, they are disposed cordially to obey it? We will not so shape

the inquiry, that it shall relate merely to exemption from sin. The real question is, whether holy love to God and man is the first moral affection which human beings generally exercise, after they become moral agents and are expressly informed what God requires of them. Keeping this point distinctly in view, let us now proceed to examine

The reasoning by which Dr. Ware supports his opinion respecting the human character.

The reasoning of Dr. Ware on this subject is indeed plausible, being founded upon those natural qualities of the youthful mind, which are honoured with the names of virtue, and universally regarded as amiable and useful. He says, “innocence, simplicity, and purity are the characteristics of early life.”—“Veracity, kindness, goodwill, flow from the natural feelings.”—“How early does the infant discover affection, attachment, gratitude to those from whom it receives kindness.” These are charming names, and I am very sensible that charming qualities of human nature are denoted by them. And charming too are the complexion and features of a beautiful child, the sprightliness of its temper, and the activity of its limbs. But do any or all of these constitute *conformity to the moral law*? Do they render a child *holy*?

But Dr. Ware, with a view to consistency, will probably say, he does not mention the lovely qualities which are characteristic of early life, as a proof of *moral virtue*, or *holiness*, because the infant child has not yet actually formed a character, either good or bad, and so is neither holy nor unholy. But although this would have an appearance of consistency in one respect, it would, in another respect, involve the writer in a great inconsistency. For if this is his meaning, how is it possible to

make his remarks, p. 26, apposite to his subject? His subject is man's *moral character*. He had just before been charging the Orthodox with giving an exaggerated description of *human nature*, inasmuch as they do not take proper notice of what is "virtuous, and kind, and amiable, and good;"—words all denoting moral qualities. After thus distinctly bringing forward his subject, that is, human nature in respect to its moral qualities, he says, "our most correct ideas of human nature will be drawn from the characteristics of infancy, and the earliest indications of disposition, tendency, and *character* in the infant mind." Forgetting what he ventures to say in other places, that men by their natural birth receive no moral character, and have none, before they are born again, he here speaks of the indications of *character* in the infant mind.

Let us give this language a fair examination, and see whether any sense whatever that can be put upon it, will make the writer who uses it consistent with himself.—When he speaks of the indications of *character* in the infant mind, I ask what character is meant? Is it the character which belongs to man, as a moral agent, or in relation to a moral law? Then it would seem the infant mind has such a character, and that character must be either good or bad, holy or unholy; which would be contrary to Dr. Ware's statements, p. 20, 41, and elsewhere. But if he does not mean the moral character of man, or his character as a moral agent; then his observations, p. 26, do not relate at all to the subject of controversy. For the only point at issue is, what is man's nature or character, as a moral agent, and in relation to a moral law? I ask then again, has the infant really a character in this respect? If so, that character must be either holy or unholy; and then

what becomes of Dr. Ware's favourite position, that infants are both free from moral corruption and destitute of holiness, and that they have no moral character, either good or bad, before they are born again? On the other hand, if it is a fact, as he maintains, that infants have no moral character; then the characteristics of infancy which he enumerates, p. 26, can nowise relate to moral character, i. e. they can nowise relate to the subject under consideration; and so far as this subject is concerned, he might just as well mention a fair complexion or beautiful countenance, as "innocence, simplicity, and purity."

It may, however, be said, that "the characteristics of infancy, and the earliest indications of disposition, tendency, and *character* in the infant mind," though the infant mind does not yet possess a *moral* character, may still help us in some other way, to "*correct* ideas of human nature." Dr. Ware will not say that these characteristics of infancy prove the nature of man to be holy by proving that holiness really belongs to the infant's mind; for, as remarked before, this would be contrary to one of his main points. How then does his reasoning stand? Does he mean to say, that those things, which are characteristics of human nature at a period when moral character does not exist, that is, that those properties of infancy which cannot be indications of any moral character *at the time*, are true indications of that moral character which subsequently exists? But this again would involve his reasoning in difficulty, because, according to his views, mankind after becoming moral agents, are not thus innocent, and pure, and free from inclination to sin.

But as I wish to do full justice to my opponent, and as far possible to give to his words the very sense which he meant to express, I must say, that his language and

his reasoning plainly imply, that human beings, at that period of infancy to which he refers, *do really possess a moral character*. What he has written in different places, taken together, evidently show that this is his opinion. He says, p. 26, “we draw our most correct ideas of *human nature* from the characteristics of *infancy*, and from the earliest indications of *disposition*, tendency, and *character* in the infant mind.” Among these characteristics of infancy, he mentions “innocence, simplicity, and purity;” which he doubtless means we should understand to be moral qualities. And a little below, after speaking of an infant as an object of interest to those about it, he asks, “Would it be so if it appeared to possess nothing good, and no tendency to good?” evidently implying that it does possess something good. In another place, he represents men as becoming “reasonable, *accountable* beings, by their natural birth.” If they are accountable beings, they are moral agents, and must have moral dispositions. He says too, still more plainly, p. 31, that young children have a “good disposition;” “that they are what men become by regeneration;” that they “are objects of the Saviour’s complacency,” and “proper objects of imitation.” From these very plain, unequivocal declarations of Dr. Ware I cannot but infer what his real opinion is, namely, that by their natural birth men become moral, accountable beings, and have a moral disposition or character which is good; good or holy in such a sense, as to entitle them to the Saviour’s complacency, and make them heirs of his kingdom. I am compelled to think this is the position he would maintain, though in several places he seems to slide away to another side of his system, and asserts that men by nature have no moral character, and are equally distant from holiness and from sin, and

equally without any natural tendency to one or the other.

Before proceeding to a direct examination of Dr. Ware's arguments in support of his opinion respecting human nature, I will make one remark. If my position, that men are by their birth *morally corrupt* is thought to be absurd, on account of their being incapable, at first, of possessing any character, good or bad; the position of Dr. Ware is in this respect equally absurd. For if men, as they come into the world,—if infants, are capable of being "*pure*," they are capable of being *impure*. If they are capable of having a good disposition, or "tendency to good," they are capable of a bad disposition, or a tendency to evil. If they are capable of such a character as will render them "objects of divine complacency," they are equally capable of such a character as will render them objects of divine displeasure. It is Dr. Ware's opinion, p. 21, that man is by nature as capable of vice as of virtue. I should hope therefore that neither he, nor any one who embraces his opinions, will ever again allege the *incapacity* of infants to be the subjects of moral corruption, as an objection against the doctrine of native depravity.

When I say that many plain and unequivocal declarations of Dr. Ware and the general current of his reasoning prove that he believes man by nature the subject of real virtue or holiness, I would not willingly oblige myself to show, that he has nowhere written any thing contrary to this. For in commenting on John iii. 3, 6, he does indeed represent that "men receive by their natural birth only human nature; that they receive no moral character, but only the faculties and powers in the exercise of which a moral character is to be formed; and that the formation of a moral character, (he

does not say whether good or bad,) introduces them into a new state of being, and may be called a new birth; and in p. 42, he seems to think the implication of the passage is, "that men do not possess by birth that character of personal holiness, which is necessary to their being Christians." It may be easier for Dr. Ware, than for me, to reconcile these representations with the passages to which I have before referred.

Let us now see, by what particular arguments he supports the opinion, that men are by nature not only free from moral corruption, but inclined to virtue.

He first argues from *the innocence, simplicity, and purity of early life, and from the veracity, kindness, good-will, attachment and gratitude, which flow from the natural feelings of children.*

To guard against being imposed upon by names, let us here inquire what is that innocence, simplicity, purity, &c. which are in reality characteristic of the infant mind?

The word *innocence*, when applied to men in regard to moral character, signifies freedom from moral defilement, or guilt. But when applied to other things, it commonly denotes that they are harmless, or free from a tendency to do hurt. In this sense a dove and a lamb are said to be innocent. If I mistake not, this is generally the meaning of the word, when applied to infant children. It is in regard to this kind of innocence, that they are so often compared to lambs and doves.

Simplicity, when applied to rational beings, properly signifies artlessness, freedom from cunning or deceit. Infants and young children may have simplicity in this sense, merely because they are incapable of subtilty or cunning, or because they have had no temptation to learn any deceitful arts.

In what sense Dr. Ware uses the word *purity* it is

not easy for me to determine. If he uses it in that high moral sense, in which our Saviour uses it when he says, "blessed are the pure in heart," and so means to assert as a general truth, that moral purity or holiness is a characteristic of early life; I would not repeat in my reply what has already been suggested, as to the contrariety of this to other representations in his Letters; but would direct the reader's attention a moment to the shape which his reasoning assumes.

He undertakes to prove the truth of a disputed doctrine respecting human nature; i. e. that man is not the subject of innate corruption; and as a proof of this, he urges the purity which characterizes early life. Now if he uses the word *purity* as synonymous with *holiness*, he is chargeable with begging the question. But if he uses the word in an inferior sense, not including moral purity or holiness; then how can it prove that man is not morally depraved? But it may be he uses the word merely to denote freedom from particular forms of vice which show themselves in the world; or he may use it comparatively, and mean only that children are not yet tainted with those gross iniquities to which they are afterwards exposed. To either of these views of the subject we should fully agree.

And what are we to suppose Dr. Ware means by *the attachment, the kindness, the gratitude*, which show themselves in little children? Does he mean any thing which has the nature of moral virtue or holiness? If so, his reasoning is faulty in the same way as before. But if he does not consider the attachment and gratitude, which are characteristics of infancy, and which, according to several passages in his Letters, precede the formation of any moral character, as having a moral nature; then I think he must regard them much in the same

light, as he would those natural instincts, appetites and passions, the existence and exercise of which are not at all connected with moral character, and imply neither holiness nor sin.

We see now how the argument stands, and are prepared to examine how forcible and conclusive it is. The abovementioned characteristics of the infant mind are insisted upon, as a proof, and a most important proof, that man is by nature free from moral depravity. I maintain, that they do not prove it.

I say, first, what several passages in Dr. Ware's Letters will bear me out in saying, that none of "the characteristics of infancy," none of those things which "flow from the natural feelings," can, in reality, be of the nature of moral virtue, and so none of them can make known the moral disposition or character of the mind, as the fruit makes known the tree. Take the innocence, the attachment, the gratitude, and other obvious characteristics of little children, just as they are. What do they prove, as to moral character? Nothing. They neither prove the existence of holiness, nor freedom from sin. If you would have conclusive evidence of this, look at the numberless instances, in which characteristics of the same nature, and often higher in degree, are found actually to exist in those, who live in the violation of the first and great command. Do we not often find youth, especially in well educated families, possessed of all those amiable qualities, which Dr. Ware mentions as proofs of freedom from moral evil? Do we not see a sweetness and tenderness of disposition, which keep them at the greatest distance from doing any thing to injure a fellow creature? And do we not see too either a power of conscience, or a delicate sense of what is decent and honourable, which leads them to abhor every

open vice? This is called *innocence*. But is not innocence of this sort often associated with forgetfulness of God, and the neglect of all the peculiar duties of religion? Let multitudes, blooming in all the attractive loveliness of youthful innocence, measure their moral affections and character by that holy law, in which God asserts his rightful claims, requiring them to love him with all the heart, and to worship him in spirit and in truth; and will they not find themselves guilty before God, and be compelled to say, as the Apostle did, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died?" In the lamentable instances of this kind, which constantly occur, we see that what is called *youthful innocence* actually consists with that alienation of heart from God, which is treated in the Scriptures, as the greatest of sins, and indeed as the foundation and sum of all moral evil. How then can Dr. Ware make it an evidence of freedom from moral evil? If it may consist with moral evil in youth, why not in childhood? But the argument is stronger than this. If what is called innocence actually consists with a high degree of moral evil in youth; much more may it consist with a smaller degree of the same in early childhood.

I reason in the same way respecting the other characteristics of early life, mentioned by Dr. Ware. How does the "simplicity" or artlessness of children prove, that they are not morally corrupt? They may be simple, unsuspecting, and artless, because they have had no opportunities or temptations to become otherwise. They may have what is sometimes denominated *purity*; that is, they may be free from the contamination of those vices, which are stamped with a visible and disgraceful grossness, because they have not been expos-

ed to that contamination, or because a regard to reputation, or the power of conscience has been a salutary restraint; and yet divine truth may decide, that "they have not the love of God in their hearts." Nor is *that disposition to speak the truth*, which appears in children, any proof that they are free from depravity. They may speak the truth, because it is the way to obtain the gratification of their desires. When they are hungry, they may speak the truth, and say, we are hungry, because it is the way to get food. Whatever may be their wants, they may speak the truth, and tell their friends what their wants are, because this is the way to get a supply. We well know that honesty is the best policy; and children may begin to learn this, while very young. But does speaking the truth from any such principle prove that they are not depraved? Dr. Ware supplies us with a very satisfactory answer. "The greatest liar," he says, "does by the constitution of his nature, doubtless speak many truths to every lie he utters." He is *the greatest liar*; and this surely is saying that he is the subject of no ordinary degree of depravity. But in perfect consistency with all this depravity, he finds motives to speak *many truths* to one lie. Since then there are so many motives to speak the truth in those who are morally depraved, and since a prevailing habit of speaking the truth does, in the case mentioned by Dr. Ware, consist with that shocking degree of depravity which is found in *the greatest liar*; it is perfectly plain, that merely speaking the truth can never prove either men or children to be free from depravity.

"How early," says Dr. Ware, "does the infant discover affection, attachment, and gratitude to those from whom it receives kindness!" If, as he thinks, this is an evidence of freedom from sin in children, why not in

men? But on this point, he who knew what was in man, guards us against mistake. “If ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same?”

The amiable characteristics of early life are made so important a topic of argument by Dr. Ware, that it may be proper to follow him a little farther. What he says p. 28, as to the original freedom of children from cruelty, their tenderness, compassion &c. is, I doubt not, generally correct. I allow, that children do not naturally take pleasure in giving pain to insects, or any other sensitive beings, and that, when they do mischief, it is not generally from the love of mischief, as the real motive, but from the love of action and strong excitement, or some other similar cause. But what does this prove, as to the existence of depravity? Men, as well as children, and men who live without God, who disregard the obligations of his law, and exhibit a character at the utmost distance from holiness, may still have no disposition to cruelty, but may be tender, sympathetic, pitiful. But can this prove that they are free from moral depravity? No more than speaking the truth can prove “the greatest liar” free from depravity.

In regard to all the particulars above noticed, the plain truth is, that, in order to qualify human beings for the state in which they are destined to live, and for the relations they are to sustain, God has given them a variety of natural appetites and natural affections, which, though capable of being made auxiliaries to virtue, and conducive to the ends of benevolence, have not, in themselves, any thing of the nature of holiness, but are perfectly distinct from it, and may be cultivated to a high degree in those, in whom moral principle is prostrated. The infidel may have them all; and so may the man

who idolizes the world; and so may the profane swearer, the duellist, and the ambitious conqueror. This is the case with all the lovely characteristics of early life, which Dr. Ware makes so prominent in his delineation of human nature. Be it so that his delineation is just,—that human beings in early life, and in many instances afterwards, do possess all the sweetness of the natural affections. It does not follow from this, that either children or men are free from moral depravity. The natural affections, which in a considerable degree show themselves even in irrational animals, are indeed not only blameless, but amiable and useful; and forever to be admired is the wisdom and the goodness of that Being, who has endued us with them. And any one who should assert these natural affections to be any part of human depravity, or any indication of a depraved nature, would mistake as grossly, as if he should assert a man's senses or limbs to be a part of depravity. But no less obvious is the mistake of the man, who considers them as a proof of freedom from depravity. They prove neither the one nor the other. Their existence and operation, simply considered, are never made the subject of divine legislation; though the divine law directs how they are to be used, and to what ends they are to be made subservient. It is only in this last view, that they assume a moral aspect.

The conclusion, to which I wish to conduct my readers on this subject, results directly, it will be observed, from a matter of fact, with which we are familiarly acquainted. We know by experience and observation, that the natural affections, sympathies and instincts of man really exist and are active in those who are morally depraved. And although Scripture and observation unite in teaching, that there are some forms or degrees

of moral evil, which generally destroy natural affection; it is obvious that other forms and degrees of it do not. From the actual appearances of human nature, no one could ever suppose, that the amiable qualities which have been mentioned as belonging to men, whether old or young, have any necessary connexion with moral character. And certainly no one can suppose this, who makes the divine law the standard of moral character. What is called natural affection neither constitutes that which the law requires, nor shows the absence of that which it forbids.

I have dwelt so long upon this particular point, because it is in reality of great consequence, and because it is one which has occasioned, and is still likely to occasion a variety of mistakes, both theoretic and practical.

Dr. Ware remarks, p. 27, that children are generally simple and unsuspecting, "until the disposition and tendency of nature has been *changed* by education, example, and circumstances." Now I very much doubt whether the possession of a character opposite to the simplicity and unsuspectingness of children, implies any essential "change in the disposition or tendency of nature." Because it is easy enough to account for it, that a child or youth, who is now simple and unsuspecting, because he has not been versed in the subtle and imposing arts of life, and has never been in circumstances which have tempted him to learn those arts, and so has never had the latent properties of his own nature brought into action, or been exposed to suffering from the deceit and wickedness of others, should afterwards become artful and false in his practices, and suspicious in his temper, without any radical change. The natural faculties and dispositions of the mind admit of an endless

variety of modifications. Difference of animal temperament and of external circumstances may originate innumerable differences in men's visible conduct, and in the aspect of their character, while their intellectual faculties and moral dispositions are substantially alike.

Secondly. Dr. Ware attempts to prove his doctrine respecting human nature by the following argument ; p. 26. "How universally is the infant an object of interest to those about it ! Would it be so, if it manifested such tokens, as the Orthodox doctrine of depravity supposes, of a disposition and tendency wholly directed to evil, and appeared to possess nothing good, and no tendency to good?"

In replying to this reasoning, I would refer to the representations, which Dr. Ware has repeatedly made, of the state of infancy. He says, that men at first are not the subjects of either moral good or evil, and have no disposition to the one more than the other. And he puts the same thing in a different form, when he says, p. 41, "that men by their natural birth receive no moral character, and have none before they are born again." Now take children in the state in which Dr. Ware here represents them to be ; i. e. before they have any moral character or any inclination to good or evil. According to this representation, they really "appear to possess nothing good, and no tendency to good ;" of course, if Dr. Ware reasons correctly, they cannot be "the objects of interest to those about them."

But although this conclusion seems to follow from our Author's remarks, taken together ; I am by no means convinced of its correctness. Is there nothing in children, viewed as subjects of depravity, which can render them objects of interest to those about them ? Does it excite no interest in us, to look upon those who are

possessed of so many faculties, and so many engaging characteristics, which may render them amiable and useful in human society? But there is a subject of higher interest still, which Dr. Ware, at the time of writing p. 26, seems wholly to have overlooked. Little children, though morally corrupt, have immortal souls, and are capable of endless happiness, or misery. And beside this, they are placed under a dispensation of mercy, and may become children of God, and heirs of his kingdom, "to the praise of the glory of his grace." Are not these faculties, these circumstances, and these prospects sufficient to render children interesting objects? Nay, does not the very fact, that they are subjects of moral corruption, and exposed to a state of irrecoverable ruin, render them objects of a still deeper interest? Were not the unbelieving Jews, and the corrupt, idolatrous gentiles interesting objects to an apostle? Is it not the very corruption, guilt, and wretchedness of unconverted sinners, that excites such compassion towards them in the hearts of Christians? And how was it with our blessed Saviour? Did not he feel a most sincere, lively interest in those who were lost, and because they were lost? And have not men, dead in trespasses and sins, been objects of the highest interest to their merciful Creator?

Thirdly. Another argument of Dr. Ware in support of his theory is thus stated. "The doctrine of depravity is repulsive. The mind naturally revolts at it. It *seems* at first, to all men universally, to be inconsistent with the divine perfection. But the first impression is made upon us by the nature which God has given us; and I think we should be slow to believe that a nature, thus given to all, is intended to mislead, and actually does mislead all, on so important a subject." p. 22.

Here let it be remembered, that the question in controversy between the two parties, is, whether the first moral feelings of man are right. The argument of Dr. Ware, just stated, assumes that they are right, and so is another instance of taking for granted the point in debate. Admit the doctrine of depravity to be true, and the fact of its being repulsive to the natural feelings of men is easily accounted for, from the depravity itself. It is surely no uncommon thing for the feelings of wicked men to revolt at a faithful representation of the vileness of their character, and the greatness of their ill-desert, especially if that representation comes clothed with authority. Those feelings, which render the doctrine of man's sinfulness repulsive, are, in our apprehension, a part of his sinfulness. If he has a spirit of pride and self-complacency; a doctrine, which tends to humble pride, and to oppose the spirit of self-complacency, will of course be repulsive. But this is not a solitary case. The feelings of man revolt at the strict and holy demands of the law. They equally revolt at the high requisitions of the gospel. The feelings of a very amiable youth revolted at the command of Christ, to "sell all that he had and give to the poor." Was the fault in the command, or in his feelings? Does not the New Testament account for that disgust and enmity of man which the Christian religion has to encounter, by the fact that he is sinful? And does not the self-righteous, self-exalting spirit, which lurks in man's heart, manifestly tend to give a repulsiveness to any doctrine, or any religion, which shows his character despoiled of its moral beauty, degraded and disgraced, and the object of God's disapprobation? How can we for a moment think, that man's natural feelings are a proper test of what is true, and of what is consistent with the perfections of God.

when the Bible constantly directs us to a test, so exceedingly different? Let man be just what he is in his natural, unrenewed state, and it becomes an inseparable attribute of the religion of the cross, that it is *offensive*.

The circumstance that "the scheme of total moral depravity, or of any original bias to evil rather than good, is something different from what we should expect, and involves difficulty," is indeed, as Dr. Ware says, "a reason for yielding our assent with caution, and not without very satisfactory evidence." In this light we have viewed it; and, according to this maxim, we have regulated our belief. The repulsiveness of the doctrine of depravity, and the natural reluctance to receive it, which Dr. Ware justly states to be universal, and which the Orthodox have probably felt as strongly as others, would not surely have been overcome, as it has been, by evidence of ordinary clearness.

Fourthly. Another argument, which Dr. Ware uses in support of his scheme, is derived from "a general view of the commands, precepts, exhortations, promises and threatenings of religion, and from the whole history of the divine dispensations to men." p. 29.

We begin with the three first. What then do the divine commands, precepts, and exhortations show? They show what mankind *ought to be*, not what they *are*. Can Dr. Ware really think, what his argument seems to imply, that God's requiring men to be holy, proves that they already are holy? His commands undoubtedly presuppose that those, to whom they are given, are moral agents; of course, that they possess all the properties, which are necessary to constitute them proper subjects of law. But is freedom from moral corruption essential to moral agency? If so, then as soon as men

become sinners, they cease to be moral agents. And if they cease to be moral agents, they can be under no moral obligation. How then can God with propriety require them to repent, or in any respect to obey his law? And what shall we say to those commands and exhortations of the Bible, which require men to be converted, to repent, to wash themselves from sin? As it is evident from the nature of these commands and exhortations, that they cannot be enjoined upon any but sinners; and as Dr. Ware's argument implies that sinners cannot properly receive them; it would seem, they ought to be blotted out. But if freedom from sin is not essential to moral agency; in other words, if every thing essential to moral agency is found in those who are depraved; and if nothing but what is essential to moral agency is required, in order that divine commands may be given to men; then God's giving such commands proves nothing one way or the other, as to the existence of moral corruption. This, I think, is a sufficient answer to the argument of Dr. Ware, now under consideration, and to much of the reasoning of Whitby and Taylor on the same subject.

Should any one here introduce the distinction which Dr. Ware makes in another place, between men's being sinners, and their *making themselves* sinners; between the character born with them, and that which is acquired; I should endeavour to make it appear, that the distinction has no concern with this subject. Sin is always of the same nature; and at whatever time, and in whatever instances it exists, it neither destroys nor weakens the obligation of the divine commands. And this is the same as saying, that divine commands may be given to man, and may be obligatory upon him, notwithstanding his native depravity. And if so, then their being actu-

ally given cannot afford any argument against *native depravity*. If sin exists in any moral agent, it must have had a beginning. But whether it began at one time or another, is not a circumstance which affects its nature. Suppose it began to exist at a period after the commencement of moral agency; it must have consisted radically in a wrong disposition or affection of heart. If an outward act is sinful, it is sinful because it is the expression or effect of that wrong disposition. Suppose now that moral evil began to exist at the very commencement of moral agency; still it must have consisted precisely in the same thing, that is, in a sinful affection or disposition. In this respect there is no difference. Do you say that, in the last case, the supposed disposition or affection could not have been really sinful, because there was no preceding exercise of moral agency which could be its cause? I answer, the same is true, in case moral evil is supposed to begin at any subsequent period. It is perfectly clear, that the *first* sinful affection or disposition cannot be consequent upon any preceding act of moral agency, as its proper cause, unless a right act can be the cause of a wrong one; or unless there can be a sinful act *before the first* sinful act, and that sinful act, which is before the first, can be the cause of the first. But it surely needs no proof, that all the exercises of moral agency, which precede the first existence of moral evil, must be right. Whether therefore the *beginning* of sinful affection is coeval with the beginning of moral agency, or not, it cannot be derived from any *faulty* exercise of moral agency, which preceded. But if by men's *making themselves sinners*, Dr. Ware means that they first become sinners by an act or exercise of theirs which precedes their being sinful, and which of course cannot be sinful itself; this is the same as holding, that the *first*

existence of sin in man is derived from a *sinless exercise, as its cause*. But who ever entertained so absurd an opinion as this?

But if by men's making themselves sinners, or becoming sinners, Dr. Ware only means that, when they begin to sin, they exercise their intellectual and moral powers, free from coercion; or that the particular sins they commit are voluntary, and that their sinful affections are, in the most proper and perfect sense, *their own*; then I say, this is all true of those who begin to be sinners, when they first begin to be moral agents. The supposition then of sin's commencing so early, is no more inconsistent with the commands of God, than the supposition of its commencing subsequently.

Let me say also, that the distinction, above referred to, between what is native or original in moral agents, and what is acquired, is one with which an unbiassed conscience is not likely to give itself any concern. Sure I am, that the divine law has nothing to do with it. The law requires moral agents to love God and man, that is, to be holy. If they are destitute of the holy affection required, whether at the commencement of their moral agency, or afterwards, the law regards them as transgressors. Conscience regards them in the same light. If I look into my heart, and find that I have had a disposition or affection contrary to what the law requires, my conscience condemns me for it. If I have had that sinful disposition for a long time, I feel myself to be so much the more criminal. And if I began to exercise that disposition as soon as I began to be a moral agent, and have exercised it ever since, I must be regarded by myself, and by others, as criminal in a very high degree. Present before a court of justice, and before the world, a man, who has

always shown a lying, malicious, thievish disposition, from the time when he was first capable of showing any disposition ; would he not be regarded with deep abhorrence, and sentenced with unsparing severity ? It is evident then, that common sense, not trammelled by false reasoning, unites with the word of God in condemning sinful affection, whatever may be the date of its origin. Whether it is the first affection of moral agents, or has its commencement afterwards, it is equally their own. In either case, they are free and unconstrained in exercising it, and possess every thing necessary to render them proper subjects of law, and capable of obedience.

This is a subject on which most writers of the Arminian school have, in my apprehension, fallen into a variety of palpable mistakes. And their mistakes, so far as I am able to judge, have arisen from a wrong notion of moral agency ; and their wrong notion of moral agency, from their not attending, with sufficient care, to the properties which the mind actually exhibits, and the laws according to which its operations are, and always must be regulated.

Dr. Ware argues against the doctrine of native depravity, from “the promises and threatenings of religion.” But what do these prove ? If God promises eternal life to those who obey the law, or to those who repent, and believe the gospel, and threatens destruction to those who do not ; does this prove that men are by nature free from moral depravity ? Are not such promises and threats just and proper in relation to those who are naturally depraved ? If not, it must be because natural depravity destroys moral agency. But we have seen above, that if depravity, beginning at any time, is consistent with moral agency ; it is so, if it begins when moral agency begins. And if depravity, beginning so

early, may be consistent with moral agency ; why may it not be consistent with “ the promises and threatenings of religion ? ”

The last particular to be noticed under this head is, “ the whole history of divine dispensations to men.” This, our Author thinks, is an argument against the Orthodox doctrine of depravity. I presume he means the history of God’s goodness. The argument then would be, that God could not be supposed to show such kindness to men, if they were naturally depraved. But this argument is at once confuted by the representations of Scripture. “ God maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Christ represents this as a prominent feature of the divine administration. God is a kind Father, a being of infinite grace, and bestows favours which are wholly undeserved. Plainly then the divine dispensations in the present state, how kind and beneficial soever they may be, cannot be urged as a proof, that men are “ naturally innocent and pure.”

Fifthly. Dr. Ware alludes “ to a great number of particulars,” mentioned in the Scriptures, “ each of which separately,” as he thinks, “ seems to imply that mankind come into the world innocent and pure, the objects of the complacency of their Creator.” p. 29, 30. He instances only in one, but that alone is, in his opinion, decisive of the question. He refers to the manner in which little children are spoken of by our Saviour, and by the Apostle. Matt. xix. 14. “ Suffer little children to come unto me—for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” “ These,” he says, “ seem to have been infants, or at least very small children.” And he adds ; “ There is not the slightest intimation, that these children had become the subjects of any great moral change.” Then comes

his conclusion. "But if they were depraved, destitute of holiness, &c. could our Saviour declare respecting them, "of such is the kingdom of God?"

It will doubtless occur to Dr. Ware, on a review of his Letters, that there is an appearance of a small inconsistency between this passage and some others. He tells us here, that infants, or very small children, belong to the kingdom of God, without "becoming the subjects of any great moral change;" and just below it is implied in his reasoning, that they are not "destitute of holiness." But in p. 20, he describes man in infancy as "destitute of all positive holiness." And p. 41, 42, he represents men by nature as "wanting that personal holiness which is necessary to their becoming members of the kingdom of God," and as needing "a great moral change—in order to their being fit members of that kingdom." Here, infants are destitute of personal holiness, and cannot belong to the kingdom of God without a great moral change; but there, they belong to the kingdom of God as they come into the world, without that moral change.

Let us now return to the reasoning of Dr. Ware from Matt. xix. 14. The question, which contains the point of his argument, is this: "If the children who were brought to our Saviour, were depraved, how could he declare respecting them, of such is the kingdom of God?" I answer, the kingdom of God consists, and will forever consist of those, who have been sinners. All the members of that kingdom will unite in the song; "Unto him who loved us and washed us *from our sins* in his own blood—be glory and dominion forever." So that their belonging, and being destined to belong to Christ's kingdom, proves nothing as to their native character, except that it was such as to need spiritual wash-

ing, or a "great moral change." It is a complaint of the Pharisees, that Christ receives sinners; and he declares it to be the great purpose of his coming into the world to seek and to save that which was lost; to call sinners to repentance, and gather them into his kingdom. He is a Saviour from sin. We have no intimation of his being a Saviour of any except sinners. His whole office, as a Saviour, relates to sinners,—to sinners exclusively. How then does the fact, that any persons, whether old or young, belong to his kingdom, prove that they are not by nature depraved, or that they are without sin? Christ gave it as a reason, why little children should come, or be brought to him, that they belonged, or would belong to his kingdom. Now this reason was certainly as strong, if they were depraved and sinful, as if they were innocent and pure. Their being sinful placed them upon the same general footing with all others, who are invited to come to Christ as a Saviour. If, because they belonged to the kingdom of God, we conclude their nature was free from the pollution of sin, we must make the same conclusion respecting the nature of others who belong to that kingdom. And this perhaps we might do, had not the Bible informed us of whom the kingdom will consist.

Thus far I have admitted the passage to signify, that the children themselves belonged to the kingdom of God. But Rosenmuller, and many others, understand it as teaching, that the members of Christ's kingdom must be *like* little children, and so put it in the same class with the other texts, quoted by Dr. Ware; Mark x. 14. 1 Cor. xiv. 20. "Unless ye be converted and become *as little children*, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—"In malice be ye children."

We well know it to have been the practice of the

Prophets and Apostles, and especially of Christ, to make use of those objects, with which they were familiar, and often those which were present, to illustrate the divine perfections, the character and duty of men, and the general truths of religion; which is only saying, that in their religious instructions they used familiar metaphors, similes, and comparisons. And it is an acknowledged principle of figurative language, that the object, from which a metaphor or simile is drawn, may not, in its own nature, or principal attributes, truly and exactly resemble that which is meant to be illustrated by it. The resemblance may respect any one of the properties or circumstances of that object, without the least reference to others. In the texts above quoted, Christians are likened to little children. But can we infer from this, that children possess any moral excellence or goodness, like that excellence or goodness of Christians, which is meant to be set forth by the comparison? Christians are also likened to sheep, lambs, doves. But do sheep, lambs, and doves possess moral excellence? Suppose I should say, that the texts, which represent Christians as being like sheep, lambs, and doves, "most clearly imply, until turned from their obvious meaning," that those animals "are objects of the Saviour's complacency and affection," and are "what men become by regeneration." Would not this argument be as conclusive, as Dr. Ware's? If he can infer the moral purity of little children, from the circumstance, that Christians are compared to them; I can infer the moral purity of lambs and doves from the same circumstance. To make this subject still clearer, look at the texts which represent the disciples of Christ as salt, light, and the branches of a vine. Do these texts imply that salt, light, or the branches of a vine, have any moral qualities like those, which

these metaphors represent as belonging to Christ's disciples? Look at another case. Christ directs his Apostles to be not only as harmless as doves, but *wise as serpents*. Does the direction imply that serpents have any moral or intellectual qualities, like what he would see in his disciples? Even the *wisdom* of the serpent,—what is it but a mischievous subtilty, which we regard with abhorrence and dread, and which, in its nature and effects, is most unlike the wisdom from above? But there is a stronger case. Christ described to his disciples the conduct of an unjust steward, who, from regard to his own interest, altered his master's accounts, and wickedly released his debtors from part of their obligations. This conduct of the steward Christ held up, as a proper object of imitation; that is, he represented the conduct which his disciples ought to pursue, as being like the conduct of a steward, chargeable with unjust and fraudulent practices. If it were necessary to go any farther, I would recite the passage, in which God is likened to an unjust judge, who, though destitute of humanity, was influenced by the wearisome importunity of a poor widow, to grant her the assistance she craved.

Now what is the natural conclusion from these, and other instances of metaphors, similes, and comparisons, but this; that, in illustrating the truths of religion, the inspired writers lay hold on any object in the physical, animal, civil, or intellectual world, or any thing else, which is suited to the purpose of illustration; that the particular object from which a metaphor is taken, may not, in its nature or principal attributes, resemble that which is to be illustrated by it; and that it is sufficient, if there is any one apparent attribute, relation, or circumstance, which may serve as a foundation for the metaphor, though all the other attributes of the object are

such, that they must be set aside, as utterly incompatible with the design of the metaphor. The properties or circumstances of any *natural* object may be made use of to illustrate things of a *moral* nature. For example; wicked men are represented in Scripture as being like barren trees, dogs, swine, and serpents. Now from the nature of the discourse, common sense always determines what is the particular property, relation, or circumstance, which is the ground of the comparison; as in the instances just mentioned; we easily perceive what it is in barren trees, in dogs, swine, and serpents, which is suited to illustrate the character of wicked men. Who ever supposed that, because these figures imply a likeness of some sort between the wicked men and the things by which they are represented, therefore, those things have a moral nature like the moral nature of Christians? There is indeed something in barren trees, dogs, swine, and serpents, which aptly sets forth the character of the wicked; and this is all that is meant by the figures. So in the case above mentioned, in which Christians are likened to sheep and doves. The mildness and harmlessness of those animals aptly illustrate those properties in Christians, which are expressed by the same names; though the former are merely natural or animal properties; the latter, moral, or spiritual. The same remarks apply to those texts which represent Christians under the similitude of salt, light, and the branches of a vine. There is something in the useful qualities of salt and light, to which the useful character or influence of Christians may fitly be compared; and there is something in the dependence of the branches upon the vine, which fitly represents the dependence of Christians upon their Saviour. Nor is the illustration in these cases any the less striking or just, because salt, light, and the branch-

es of a vine, have only a physical nature, while the character of Christians, which is likened to them, is moral or spiritual. Once more. Christians are represented as pilgrims, soldiers, and conquerors. But did any man ever interpret these figures as implying, that pilgrims, soldiers, and conquerors are free from moral evil, and resemble Christians in moral purity? These last instances show that there may be something even in depraved human beings, on account of which Christians may be likened to them.

Now if such is the principle, which must govern us in the interpretation of all figurative language; how utterly void of force is the favourite argument of Dr. Ware from the texts above recited? Because it is said that, in order to be Christians and enter into the kingdom of heaven, we must become *as little children*, he argues that children have a moral virtue or goodness of the same nature with the holiness of Christians. Suppose now that our Saviour had taken a *lamb*, instead of a child, and had set the harmless, lovely creature in the midst of his disciples, and told them, they must become like that lamb; would it have implied that the lamb had moral goodness, and was "what men become by regeneration?" The plain truth is, that the amiable *natural* qualities, which distinguish little children, and which, as we have seen, are perfectly consistent with the existence of depravity, are made use of to illustrate the amiable *moral* qualities which ought to belong to Christians. The text 1 Cor. xiv. 20, is to receive the same construction. Christians are exhorted to show in their conduct a harmlessness and kindness like that, which is characteristic of children. The natural qualities of children are made to represent the moral virtues of Chris-

tians; precisely on the same principle, that the kind and tender care, which the hen extends towards her young, is made to illustrate the tender mercy of Christ towards sinners.

We have now attended to the chief arguments which Dr. Ware has offered, as the support of his theory of human nature. The reader, after a thorough examination, will judge whether they are conclusive, and to what they really amount.

CHAPTER II.

IN the foregoing chapter, I have made it appear, as I think, that those amiable qualities, which are, really characteristic of early life, and which Dr. Ware has mentioned as indications of moral purity, are in fact of such a nature, that they may consist, and in subsequent life often do consist with depravity, and so cannot afford any argument at all against the common Orthodox doctrine.

But why does Dr. Ware, in his attempt to show what human nature is, confine his attention to a part of those things which are characteristics of early life? How can he think it just, to dwell upon those things only, which are amiable and attractive, while he gives no weight to those of a contrary character? Why especially, does he make such an effort to explain all the appearances of folly and corruption in the youthful mind in such a manner, as to give no support to the common doctrine of the Christian church? Does he find in this no evidence of being warped by a favourite theory? He is "persuaded," as has been noticed be-

fore, “that no man was ever led by personal observation and experience to the thought of an original corruption of human nature.” But how happens it that he has this persuasion, when the well known fact is, that sober, thinking men through the Christian world have generally been led by observation and experience, not only to *think* of an original depravity, but to *believe it*? I shall here give the testimony of a man, who had no tinge of melancholy or superstition, and who was as little inclined to judge severely or uncandidly on this subject, as any man living. “I have been employed,” he says, “in the education of children and youth more than thirty years, and have watched their conduct with no small attention and anxiety. Yet among the thousands of children, committed to my care, I cannot say with truth, that I have seen *one*, whose native character I had any reason to believe to be virtuous; or whom I could conscientiously pronounce to be free from the evil attributes mentioned above;” that is, disobedience, revenge, selfishness, &c.* But I do not give this as the opinion of a single man. I hesitate not to say, that it has been the opinion of a great majority of enlightened Christians in all ages and countries. And might not Dr. Ware have found various passages of Scripture which announce the very truth I contend for? Might he not have found a man of no less observation and judgment, than Solomon, declaring it as a general truth, that, “foolishness is bound in the heart of a child?” Might he not have found that David’s experience led him to the thought of an original, native depravity, when he made it a part of his humble confession before God; “Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me?” Might he not

* Dr. Dwight’s Theology, Vol. 2, p. 23.

have found that Job's observation or experience led him to the thought of original depravity, when he said, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" and, "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" And might he not have found God himself declaring, directly, in his own name, that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth?"

I have the unhappiness to differ entirely from Dr. Ware on this point, and am persuaded that no man, who is careful to make the law of God his rule of judgment, can avoid the conclusion above expressed. For just consider what are the real characteristics of childhood and youth, in relation to that law. I ask not now what are those amiable affections or instincts, which belong to domestic and social relations; but what are the *moral* characteristics of children;—not what we should *suppose* they must be, from the views we have entertained of God; but what they are in fact. What are the real feelings and actions of children in regard to God's holy law? Begin the examination of childhood at an early period. Begin at the period when moral agency begins; and suppose moral agency begins earlier or later, as you please; and inquire for the disposition which children manifest, in respect to the divine commands. Do they show a heart to love God, supremely, when they are two or three years old? Is it said, they are not generally capable, at that age, of having any correct knowledge of God, or of their duty, and so are not capable of loving him? Take then a later period. Follow them to the age of four, or five years, to six, or ten, till they have been instructed in religion, and are capable of loving and worshipping God. Do they generally show a disposition to love and worship God then? When they first begin, by visible con-

duct, to exhibit the temper of their minds, as subjects of the divine law ; do they show signs of cheerful, holy obedience ? Does the observation of Christian parents and ministers teach them any thing like this ? Does not their observation rather confirm the truth of what the scriptures declare, as quoted above ? Was there ever a man, who laboured in earnest to teach children the things of religion, and to induce them to keep the divine commands, who did not find their inclinations mighty obstacles to his success ? If children were uncorrupt and pure, they would, as soon as capable, show the proper signs of holiness. Children who are renewed early in life, manifest a desire after God, hatred and dread of sin, and delight in duty. But do not children in general show, at every period of childhood, that they have not the love of God in them ; that they dislike the duties of religion, and choose the ways of sin ? You may set before them the most serious and tender considerations, and may succeed so far, as in some measure to gain their attention, and rouse their conscience. But you will find that their heart has a bias towards the pleasures of sin, which no consideration of duty or of happiness can overcome. With those who judge themselves by the law of God, is not this a matter of fact, a truth written as with a sun-beam ? The earliest period of childhood, to which their memory can extend, furnishes to their own minds abundant evidence of a disinclination to the duties and pleasures of religion, and a relish for the pleasures of sin. What is moral depravity, if this is not ? I do not say that depravity, at first, exists in the highest degree, and that children are at once ripe for the most atrocious deeds. I do not say that children are inclined to lie merely for the sake of lying, without any temptation. They may speak many truths to one false-

hood, as "the greatest liars" may. But we expect great liars will speak falsehood, when they have occasion to do it. Their telling lies now and then, when they have some bad ends to answer, may, as appears from the case which Dr. Ware mentions, render them highly criminal. So with children. They may generally be disposed, in the simplicity of their hearts, to speak the truth. But has not every one who has had the care of little children, found them inclined to lie when tempted to it? Does it not require unremitting care and every possible effort, to guard them against the practice of lying, whenever they think it the way to exculpate themselves, or to secure any favourite gratification? And when a habit of lying is once formed in children, is it not found to be extremely difficult to correct it? The same might be said as to other tendencies of the youthful mind. When every thing goes smoothly with children, and all their wishes are gratified, they may exhibit a disposition quite pleasant and friendly. So may persons arrived at manhood, though really possessed of a contrary disposition. But how is it with little children, when their wishes are crossed, and when they are subjected to suffering? How is it, when they are flattered, and when they are slighted? Do they not very early show signs of the same temper of mind, which we see exhibited in active life by the proud, the envious, the selfish, the wrathful, and the revengeful? In short, if we find any thing in mankind at large, which furnishes proof of depravity; we find it in little children; not indeed in the same form, or degree; for they are not capable of this. But we find what is of the same nature. And even as to form or degree; do not the pride, the selfishness, the illwill, the revenge,

exhibited by little children, resemble the same evil passions in a man, as much as their bodies or their minds resemble his? They have the understanding, the bodily strength, the features, and all the attributes of a man, though in miniature. And who that watches the character of children, with the eye of a Christian or a philosopher, can have the least doubt, that they possess, in a correspondent degree, all the moral attributes, and especially the moral corruptions, which appear among men? As soon as they are capable, they show these corruptions by intelligible outward signs. And they show them in a manner perfectly agreeable to the state and circumstances of childhood. True, they do not show them as soon as they are born. Nor do they show a rational mind, as soon as they are born. And yet who ever doubted that children naturally possess a rational mind? Dr. Ware says that, "by their birth men become reasonable, accountable beings." But does a child actually show reason, as soon as he is born? And would Dr. Ware consider a child really accountable, as soon as he is born? But reason and accountableness universally belong to mankind; and children begin early to show signs of being reasonable and accountable beings, and exhibit more and more evidence of it, till they come to the understanding of a man. Now I refer it to impartial observers, to judge, whether children do not exhibit as clear signs of moral evil, as they do of reason; and whether they do not begin to exhibit these signs as early as could be expected, allowing moral evil to be a native property of their minds? Although they are by nature depraved; still, in order that their depravity may be visibly acted out, they must not only be capable of showing it by outward signs, but must have occasion thus to show it. Now as soon as children have ability and

occasion to show their dispositions, they generally exhibit as clear evidence of initial depravity, as of intelligence. The occasion may not be constant, nor very frequent; any more than the occasion for actual falsehood among "the greatest liars." But this circumstance does not in either case affect the clearness of the evidence.

CHAPTER III.

WHETHER human depravity can in any proper sense be called *native*, *innate*, *natural*, or *hereditary*, is a question, which seems to call for more particular discussion. There are many pretences against the common doctrine, which ought to be exposed, and some difficulties attending it which ought, if possible, to be cleared away. Dr. Ware allows that "all men are sinners," but says, they are so by *habit*, not by *nature*. All the wickedness of man is, in his view, perfectly consistent with his coming into being, innocent and pure. With a view to what he and others have advanced in opposition to the doctrine of *native* depravity, and to present the doctrine to others precisely in the light in which it has presented itself to my own mind, I shall allow myself in the free discussion which follows.

My first inquiry respects the proper meaning and use of the words and phrases commonly employed in stating the doctrine; such as *native*, *innate*, *natural*, *born with a depraved nature*, &c. To satisfy myself on this subject, I take a number of examples, in which the words and phrases are employed with undoubted propriety.

First example. Man has a *natural* disposition to society ; or he has *by nature* a propensity to social life ; or he *naturally* possesses a social principle, or is *naturally* formed for society. Such phrases are frequent ; nor did I ever hear any objection against them. But what is the fact which these phrases denote ? Do children actually show a social principle, as soon as they are born ? Do they immediately give visible signs of social affection, or of that propensity which is the foundation of domestic and civil society ? Is it not a long time, before they become capable of expressing or exercising the social principle ? What then do we mean by its being *natural* to man, or his having it *by nature*, but that man is born with *such a constitution*, or in *such a state*, that if he is not turned aside from the real bent of his nature, he certainly will be a social being, or will be actually inclined to live in society ; in other words, that his being disposed to choose society, rather than solitude, results directly from the original constitution or tendency of his mind ? If he choose a hermitage, he does violence to his nature ; he shows that there has been some jar in his constitution, some unnatural shock to his temper.

Second example. Man is *naturally pitiful*. He is born with a principle of sympathy, or compassion ; or pity is one of the natural, original principles of the human heart. These expressions, which are in common use, do not mean that pity begins to show itself, or even to be distinctly exercised, as soon as man is born ; but that *it uniformly results from his original constitution* ; that it is the certain consequence of the state in which he is born, or the temper of mind which he possesses by his birth ; and that, in every case, it will in due time show itself, unless his nature is perverted.

As a *third example*, I would mention what is com-

monly called *natural affection* ; by which is intended particularly the affection of parents for their offspring. Man is born with such a nature, or has such a tendency in his constitution, that, as soon as the relation exists, he feels the affection. However distant from his birth the time when it is first distinctly felt and acted out ; it is called *natural*, because with such a nature or constitution as his, unbroken and unperverted, he will certainly feel the affection, whenever he comes into the relation. The affection implies no refinement upon his nature. It rises naturally or spontaneously, like the affection which irrational animals show for their young.

Fourth example. We speak of a man as having an original strength of mind, or liveliness of imagination, superiour to what others possess. This might not appear for many years. But it is at length evident, that the difference cannot be accounted for by difference of culture, and so must arise from difference of original constitution. On this account we call it *native superiority*. We say, a man was *born a king*, or was *born a commander* ; because uniformly, from early life, he showed marks of an elevated character, or qualities which fitted him to command. We consider those qualities *natural*, because it is plain, that they are no more owing to his education, than the features of his countenance ; which may perhaps indicate, as clearly as the qualities of his mind, his high destination. Of another we say, that he was *born an idiot* ; that he had an original want of understanding, or a natural defect in the structure of his mind ; because his idiotism cannot be traced to any calamity which has befallen him since his birth, but is manifestly owing to the constitution of mind, with which he was born. In this case, we say his mental imbecility was

natural to him ; though there might have been a considerable time after his birth, before it appeared.

Thus too we say of Handel, that he had a *native* or *inborn taste for music*, or that he was *born a musician* ; because he showed that taste very early, and no influence of education or example could account for the difference, which existed between him and other men, in this respect. Milton, we say, had a *native* sublimity of mind and fruitfulness of invention, which qualified him to be a distinguished poet.

Fifth example. We sometimes say of a bodily disease, that it is *native*, or that it was *born with a man* ; because it appears manifestly to result from the original constitution of his body, though the disease did not show itself for many years. It is often said, a man was born with a consumptive constitution, or with a state of body which tended to a consumption ; and it is deemed a matter of great importance in the medical art, to discover when this is the case.

If another example were necessary, I might notice the manner in which we apply the words and phrases, now under consideration, to irrational animals ; as when we say, it is *natural* for serpents to bite ; it is the *nature* of birds, to fly ; of lions, to be carnivorous ; of fishes, to swim. But the illustration has been pursued far enough to answer the purpose intended.

I would not however proceed, without inquiring a little into the use of the word *hereditary*, in relation to these subjects. It is obviously suitable to speak of particular properties of mind and of body as *hereditary*, when they can most satisfactorily be accounted for on the common principle of a *likeness between parents and children*. There is a general resemblance which a child bears to his parents, as belonging to the same species ; and a par-

ticular resemblance which he bears to them, as individuals. Observation shows that, in regard to the faculties and dispositions of the mind, as well as the structure of the body, parents universally transmit to their offspring a general resemblance, and frequently, a particular, individual resemblance. With respect to each of these, what is more common than to say, that children *inherit* it, or derive it from their parents? Diseases are said to be hereditary in certain families, where they are observed to descend from generation to generation, and where, at the same time, they evidently result from something originally belonging to the constitution. There is, for example, an hereditary blindness and deafness; an hereditary firmness or weakness of bodily constitution; an hereditary strength or imbecility of mind. A man inherits a slowness or quickness of imagination, a quietness or irritability of temper, &c. Wherever there is an obvious resemblance between children and their parents with respect to any properties of body or mind, especially if that resemblance has been the same for many generations, and is most easily accounted for on the common principle, that children bear the likeness of their parents; we hesitate not to say, those properties are hereditary. And some respectable writers have been led by the particular opinions they have held on the subject, to speak of *piety* in the same manner. Southey says, "Talents of no ordinary kind, as well as a *devotional* temper, were *hereditary* in the family of the Wesleys." I mention it merely to show in what sense the *word* is used.

Let us now bring this train of remarks to bear directly upon the subject of investigation. Here we are to inquire, whether the circumstances, which lead us to apply the words *natural*, *native*, *innate*, and *hereditary*, to

such bodily and mental properties, as those above mentioned, do in fact belong to the moral depravity or sinfulness of man. We should pursue this inquiry with special care, because the result must be of great consequence in settling the present controversy.

I say then, that moral depravity is a thing which has been found in the human species from generation to generation. There never has been a single exception in any age. Dr. Ware mentions it as a truth which no one will deny, *that all men are sinners*. This is not a general, but an universal truth. Every child of Adam has sinned. Moral depravity is as universal as reason, or memory, or social affection, or pity, or any of the bodily appetites. We can as easily find a man without any of these, as without sin. So far then as the universality or constant occurrence of the fact is concerned, there is as much propriety in saying, that moral depravity is natural to man, as that the faculty of reason, or any bodily appetite is.

Another circumstance, which justifies us in applying the epithets innate, natural &c. to human depravity, is, that it shows itself *very early*. We are indeed incapable of looking into the mind of an infant, and seeing the first emotions of moral evil. It is impossible that our memory should go back to what took place in our own minds, during our infancy. Nor can we have any definite knowledge of what takes place in the minds of others in infancy; because they are unable to exhibit those intelligible signs, which are to us the only medium of access to the mind. But among the earliest things, which our memory can recal in ourselves, or which we are able to observe in others, are the indications and incipient exercises of sinful affection. Now if, as far back as our recollection can go in regard to ourselves, or our observa-

tion in regard to others, we uniformly find marks of moral evil; is it not reasonable to think it may exist before? and that we should be perfectly satisfied of its earlier existence, if we could, in any way, trace back to an earlier period, the operations of our own minds, or if children at an earlier period could, by any intelligible signs, indicate to us the moral state of their minds? In order that any affection may show itself by outward signs, and especially that its actings may be distinctly recollected, it must have acquired a certain degree of strength. But is it not according to the law of our nature, that the affection should exist in a lower degree, before that time? We are, indeed, unable to determine how early depraved affection may begin to operate. But considering how early it rises to such strength, as to make itself visible; and considering too the gradual growth of every thing in the mind; can we avoid the conclusion, that it probably exists, though in a feebler state, much sooner than it becomes visible? May it not be with our moral nature in this respect, as it is with the peculiar properties of an eagle, a serpent, or a lion, which have always been considered as existing radically in the original constitution of the animal, though they begin to show themselves a considerable time after? Be this, however, as it may; the actual appearance of moral evil in man is, in common cases, very early; so that as far as the period of its first occurrence is concerned, there is a plain reason for calling it natural, or innate.

Another circumstance, distinguishing those things which are properly called *natural* or *innate*, or which we say belong to man from the first, is, that they cannot be traced to any change in the constitution of his nature, subsequent to his birth, and do not presuppose such a change. If idiotism is occasioned by a fracture of the

skull, or by the influence of disease, it is not called natural. But if no such calamity has befallen a man, who shows himself to be without understanding, and his want of mind results, as a direct consequence, from his original constitution; in other words, if he never had any mind; and if, with such an original structure, it would be impossible that he ever should have any; then his idiotism is called *natural*, or he is said to be *born an idiot*.

Now is the moral depravity of man to be traced to any calamity which has befallen him, or to any change which has taken place in his moral constitution, subsequently to his birth? Does it presuppose that there has been such a change? If a change takes place adequate to account for moral depravity; it must be an universal change, because it must account for the fact, that all are sinners. The position then would be, that, although men are universally born without any disposition or tendency in their nature, which can account for the depravity they afterwards exhibit; a change uniformly takes place, which is the spring of all the moral evil actually found in man. And this change must take place very early, because by the supposition, it must precede the first appearance of moral evil. We have then before us a most important event; an universal change in the moral constitution of man; a change which always takes place very early in childhood, and which satisfactorily accounts for all the sins which mankind commit. Here it becomes a matter of deep interest to inquire, what is the cause of a change, so momentous in its nature, and in its results? Is that cause *extraneous* to the human mind, or *within* the mind? If any opponent should say, the cause is *extraneous* to the mind; then I should wish him to solve the difficulty of supposing, that our moral nature, without any faulty conduct of

ours, is subjected to the calamitous influence of such a cause. Call that which is the cause of the change, "education, example, and circumstances," as Dr. Ware does, p. 27. It is a cause, which is extraneous to the mind, and over which, especially at so early a period, we can have little or no control. I should wish Dr. Ware to show, upon his own principles, how we can be accountable for the consequences of a change, produced in such a manner. And before leaving the subject, I should be gratified to know, how he would make it appear consistent, that a God of infinite goodness should expose his feeble, helpless creatures, in the very first stage of their existence, to the operation of a cause so dreadful.

But if the cause of the supposed change is within the mind, it must consist in something which belongs to the original constitution of the mind, or in something which is superinduced upon the mind, after its first existence. If it consists in something which belongs to the original constitution of the mind; then we are thrown back upon the very difficulty which Dr. Ware and others think it so important to shun. But if the cause of the supposed change consists in something which is superinduced upon the mind, after its first existence; it is certainly proper that we should inquire, what that thing is; what has occasioned it, or by what means it has been superinduced upon the mind. And the answer, if there could be an answer to this inquiry, would only make way for another of the same kind, and that for another, and so on indefinitely.

These are some of the difficulties which attend the supposition, that the depravity, which man actually exhibits, is owing to any calamity which befalls him, or to any change which takes place in his moral constitution, subsequently to his birth: while on the other hand, the

supposition, if admitted, has no advantage whatever over the common supposition, that our actual wickedness is to be traced back to what is original or native in our moral constitution. It gives no convenience or clearness to any philosophical reasoning, which we may think it proper to pursue in relation to this subject; as it only presents other causes, of the existence of which we have no evidence, and which, if they were real, must after all be traced back to the original constitution of our nature. The supposition has no advantage in regard to our views of the divine character, it being every way as easy to reconcile it with the goodness of God, that he should give us originally a constitution, which uniformly results in actual transgression, as that he should expose us to the operation of causes, such as Dr. Ware names, p. 27, which uniformly produce a change in our nature afterwards, from purity to pollution.

Against the supposition of such a change in our nature, there are strong objections. In the first place; so far as our observation goes, all the causes which operate upon the human mind, are suited only to excite to action, in various ways, the powers and dispositions actually belonging to our nature, but not to change that nature. Secondly; the supposition of such a change in our nature is wholly *unphilosophical*, because wholly *unnecessary*. It is as unphilosophical, as to suppose a change of nature in order to account for the serpent's venomous bite, the lion's fierceness, or that intelligence, gratitude, sympathy, and kindness of man Dr. Ware considers as natural. Thirdly. The uniformity of the fact that men become sinners, denotes that it results from the settled constitution of our nature, and not from any occasional or accidental cause. We reason thus respecting things which uniformly take place in the physical world; and

why not in the moral world? If our becoming sinners were not owing to a steady law or principle of our nature, but to some accidental cause; we should, in all reason, expect to find some exceptions. The uniform motions of the planets denote a uniform cause, a settled constitution of nature; while the occasional appearance of transient meteors denotes occasional, transient causes. If there were no settled constitution or law of nature respecting the motion of the planets, who would expect to find their motions constant and invariable?

Now just as far as there is evidence, that man's actual sinfulness is owing to the original constitution of his moral nature, and not to any change in his nature experienced after his birth; just so far we have reason to consider his depravity natural.

I have yet another reason for considering man's depravity *natural*. I look at other principles in man, which are generally considered natural, such as the animal appetites, the love of parents for their offspring, and also that gratitude, compassion, and kindness, which Dr. Ware notices, "as original attributes of human nature." I find these natural principles operate *freely* and *spontaneously*. It requires no laborious discipline to produce them, no urgency of motives to excite them to action. When the proper occasion occurs, they arise unsolicited. This is a general mark of those active principles, which are allowed to be *native* properties of man. The same mark distinguishes man's moral depravity. Take children, as soon as they are capable of manifesting what they are; and let the occasion for exercising a corrupt affection occur. How soon is it excited? How spontaneously does the feeling of pride, ill will, and revenge show itself in their looks and actions? It gets possession of them before they are aware. It arises of its own

accord, before they have considered whether it is good or bad. They first learn its turpitude from having felt its spontaneous operation in their own minds. And it is the case not only in childhood, but in every period of life, that sinful affections arise readily, as soon as the occasion occurs. So far then as this circumstance has influence, it is a justification of the doctrine of native depravity.

But moral evil in man has still another mark of being natural or innate; and that is, that *it is hard to be eradicated, and resists powerful means of overcoming it.* From this we are led to think, that it has taken deep root in man's nature, and is not an accidental or superficial thing. The christian, who makes the greatest efforts to eradicate his depraved affections, has, from his own experience, the clearest evidence that they adhere to the very constitution of his moral nature; that they make a part of himself; and that getting rid of them is like cutting off a hand, or plucking out an eye. He has evidence too, that while the heart is unrenewed, or while man continues in his natural state, no dictate of conscience, no motive or influence which can be brought to bear upon his mind, can subdue his selfishness and pride, or induce him to love God and be humble. This fact is as well supported by experience, as any fact whatever in the history of the mind. And as there is no other way, but experience, to prove it, on supposition of its real existence; my last appeal for the truth of the Orthodox doctrine of depravity would be to the experience of Christians.

There is one circumstance of human depravity, which justice requires me distinctly to notice, as it seems utterly incapable of being reconciled to any scheme but the Orthodox. When we look upon a new

born child, we predict, that he will certainly be a sinner. It is not a conjecture, nor a probability, but a certainty. It is a thing which no precautions, no circumstances whatever can prevent. Let the child be, from the first, in the hands of parents, nurses, and tutors, as holy as angels, so that he shall never hear any thing but words of truth and love, and never see any thing but examples of excellence; still we predict with certainty, that he will not escape the pollution of sin; that he will be a transgressor of the divine law. Now such a prediction as this must rest on some fixed principle, some certain, uniform cause; just like our prediction respecting the future developement which the child will make of any bodily or mental power. We know beforehand, that if the child is free from special defects, he will speak, and walk, and love, and desire, and remember. This foreknowledge in us rests upon the full evidence we have, that such is *the settled law or constitution of human nature*. It is precisely on the same ground, that we predict the future transgression of the new-born infant. The prediction does not imply any particular knowledge of this individual child, in distinction from other children; for, in the case which I suppose, we only know that he is *human*. We found our prediction solely upon the fact, that the child has *human nature*. We know that it is the invariable law of his nature, that he will be a transgressor. If there is no such steady cause, no such invariable law, how can we certainly conclude that this particular child, born of pious, faithful, exemplary parents, will be a sinner? May not this child, if such as Dr. Ware supposes every infant to be,—“innocent, pure, free from all disposition or tendency to sin,” and under the salutary influence of the best of parents;—may not such a child be secured against moral evil? Or if this

child should not escape those powerful, calamitous causes, which are supposed to turn our nature from innocence to guilt; how do we know that some other child of Adam may not? If there is no steady, no uniformly operating cause, or law of nature, leading to moral evil; or as Dr. Ware expresses it, "if man is by nature no more inclined or disposed to vice than to virtue;" may we not suppose that one of a thousand, or at least one of eight hundred millions, will retain his original purity, and go through this short life without becoming a sinner? But we are forbidden to suppose this by that sober observation, which teaches us the truth of our Saviour's maxim, that "no man can gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." The cause in the former case is indeed *moral*; in the latter, *physical*. But in both cases the cause which operates is constant; and it is the constancy or uniformity of the cause, which enables us, in either case, to form a certain judgment respecting the constancy of the effect. Now in any such case, where do we look for the cause of a constant, uniform effect, but in the nature or constitution of the thing? If this reasoning is substantially correct, what can be more proper than to call the sinfulness of man *natural, original, innate*?

It might here be expected, that I should argue particularly from those texts, which teach directly that our sinfulness results from the original constitution of our nature; from various maxims and rules of Scripture, implying a bias in human nature, which it is the object of Christian instruction and discipline to correct; and particularly from the representations of the New Testament, that man has, by his natural birth, that carnal mind which is opposite to holiness, and on account of which he needs to be born again. But the arguments derived from these sources were distinctly brought to

view in my Letters to Unitarians; and I cheerfully leave it to the judgment of my readers, whether any thing has been offered to diminish their force.

I have now stated the leading considerations, which prove the depravity of man to be *native, natural, innate*. First. Moral depravity is as universal among men, as reason, memory, or the bodily senses, which are allowed by all to be natural. Second. Depravity shows itself very early; as early as could be expected, on the supposition that it is native; that is, at the earliest period of childhood to which our memory can reach in regard to ourselves, or in which children are able, by intelligible signs, to manifest their feelings to others. Third. The depravity of man cannot be traced to any calamity which befalls him, or to any change which takes place in his moral constitution, subsequently to his birth. Fourth. Moral depravity, like other native affections or principles of the mind, is spontaneous in its operations, and hard to be eradicated. Fifth. We can predict concerning any human being, as soon as born, that if he live long enough to exhibit the character of a moral agent, he will certainly be a sinner; and this power of prediction must depend on a settled, uniform cause, a law of our nature.

These, with the Scripture arguments alluded to, are, to say the least, as good reasons why we should believe moral depravity to be a *native, original attribute of man*, as any which Dr. Ware can have for believing "kindness, gratitude, and love of truth" to be so. I admit that these and other things of like kind, if taken with proper explanations, are as Dr. Ware represents them, *natural* properties of man. But let him tell us why they are to be considered as natural; and then we may see whether the reasons, which prove them to be natural, are stronger than those which prove human depravity to be so.

CHAPTER IV.

THE principal objections urged against the doctrine, which I attempted to defend in the preceding chapter, and the principal difficulties in which it is entangled, will now be made the subject of particular consideration.

Notwithstanding the universal prevalence of moral evil, and all the arguments which have been adduced to prove that it is *natural* to man, like those other appetites and affections which are, on both sides, regarded in this light; there are, it is said, special reasons against considering *moral evil* to be a natural property of man; reasons strong enough to countervail all the arguments in favour of the Orthodox doctrine. These reasons are, in brief, that *the doctrine of native depravity, is inconsistent with the moral attributes of God, and inconsistent with moral agency in man.* Objections like these are arrayed against the common doctrine of native depravity by Dr. Taylor, and many other writers, and are suggested by Dr. Ware in several passages in his Letters.

Here I must take the liberty to remark, as I remarked in my Letters to Unitarians, that the mode of reasoning, introduced by those who urge objections in this manner, is altogether unphilosophical, and can never be relied upon either in physics, ethics, or theology. The particular fault to which I refer in their mode of reasoning, is, that they consider a difficulty which they are not able to solve, as sufficient to disprove a doctrine, supported by clear and conclusive evidence. In the science of the mind, as well as in natural philosophy, the legitimate object of research is, as the most approved writers have abundantly shown, to discover what is *fact*;

not to determine what is *possible* or *consistent*. What would be thought of me, should I regulate my inquiries in natural philosophy by the principle involved in the mode of reasoning referred to? I start with a full belief of the common doctrine of philosophy, that all material substances have the power of attraction constantly operating with regard to each other; and I am resolved to admit nothing, which seems to me incapable of being reconciled with this. If in the progress of my inquiries I should find any thing, which seems to me inconsistent with the grand principle of attraction, I am predetermined not receive it into my creed. By and by facts occur, which indicate that, in certain cases, material substances have the power of *repulsion*. But as I am unable to see how this power can consist with the other, I will not believe its existence. Or if I admit the existence of *repulsion*, I will no longer admit *attraction*. Am I now a disciple of Newton? Or has my understanding gone back to the thralldom of the school-men? Governing myself by the same maxim, I attempt to learn the properties of the magnet. I am not satisfied with the simple inquiry, what properties do in fact belong to it? What do experience and observation show? With this I must join another inquiry;—how can such properties be compatible with each other? And how can I admit two different things, when I am not able to see their consistency? Such philosophizing as this would lead to results, for which few men would be willing to be responsible.

But the falsity of the mode of reasoning, above described, is no less obvious, in relation to the doctrine of depravity. The proper inquiry is, what is taught by the word of God, and by the facts which fall under our observation? I ought to come to this inquiry with a

mind as free from prepossession, as that with which a physician inquires, whether his patient exhibits the signs of a consumption. And if I find such proof that depravity naturally belongs to man, as satisfies me that any other properties of man are natural; I have come to the end of my inquiry. So far as my belief of the fact is concerned, I have nothing to do with the question, how this fact is consistent with the perfections of God, or with the moral agency of man, or with any thing else. I say not this, however, because I have the least reluctance to consider the question of consistency, in its proper place; but to show that, in our reasoning, the consideration of this is to be made entirely distinct from the consideration of the evidence, which proves the fact. If I would be either a philosopher or a Christian, I must believe what is clearly proved to be fact, whether I am able to reconcile the fact with other things I believe, or not. Nor must I in any case suffer my views of the clearness and competency of the proof, or my mode of coming to the discovery of it, to be influenced by any difficulty I may feel, as to the consistency of the fact to be proved with other facts. But I wish it to be remembered that I say all this, not because I suppose that two facts or truths, which are to be believed, may be really inconsistent with each other; but because, admitting that they are consistent, we may not in every case be under advantages to discover *how* they are consistent.

To come at a still clearer view of the error involved in that principle of reasoning, against which my objections have been aimed; suppose some philosopher should rise up and say, that my believing the power of repulsion to exist in matter is inconsistent with my believing the power of attraction; or should charge me with denying attraction, because I believe repulsion.

And suppose this pretended inconsistency of repulsion with attraction should be perpetually mentioned, or hinted at, as an argument proving conclusively, that matter can have no such property, as the power of repulsion. In reply to such sophistry I should say, first, that there is, in my view, no inconsistency at all between these two powers, and that, if any man affirms there is an inconsistency, the burden of proof certainly lies upon him. Secondly. A man's being unable to see the consistency of the two powers can be taken as no part of the proof of a real inconsistency. Thirdly. The question, whether there is such a thing as repulsion in matter, must depend entirely on its proper philosophical evidence, and must be discussed without any regard to the alleged inconsistency of repulsion with attraction. If repulsion is proved to exist by clear, conclusive evidence; I should be a child, and not a philosopher, to refuse it a place in my belief, because it is difficult to reconcile it with something else.

I entertain the same views of the proper mode of reasoning on the subject of man's natural depravity; and these views I exhibited in my fourth Letter, to which I beg leave particularly to refer the reader. After several remarks, intended to simplify the object of inquiry, I said; "These remarks are intended to show that according to the just principles of reasoning in such a case, we have nothing to do with the inquiry, whether the common doctrine of depravity can consist with the moral perfection of God, &c. If I say, this doctrine cannot be true, because I cannot reconcile it with the goodness of God; it is the same as saying, I am an infallible judge, and my opinion must stand, though opposed by the declarations of Scripture and the evidence of facts. To take such a position would be an effectual bar to convic-

tion, and render all reasoning useless. If we would regulate our investigations on this subject by correct principles, we must reject totally every prepossession against the doctrine of depravity, arising from the consideration of the divine perfections, or from any thing else, and must restrict ourselves to this single inquiry, *what is true in fact?* If the subject is one on which the Scripture undertakes to decide; the question is, *what saith the Scripture?*—If when we pursue our inquiry, we find that the Scripture, interpreted without the influence of any prepossession, and according to just rules, teaches that man is by nature unholy; this must unhesitatingly be admitted, as a certain truth. That God declares it, is proof enough.—If observation and experience teach the same truth; we are to admit it as doubly confirmed. As to the goodness of God, we know it from other evidence.”

Dr. Ware thinks the course I pursued in regard to this subject liable to objection. “This is certainly a very extraordinary thought,” he says, “that in defending his system against an objection to which it is thought liable, he should have nothing to do with the very objection itself, nor with the difficulty it involves. Did the question relate to the simple fact, whether the doctrine of depravity, as maintained by the Orthodox, were a doctrine of Scripture or not, its consistency or inconsistency with the moral perfections of God would indeed make no part of the ground on which the argument should proceed.” p. 12.

My reply to this, and to what stands connected with it, is a very easy one. The grand point at issue was and is, whether the Orthodox doctrine of depravity is true. I was aware that Mr. Channing and others had not made this the grand point at issue, and with a view to expose what I considered a mistake in them, and to

simplify the object of inquiry, I made the remarks in my fourth Letter. I represented that the great inquiry in relation to this subject ought to be ; “ Do the Scriptures, understood according to just rules of interpretation, teach the doctrine of native depravity ?” Now if this were really to be made the chief topic of inquiry, Dr. Ware himself allows, that “ the consistency or inconsistency of the doctrine with the moral perfections of God would indeed make no part of the ground, on which the argument should proceed.” The fact was, that it had often been mentioned, as a decisive reason against believing the doctrine of depravity, that it is inconsistent with the moral perfection of God. If an *appearance* of such inconsistency had been mentioned merely as a difficulty attending an important Scripture doctrine ; the case would have been different. But its absolute inconsistency with the divine perfections had been urged, as conclusively disproving the truth of the doctrine. I undertook to show that such a mode of reasoning is altogether unphilosophical, and that it would be seen to be so in other like cases. And I now say again, that what I have represented to be the grand inquiry is not to be shackled with any other matters. If indeed, after we have proved from legitimate sources of evidence, that man is by nature depraved, any one choose to bring into view the difficulty of reconciling the doctrine with the divine perfections ; I will be so far from attempting to evade the difficulty, that I will apply myself with all possible diligence and care, to solve it. And this I shall actually do, in some measure, before leaving the subject. But after all, be it remembered, that, whether I succeed in solving the difficulty or not, the ground of my faith in the doctrine is the same. I believe it, because it is taught in the Scriptures ; just as the philosopher be-

believes what thorough investigation shows to be fact, whether he finds himself able to reconcile it with other facts, or not.

But Dr. Ware insists, p. 12, 13, that it certainly does belong to him, who would relieve the Orthodox system from the imputation of being inconsistent with the divine perfections, to prove that it is consistent. For the sake of elucidating more fully the principle of reasoning under consideration, I will allow, for the present, that it does belong to me to prove this consistency. And I will give in few words, the nature of the proof which I now have to offer. Let then the alleged inconsistency appear ever so great, even as great, and as hard to be removed, as Unitarians suppose ; I shall consider it as valid evidence of a real consistency, if I show by proper arguments, first, *that God possesses moral perfection* ; and secondly, *that man is by nature depraved*. I am speaking now of the kind of proof that is to be relied upon, not attempting to exhibit the proof at full length. Suppose each of the two positions, just stated, to be supported by suitable evidence. I adduce the simple fact, that *both positions are shown to be true*, as *satisfactory proof of their real consistency with each other*. In many cases, this may be the only possible method of proof ; because we may not be able to bring the two things together by a direct comparison, and in that way to show that they are consistent with each other. This principle is much used in Geometry. In some cases where we cannot compare two things together so as to prove their agreement with each other directly, we compare them both with a third, and by making out their agreement with that, we prove their agreement with each other. Their agreement with the third is the medium of proof. So in the case under consider-

ation. Even if we could do nothing, by a direct comparison of the two positions, towards proving a mutual consistency ; the fact that each of them is shown by proper evidence to be true, must be taken as evidence that they are consistent. This is the only way in which a thousand things in physics, and in the philosophy of the mind, can ever be proved to be consistent with each other ; and it is the only way in which men, who are completely disentangled from the hypothetical philosophy, deem it necessary to attempt a proof.

But Dr. Ware shows at the end of Letter II, that he is of a very different opinion, as to this principle of reasoning. He says, that *I have contented myself with endeavouring to prove the doctrines of Orthodoxy, as matters of fact, upon the principle, that if I could clearly prove them to be doctrines of Scriptures, I should not be bound to show how they can be consistent with the divine perfections.* He signifies his disapprobation of all this, and declares that, as I have proceeded thus, *it is unnecessary to say any thing more to show, that the imputation of our holding doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections is not removed.* To this remarkable passage I request the reader to give some close attention. The principle on which I proceeded in my reasoning, as Dr. Ware here observes, was this ; that if I could clearly prove our doctrines to be matters of fact, and doctrines of Scripture, I should not be bound to show, in any other way, how they can be consistent with the divine perfections. Now he says, as I have contented myself with an attempt made according to this principle, the imputation of our holding opinions inconsistent with the divine perfections remains ; that is to say ; my having clearly proved our doctrines to be doctrines of Scripture. if I had done it. would not be enough

to prove them consistent with the divine perfections ;— for this is the same as his saying, that my having clearly proved our doctrines to be doctrines of Scripture would not remove the imputation of our holding doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections ; and this is the same as to say, that, for aught we know, the Scriptures may contain doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections. I should be sorry to think, that this is the ground-work of Dr. Ware's reasoning on this subject. But it really is so, unless he is so unfortunate as not to express what he intends ; or unless I am so unfortunate as to misinterpret his language. But truly I see not how I could avoid the conclusion above stated. For if the principle on which he says I proceeded, and on which I indeed meant to proceed, that if I could clearly prove our doctrines to be doctrines of Scripture, we should be free from the imputation of holding doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections,—if this principle is to be rejected ; it must be because the Bible may contain doctrines inconsistent with those perfections. Only let us agree in the position, that the Bible teaches nothing really inconsistent with the divine perfections ; then, of course, my proving the doctrines in question to be doctrines of Scripture would be considered as removing every pretence, that I hold doctrines inconsistent with those perfections. I know indeed that Dr. Ware did not mean to admit that I had proved our doctrines to be taught in the Bible. But what he says manifestly implies, that if I had proved this, and proved it clearly, and had done no more, I should still be chargeable with holding doctrines inconsistent with the perfections of God ; for this was the imputation, which he says would not be removed.

As this subject is of very great consequence in the regulation of our religious inquiries in general, and as my wish is to make it perfectly intelligible to every reader; I beg leave to exhibit my views in a varied form.

The positions which I have laboured to establish, as the regulating principles of our reasoning, and of our faith, particularly on this subject, are these. 1. The grand inquiry, and in truth the only inquiry is, what is taught by the word of God? 2. Though the Scriptures contain doctrines which may, to some, have an appearance of being inconsistent with the divine perfections; they contain none which are inconsistent in reality. 3. As soon as any doctrine is clearly proved to be a doctrine of Scripture, it is, for that reason alone, entitled to our faith; and even if we should entirely fail of showing its consistency with the divine perfections, or with moral agency, to the satisfaction of an objector; we could not, on that account, be justly charged with holding a doctrine inconsistent with the divine perfections. But Dr. Ware's representation is, that as the Orthodox are charged with denying the moral perfection of God, or with holding doctrines inconsistent with it; the very point at issue is, whether our doctrines are inconsistent with the divine perfections; and that it was my business in this controversy, to prove them to be consistent. For the sake of clearing away this perplexity, as satisfactorily as possible, I will, for the present, admit these views of Dr. Ware to be correct, and will undertake the task of giving the proof demanded. But I claim the right of choosing my own method of proof. And for the purpose of trying the principle, I do now choose to make use of this method, and to rely upon this method alone; that is, *to prove that our doctrines are in*

fact consistent with the perfections of God, by proving them to be doctrines of his word. Will Dr. Ware allow this method of proof to be valid, and satisfactory? If so, he must alter the close of his second Letter. But if not, I ask why? Let him offer any reason whatever, to show that this method of proof would not be valid; and then see if the reason offered does not clearly imply, that the Scriptures may contain doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections.

Should Dr. Ware say, as he has said, that he by no means admits that I have proved the doctrines of Orthodoxy to be doctrines of Scripture, and so that I have made out no such proof as this of their consistency with the divine perfections; I should make this obvious reply. The thing now under consideration is the *principle* of reasoning, not the *success* of it. The present question is not, whether I have actually proved our doctrines to be doctrines of Scripture; but whether, *if I should do this*, though I should then stop, it would be a sufficient proof, that our doctrines are consistent with the perfections of God; or whether, after clearly proving them to be doctrines of Scripture, the imputation might still lie against me of holding doctrines inconsistent with the divine perfections, because I did not in any other way, show, nor attempt “to show, how they can be consistent.”

But possibly, after all that has been said, Dr. Ware's real meaning may not be what I have understood from his language; and he may on reflection, cheerfully accede to the principle of reasoning which I have been labouring to establish. The principle is this; and if the word of God is true, it will stand forever; namely; that clearly proving any doctrines to be doctrines of Scripture, is, by itself, a satisfactory proof of their con-

sistency with the divine perfections ; that in this controversy, the simple inquiry should be, *what do the Scriptures teach?* and that in pursuing this inquiry, and in estimating the value of evidence which bears upon it, we ought not to be influenced by any apprehension, that the doctrines in question are inconsistent with the character of God, nor by any appearance of such inconsistency ;—just as we should pursue the inquiry, whether there has in reality been a general deluge, without any regard to the question, whether we are able to show such a fact to be consistent with the character of God. From this principle it would follow, that if any man finds, in regard to the doctrines of Orthodoxy, that he has been influenced by an appearance or apprehension of their inconsistency with the divine perfections, and that in this way he has been prepossessed against those doctrines, and has refused to be convinced of their truth by evidence, which would be satisfactory in other cases ; it is high time for him to inquire, whether he has not done violence to the principles of reasoning, and whether he is not in danger of wandering irreclaimably from the path of divine truth. He forgets that such short-sighted creatures, as we are, may, in a thousand cases, be unable to see *how* things can be consistent, which really are so ; and that we may think we see an inconsistency, when, if we had a greater extent or clearness of vision, we might see none. While he rejects a doctrine, which is supported by such evidence as is generally deemed sufficient, because he is unable to see how the doctrine can consist with something else ; he places a reliance upon the strength of his understanding, to which it is not entitled, and opens the door for a wide-spreading skepticism ; and he does this in relation to doctrines, which are of the

highest importance, and the truth of which is shown by evidence of noon-day clearness.

Under the influence of such mistaken views, as those just alluded to, a philosopher examines the proof of a general deluge, and finds it clear and strong. But he determines not to believe it, because he cannot see *how* it could have been consistent with the justice and goodness of God, to destroy a world by a deluge. You tell him, it is clearly taught in the Bible, which he professes to receive as the word of God, and that it ought, on that account alone, to be believed, whatever difficulties may seem to attend it. But he avers, with increasing warmth of feeling, that it is totally inconsistent with the goodness of God, who is the Father of his creatures; “that we can make no supposition upon the ground of which we shall be able to see that it can be consistent;” that it ought therefore to be rejected; and that the few texts of Scripture which seem to favour it, must be explained in some other way, so that they may give no support to a fact, which “certainly admits of no reconciliation with any notion we can have of the moral perfection of the Author of our being.”

The same philosopher casts his eye over the destruction of Sodom by fire from heaven, and of Jerusalem by the Roman army. His sensibilities are shocked by the idea of such scenes of distress and desolation. That God should visit so great a multitude of people, old and young, including so many thousands of harmless infants, with such overwhelming judgments, seems totally irreconcilable with his paternal character. Our philosopher, who feels for his fellow-creatures, cannot think, that a Being of infinite compassion could ever have taken pleasure in witnessing so awful an event, brought about too by his own agency. And though the evidence from history is

such as would satisfy him in other cases, he thinks it cannot be satisfactory in this, as it would involve us in the belief of a fact, so inconsistent with the moral perfection of God. So far as the Bible is concerned, instead of openly rejecting its authority, he goes about to put such a sense upon it, as he thinks it ought to have. He claims the right of proceeding in this way from one subject to another, and of rejecting or modifying any texts of Scripture, so that they may not oppose the notion which he has suffered to preoccupy his mind, in regard to the character of God. He seems to see that the common doctrines of depravity, atonement, election, regeneration, and the endless punishment of the wicked are incapable of being reconciled with the divine perfections. According to his maxim, therefore, these doctrines must all be rejected; and the Bible must be so explained, as to give them no support.

Now the foundation of such a philosopher's reasoning is just this: He has more confidence in his own preconceptions, than in the word of God. While he ought to guide his reason by the dictates of revelation; he labours to conform the dictates of revelation to the hasty judgments of reason. See how clearly and strongly the Scriptures assert the natural corruption of man. If with half the clearness and strength they asserted his native purity, how would Unitarians glory in the firm foundation of their faith? But no sooner does the word of God begin to assert man's native depravity, than it has to encounter a strong preconception, that the doctrine cannot consist with God's moral perfection, and cannot be true. Our opponents think that the Scriptures do not teach the doctrine. But would they think so, were they not biassed by a preconception against the doctrine? And must it not be evident even to themselves, that such a

preconception is likely to prevent all fair and impartial investigation of the evidence which supports the doctrine? How can there be a fair investigation of the meaning of Scripture by those, who have prejudged what its meaning must, or must not be? Is it not obvious, that they judge differently in regard to other doctrines, against which their prejudices are not arrayed? Is not evidence of inferior clearness perfectly satisfactory on a thousand other subjects? But here, according to the maxims which govern our opponents, it seems utterly impossible they should ever be convinced. Let the Scriptures say what they will; let them assert the doctrine of native depravity, and the other doctrines allied to it, in language ever so plain, and in circumstances which show, according to all just rules of interpretation, what the sense must be; and let it appear from the conduct of the writers, and from what they exhibited of their own feelings, that they did actually regard these doctrines, as divine truths; it still answers no purpose with our opponents. For they meet all this with the argument, that these doctrines can never be reconciled with the moral perfections of God. Viewing the doctrines in this light, and entertaining this strong prepossession against them, they can receive no result of experience, and no declaration of Scripture, as conclusive evidence of their truth. I say then, that so long as they suffer that notion of inconsistency to occupy their minds, and to control their faith; it is perfectly idle to cite the Scriptures as evidence. If Paul himself were here, and should declare the doctrines, as we understand them, to be according to truth; they would even then reject them. Just so far as their maxim is adopted, the authority of the Bible is given up, and the discussion proceeds on the ground of mere natural rea-

son. And even after it has been clearly proved that any particular doctrines are taught in the Bible; we must still inquire at the oracle of reason, whether those doctrines are worthy to be received.

I am aware that presenting the reasoning of our opponents in this light may be thought to savour but little of candour. But truly, I think they will not hesitate to acknowledge, that so far as the exercise of candour is concerned, I can justify myself by appealing to the standard which they themselves have established. For if it is consistent with candour for them to charge us with denying the moral perfection of God, or with holding sentiments implying such a denial; why should I be thought deficient in candour for endeavouring, according to my serious conviction, to show, that they entertain sentiments, or adopt a mode of reasoning, which involves the denial of the truth and authority of the Scriptures?

The same remarks apply to the other part of the objection against the evidence of native depravity; namely; that it cannot be admitted to be conclusive, because the doctrine is inconsistent with moral agency. But without repeating these remarks, I will just say, that it is altogether as proper for me to deny man's moral agency on account of its apparent inconsistency with the doctrine of depravity, as for others to deny man's depravity, on account of its apparent inconsistency with moral agency.

Let it not however be supposed, from any of the foregoing remarks, that I wish to discountenance direct and free inquiry respecting the consistency of our doctrine of depravity with the moral perfection of God; or that I think there is no other way of meeting the objection under consideration, than the one I have thus far

pursued. I must, however, view this as sufficient. And whether I succeed or not in my attempt to show, by another mode of reasoning, that the doctrine of depravity is reconcilable with the moral perfection of God and the moral agency of man, I shall consider the doctrine as worthy of unhesitating belief, if it has no support but this, which is indeed the best support of all,—that it is taught in the holy Scriptures.

Nor let it be supposed from the foregoing remarks, that I apprehend any peculiar difficulty in showing the consistency of native depravity with the divine perfections. There is certainly no contradiction in the terms; that is, the proposition which affirms the native depravity of man, does not, in the terms of it, contain a denial of the perfection of God. The inconsistency, if there is any, must be made to appear by an investigation of *the subject*. If Dr. Ware soberly thinks that there is an inconsistency; he ought not to content himself with such a bare assertion of it, as is suited to make an impression on those, who will not give themselves the trouble of thinking, or to excite prejudice in those who are governed by sounds, and first appearances. It behoves him to support his charge of inconsistency by substantial evidence. But it cannot surely be considered, as having any thing of the nature of evidence, for him to say, *that we can make no supposition upon which we shall be able to perceive the consistency between natural depravity and the divine goodness, or that the doctrine of native depravity certainly admits of no reconciliation with any notion we can have of the moral perfection of God*. These are strong affirmations, and doubtless sincere ones, expressing the real conviction of the writer. But he cannot expect us to receive them, as arguments. Should I think it best to make affirmations in the same way, expressive of *my*

views on this subject ; I should say, in direct opposition to what has just been quoted from our Author, that there is a very plain supposition, upon which we are able to perceive the perfect consistency of native depravity and divine goodness ; and this supposition is, that the existence of man, with such a nature or character as we ascribe to him, may, in the administration of a perfect moral government, be made ultimately conducive to the great end of benevolence, that is, the happiness of the universe. Or I should say thus ; that man's native depravity is not in the least inconsistent with divine *justice*, if it be so that man, notwithstanding his native depravity, never suffers more than what he truly deserves for his own personal sins ;—not inconsistent with divine *goodness*, if man's depravity is made an effectual means of promoting the object, at which goodness aims ;—and not inconsistent with *wisdom*, if the system, of which man's depravity is a part, is so contrived, that it is suited to promote the best end in the best manner.

But although, in this brief statement, I have made a supposition, according to which the native depravity of man must appear perfectly reconcileable with God's moral perfections ; I shall not stop here ; but shall proceed, once for all, freely to investigate this subject, and to inquire, whether there is any force in the objection, so often and so triumphantly repeated, that the doctrine of native depravity is totally inconsistent with the moral perfection of God, and can, on no supposition whatever, be reconciled with it.

What then do my opponents mean by saying, that any thing is inconsistent with the moral perfection of God ? that is, with his benevolence, or goodness ? Most obviously they must mean, that if that doctrine is true, or if that event takes place, God cannot be good ; in

other words, that he cannot have benevolent feelings, or he cannot pursue the end of a benevolent administration. It is clear that the end of true benevolence, whether in feeling or in action, is to do good, or to promote real happiness. And if the being who possesses perfect benevolence, has also an infinite understanding, and is capable of comprehending a vast system of intelligent beings, which extends to eternity ; the object of his benevolence must be the happiness of such a system—the highest degree of happiness of which that system is capable, taken in its whole extent and duration. Now the native depravity of man is plainly consistent with the divine benevolence, if it is, on the whole, consistent with the greatest good of the intelligent system. Do you ask how it can possibly be made consistent ? My answer is, it may, in one way or another, be the means of making a brighter and more diversified display of the divine perfections, and thus of giving the intelligent creation, as a whole, a higher knowledge and enjoyment of God. It may be the means of illustrating more clearly the excellence of the law and government of God, and of producing ultimately, through his moral kingdom, a purer and more ardent attachment to his character, and his administration ; so that his intelligent creatures, by means of the instruction and discipline in this way afforded, may be brought at length to a state of higher perfection and enjoyment, than they could attain in any other way. Through the vigilant wisdom and justice of civil rulers, such a happy result of rebellion sometimes appears in human governments. And why may it not be so in the divine government, which is directed by wisdom and justice infinitely more vigilant, and controlled by power infinitely more efficacious, than any human government ? If in the ways here suggested, or in other ways, the de-

pravity of man may be made to subserve the end of the divine administration; its existence is plainly consistent with the divine goodness; or, which is the same thing, it may exist, and yet God show himself to be infinitely good. The subject of native depravity is, in this respect, explained on the same principle with that of moral evil generally. If you ask, how the existence of moral evil can be consistent with the moral perfections of God; you ask a question of as difficult solution as the one we have been considering; and the proper answer to it must, in my view, be the same.

But has any thing ever taken place under the divine administration, which in any degree illustrates this subject? Are there any facts which tend to show, that the solution I have given of the difficulty, is conformable to truth, and ought to be satisfactory?

In reply to this, I refer the reader to all the instances recorded in the Scriptures, and all which have occurred in the common course of divine providence, in which the sins of men have been made the occasion of glory to God, and of good to his kingdom. These instances press upon our notice from every quarter. But I shall content myself with suggesting one or two of those which are most remarkable. No one will think it strange, that I should here mention the case of the Egyptian king; which I do, not because it is a case essentially different from others, but because the Scriptures make it a subject of particular remark, and give an explanation of it, which fully confirms the general principle involved in my reasoning. In a passage too weighty to be overlooked, and in language too plain to be misunderstood, God himself expressly informs us of the very purpose for which he raised that wicked man to the throne of Egypt. *Exod. ix. 16.* Was not the purpose which

in that case God had in view, and which he actually accomplished, a benevolent purpose? And were not all the means he employed, consistent with his moral perfections? And can any thing be clearer, than that the principal means employed was the diversified display the Egyptian monarch made of the most impious pride, and the most unrelenting hardness of heart? It is utterly in vain to attempt an enumeration of the instances, more or less remarkable, in which the sinful passions and actions of man have been made to praise God. The work of redemption exhibits this wonderful subserviency of moral evil to a benevolent end, with the greatest possible clearness. All those acts of God in the salvation of men, which are "to the praise of the glory of his grace," and all the songs of thanksgiving among the redeemed in heaven, are occasioned by human transgression. And a careful examination of this subject will show not only the fact, that moral evil is so overruled by the divine hand, as to be made actually subservient to the end of benevolence, but something of the *manner* in which it is done. I will only add here, that in regard to this subserviency of evil to good, there can be no distinction between moral evil generally, and that moral evil which is *native*. For if moral evil, occurring at *any* period of man's life, may be made to contribute to the end of a benevolent administration; why may not that which occurs at the earliest period?

Such, in brief, are my views, as to the actual consistency of man's native depravity with the divine perfections. I turn now to the objector, who thinks native depravity to be inconsistent with the divine perfections. Let him tell me definitely, *why* it is inconsistent. Because man, from the first of his existence as a moral agent, is sinful, does God cease to be good? May not God so overrule the corruption of our nature, that, in the final result of

his administration, it shall be the occasion of a brighter display of his holiness, and an augmentation of happiness in his universal empire? Cannot Omnipotence bring good out of evil in this case, as well as in others? How does it appear, that the moral perfection of God must necessarily preclude the existence of sin in man, at the commencement of his moral agency? Will the objector say, that *native* sinfulness, if it should exist, must of necessity be attributed to the *immediate agency* of God, and that this would make him the cause of moral evil in a sense, obviously inconsistent with his infinite holiness? I would request the objector, before adopting such a conclusion, to allow himself time for a little free inquiry.—Does not moral evil actually exist? Are not all men sinners? If so, then it must be allowed by both parties, that moral evil has a *beginning* in men. It is true, indeed, that Unitarians differ from us as to the time of its beginning. But when we assert that man is a sinner, or begins to sin, as soon as he is a moral agent, we no more attribute sin to the immediate agency of God, than those do, who assert that sin begins at any subsequent period. Show me how sin may begin to exist at any period of man's life, without implying an agency of God inconsistent with his holiness; and I will show you how it may begin to exist at the earliest period, without implying any such agency? If you say that sin, when it exists in mature age, is the free, unconstrained action of a rational and accountable being, and that all its guilt is chargeable upon him, and not upon God; I say the same respecting that sin, which we suppose belongs to man at his first existence. It is the act of a rational, accountable being; an act as free and unconstrained as any which takes place during his whole life; and none the less free and unconstrained, because for a time it

may begin and end in the affections,—the circumstances of the case not permitting it to show itself outwardly in a visible form. This is true of a thousand sins, of which men are guilty in every period of their life; sins which exist merely in the affections of the mind, and are visible only to the eye of conscience, and of God. Now I think it manifest, that between the affections found in a state of manhood, and those in early childhood, there is no difference as to their *nature*, though there is a vast difference as to their *strength*. Nor can there be any difference, as to the degree in which a child, and a person of mature age, is dependent on God in the exercise of his affections. From infancy to old age, man is in the highest degree dependent. He always lives, and moves, and has his being in God. The first movements of his moral nature, which must of necessity be affections merely, have precisely the same relation to the divine agency, as any moral affections afterwards. If God can create a being, who shall, at any time, be the subject of feelings and actions of a moral nature, or who shall, at any time, be a free, accountable agent; he can, if he please, create one who shall be a free, moral, accountable agent *from the beginning*. Suppose the first moral feelings and actions of such a being to be sinful; are they not still his own feelings and actions, for which he is justly accountable? With regard to the agency of God, it is evident that no difficulty attends that moral evil which begins thus early, and is therefore called native, more than attends that which originates at any subsequent period. Or to express it in another form; if God can, consistently with his holiness, create and preserve an intelligent being, who shall be a sinner at any period of his life; he can create and preserve one who shall be a sinner from the beginning. With respect to

the perfections and the agency of God, there appears no difference between the supposition that moral evil begins at the commencement of man's existence, and the supposition that it begins at a subsequent period, unless there is some *intrinsic* absurdity or difficulty in supposing it to begin so early. If there is any such absurdity or difficulty, it must relate to the subject of moral agency. It is then important to inquire, whether the doctrine of native depravity is inconsistent with a right view of moral agency. This inquiry will be pursued in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

Is THE doctrine of native depravity inconsistent with moral agency?

It seems to be frequently taken for granted by Dr. Ware, as well as by Dr. Taylor, and others, that man becomes a moral agent in consequence of an *antecedent* course of voluntary action; and particularly, that he becomes a *sinner* by a course of misconduct, which *precedes* his being a sinner. Dr. Ware says, pp. 33, 36, 37, that men become sinners by yielding to temptations—by obeying the impulse of the passions and the calls of appetite, in opposition to the direction of reason and the notices of conscience,—by subjecting themselves to the dominion of the inferior part of their nature,—by the abuse of God's gifts, &c. But does he mean to say, that all this conduct takes place, *before men become sinners*? Then he means to say, that they commit as great sins *before* they are sinners, as *after*. For what worse can real sinners do, than “yielding to temptation—obeying the im-

pulse of the passions in opposition to reason and conscience, subjecting themselves to the inferior part of their nature, and abusing God's gifts?" Or does Dr. Ware mean only to say, that these are the ways in which they manifest and increase their sinfulness? If so, his meaning is doubtless correct. It is certainly *sin*, for men to do the things above mentioned; and in the very act of doing them, they are *sinner*s.

But the question returns, whether native depravity is inconsistent with moral agency. There is no way to answer this satisfactorily, but by getting clear ideas of moral agency, as well as of native depravity, and then determining, by a careful comparison, whether they are repugnant to each other. What then is moral agency? Or to make the question more convenient, what is a *moral agent*? Answer. A moral agent is one who acts under a moral law, and is justly accountable for his conduct. Now we find it to be the opinion of Dr. Ware, pp. 21, 41, that "by their natural birth men become *reasonable, accountable* beings." This is as much as to say, they become *moral agents*. And if they are moral agents, they are capable of moral action; that is, capable of holiness and sin; as Dr. Ware often represents them to be. But if they are *capable* of sin, there is no absurdity in supposing that they may actually be the subjects of sin; and that they may be the subjects of sin, as soon as they are moral agents. In one place, which I have already noticed, Dr. Ware says boldly, they are so. In explaining the phrase, "All have sinned," he says it means, "all who are capable of sinning, all *as soon as they are capable of it, all as soon as they are moral agents.*" For the assistance which these passages afford, I am under particular obligations to Dr. Ware. If these statements of his are correct, as I am persuaded

they are ; there can be no inconsistency between native depravity and moral agency. Our Author seems here to rise to the highest point of Orthodoxy ; for he says, first, that “ all who are capable of sinning,—all who are moral agents, are sinners ; and that they are sinners *as soon* as they are capable of sinning, or *as soon as they are moral agents.*” And secondly, he says, that “ men are reasonable, accountable beings,” that is, moral agents, and of course capable of sin,—“ by their natural birth.” All, by their natural birth, are moral agents, and as soon as they are moral agents, they are sinners ;—*moral agents by nature, and sinners as soon as moral agents.* To this representation of Dr. Ware I fully accede ; nor do I believe that any man can perceive in it the least absurdity or inconsistency.

The great question with many is, how children can be capable of sin at so early a stage of their existence, as is supposed. But if God has made them moral agents ; if from the first he has constituted them “ reasonable, accountable beings ;” or if they are such “ by their natural birth,” as Dr. Ware expresses it ; are they not of course capable of sin from the first ? They must be as really capable of sin at the commencement of their moral existence, as at any subsequent period. If the objector denies this, then let him tell me how it can be, that men become more truly capable of sin, after they have been moral agents for some time, than when they *begin* to be moral agents. I speak not here, as to the *degree* of capability, but the *reality* of it. If at the commencement of moral existence, men are not as really capable of sin, as afterwards ; it must be because they are not really moral agents. And if they are not really moral agents, it must be because they have not the properties which are essential to moral agency. But Dr. Ware asserts

that they have these properties *by nature*; so that I have no controversy with him on this subject.

But if men, at the beginning of their existence, are not really moral agents; the present discussion has nothing to do with them at that period; for the very question, whether they are the subjects of moral evil, manifestly implies that they are capable of moral evil. I make it no part of my object in this discussion, to determine precisely the time, when moral agency begins. There are difficulties in the way of such a determination, which I feel myself wholly unable to surmount. My position is, that as soon as men are moral agents, they are sinners. Dr. Ware's limitation of the universal expression, "all have sinned," p. 44, is undoubtedly just. It seems to me as unreasonable and absurd to say, that human beings are really sinners before they are moral agents, as to say that birds or fishes are sinners. Dr. Ware's position is mine, that *men are sinners as soon as they are moral agents*.

But I wish to take a still nearer and more particular view of this point. Let me say then, that if men at first, have a low degree of moral agency, or a low and feeble degree of those faculties which constitute them moral agents, as we find the case actually is; they must be sinners in a correspondent degree. This view of the subject appears to me perfectly reasonable. Men have by nature the constitution—they have all the faculties, essential to moral agency. But at first they have them in a small degree. Of course they are in a small degree accountable creatures—in a small degree capable of sin; and if they are really sinners, they must be so only in the same degree. According to this view, there must be the same difference between men of mature age and little children in regard to their sinfulness, as there

is in regard to their intellectual and moral powers. In early childhood, there is only the feeble dawn of reason and conscience; only the commencement, and that almost imperceptible, of intellectual and moral faculties, and of moral agency—much like the commencement of corporeal powers and corporeal action in infancy. As childhood advances, the light of reason and conscience waxes brighter; the intellectual and moral powers gradually increase, till they come to a good degree of strength. Now reason and observation lead us to think it is so, in regard to moral evil. In early childhood, there is a small and almost imperceptible beginning of sinful affection, a beginning exactly corresponding to the feeble dawn of reason and conscience, and to the incipient state of moral agency. After this, sinful affection and action gradually increase with the increasing strength of the intellectual and moral faculties, till they rise to their ultimate state. Is there any thing incredible in all this? Is it not fully confirmed by the actual appearances of human nature from infancy to mature age, as well as by the representations of Scripture?

But our attention is called to another view of the subject. In regard to moral agency, as well as many other subjects, Dr. Ware seems to agree with Dr. John Taylor, who invests his opinions and arguments with such charms of genius and taste, as are found in few writers of any age. Dr. Ware p. 20, represents man as without either sin or holiness, until he has, by *the exercise of his faculties*, actually formed a character either good or bad." He must mean an exercise of the faculties which *precedes* the existence of either sin or holiness. In another place, he seems fond of representing, that *men make themselves sinners*; which, connected as it is, must mean, that they are not sinners before they make themselves

so, and that the effort, or the exercise of their faculties, whatever it may be, by which they *make themselves sinners*, takes place *before* they are in any degree the subjects of sin. For it would hardly be to his purpose to say, that men *make themselves sinners* by an exercise of their faculties, after they have become sinners; though he might very justly affirm, that they make themselves *more and more sinful* in that way.

This then, if I mistake not, is Dr. Ware's theory, as it seems to be of many celebrated writers; namely; that men make themselves sinners, or bring themselves into a state of sinfulness, or form a sinful disposition in themselves, by an exercise of their powers, or a course of voluntary action, which is antecedent to the first existence of sin in them. It is most certainly Dr. Ware's meaning, that the exercise or course of action, by which men make themselves sinners, precedes the first existence of sin in them; because it is his object to account for the fact, that men first become sinners; and we should not expect that he would ascribe the *commencement* or *origin* of moral evil in mankind to an exercise of their faculties, which takes place *after* that same moral evil has begun to exist. His theory then is, that before men have any taint of sin, they go through an exercise of their faculties, or a course of action, which results in sin, or by which they make themselves sinners.

The difficulties, with which this theory is encumbered, I have before hinted at. But I shall now set them before the reader more particularly and fully.

1. When Dr. Ware, in stating this theory, speaks of "the exercise of the faculties," he must mean those faculties of moral agents, which he thinks men possess by their natural birth. I ask then, whether they can exercise those faculties, without being in

fact moral agents ; or in other words, without exercising their moral agency ? My next question is, how they can be moral agents, and perform the actions, or have the feelings of moral agents, and yet have neither holiness nor sin ? If they are moral agents, they are accountable to God. Accountable for what ? Why, according to one part of Dr. Ware's scheme, accountable for an exercise of the faculties, which is neither holy nor sinful ; not *holy*, for if it were holy, it surely could not be the way in which men "make themselves sinners ;"—and not sinful, because, according to this scheme, sin begins to exist as its *consequence*, not as its attribute, or attendant circumstance. If then this theory is true, moral agents, who are of course accountable to God, are, in this case, accountable for an exercise of their powers, which is neither holy nor sinful. What does such accountability amount to ? Further. If they are moral agents, their actions have a relation to a moral law, and so must be conformed or not conformed, obedience or disobedience. But here is an exercise of faculties or a course of action in moral agents, which partakes neither of obedience nor disobedience. What then is its relation to law ? And of what account is it in a moral view ?

But I have another question ; namely ; how can such an exercise of the faculties, or such a course of action, as is supposed by Dr. Ware, produce the effect attributed to it ? How can actions, which *precede* the *existence* of moral evil, and so have in them nothing of the nature of moral evil, tend to produce moral evil, as their result ? Was there ever any thing like this in the history of the human mind ? that is, that a rational, voluntary exercise should produce an effect, of an entirely different nature from itself ? The exercise of reason may produce an improvement of reason, or may excite a rational affection.

The exercise of any perverse, corrupt passion may increase the strength of that passion, and tend to bring the mind under its influence. But show me any fact in human nature, which can lead us to think, that actions, in no degree sinful, will produce sin. In the case before us, why should they produce sin, rather than holiness? Have they, or has the mind in which they exist, any tendency to sin, rather than to holiness? But this would be contrary to Dr. Ware's scheme, as exhibited, p. 20, 21, and elsewhere. Does sin, then, rather than holiness, result from those actions, by *chance*, that is, without any thing in them, which can be a cause of this result, rather than of another? If so, then the task still lies on Dr. Ware's hands, of accounting by some adequate cause, for the first existence of moral evil in the human mind.

The difficulties I have now suggested, though quickly disposed of by men of superficial understanding, will not easily be passed over by those, who are accustomed to close and patient investigation. Dr. Ware attributes the first existence of sin in the individuals of our race, to a certain exercise of their rational faculties, or a certain course of voluntary action, as its cause. I can well enough perceive that, according to the known laws of the human mind, the exercise of the faculties will strengthen the faculties, and that any course of voluntary action will strengthen and confirm all those dispositions which it involves. But here is a scheme quite different; not that the faculties of the mind, not that the moral dispositions acquire strength by exercise, nor that intellectual and moral habits are in this way generated, or confirmed; but that an exercise of the faculties, or a course of action, which has not the smallest degree of any thing sinful in it, is yet the cause which produces sin, or the very way in which men first *make themselves sinners*. I

ask for facts, plain, obvious facts, which men have been conscious of in themselves or witnessed in others, to establish this theory. I can indeed readily admit, that children and men may exercise their faculties for some time, before they make a particular disposition or trait of character, which belongs to them, manifest to others. This may be owing to the weakness of the disposition, or to the absence of those causes, which would excite it in any sensible degree and give it a visible form, or to the influence of causes which lead to a studied concealment. But in all such cases, the disposition exists—actually exists, though in a low and invisible degree. Motives excite it. Exercise strengthens it. Occasions give it form, and bring it out to view. But according to the settled constitution of human nature, no motives, no exercise of the mind, no occasions can ever produce a *new* moral disposition or affection, that is to say, one which does not in some way already belong to the mind. They can no more do this, than they can produce a new intellectual faculty, or a new bodily appetite.—It is readily granted, that motives and occasions may produce a new modification of a moral disposition, or a new combination of different dispositions, and in that way may originate a new form of affection, so that a new name will become necessary; as a man, who has a spirit of selfishness lurking within him, may, at one time, be placed in circumstances, which will give his selfishness the form of pride or vanity; at another time, the form of covetousness; at another time, the form of envy or revenge. But the general nature of pride, vanity, avarice, envy and revenge is involved in that selfishness, which before lurked in the mind, and which may be considered as the original affection. In all these cases, there is nothing new in its nature. The disposition, which is excited in

a course of voluntary action, is one which before existed either in the same form, or in a different one. But Dr. Ware's scheme is very diverse from this. He undertakes to account for the *origin* of a sinful disposition, by an exercise of the faculties, in which that disposition is in no sense involved. Let Dr. Ware prove, that there is any connexion between such a cause and such an effect.

Before leaving this part of Dr. Ware's scheme, take one short view of it. He undertakes to account for the first existence of sin in individuals of the human race. But how does he account for it? He says, *they make themselves sinners*, and that they do it *by yielding to temptation, by obeying the impulse of passion in opposition to reason and conscience, and by subjecting themselves to the dominion of the inferior part of their nature*. But how can all these things take place, without implying that sin already exists? These certainly are sins, if there is any such thing as sin in the world. But these particular modes of sinning are represented as accounting for the fact that men are sinners. Thus the same thing is made to be cause and effect. But how will Dr. Ware account for these particular modes of sinning; namely, men's yielding to temptations which it is in their power to resist, obeying the impulse of passion, &c? If sin in any other form is to be accounted for by a proper cause; why not in these forms? Or are we to stop short here, as Dr. Ware seems, p. 37, to think necessary? Speaking with reference to the origin of sin, he says; "when we have traced back the wickedness of men, as it actually exists, to the voluntary neglect, perversion, and abuse of the nature God has given them, we can go no farther." But after all, this is only tracing back the wickedness of men, to itself—wickedness considered generally or in the gross, to wickedness in particular forms.

This corrupt nature of men is what they have made for themselves ; and they have made it by the neglect, perversion, and abuse of the nature God has given them. But their nature must have been already corrupt, when such *neglect*, *perversion*, and *abuse* took place. These were sins. And one would rather suppose it rational to make a corrupt nature account for these particular sins, than to make these account for that ; because, manifestly, if either precedes the other, and may act as a cause of the other, it is the sinful disposition or corrupt nature, not any particular modes of sinning. Common sense leads us to ascribe sinful actions, or particular modes of sinning, to a sinful disposition or heart, as the source, and to speak of them as deriving from that source all their criminality.

In the treatment of this subject, Dr. Ware seems to have a very commendable motive, that is, a conviction of the weakness and fallibility of man. He says, p. 37, " Questions may be asked upon this statement, which cannot be answered, because we have not faculties which enable us in any cases, to trace things up to the first cause and spring of action." Had Dr. Taylor, and other writers like him, observed this maxim, they never would have attempted to trace back the existence of moral evil in man to its first cause ; or if, while attempting this, they had been under the guidance of reason or philosophy, they never would have fixed upon the operation of a free-will, or self-determining power. Because it is perfectly obvious, that the particular motions or determinations of the will are prompted and governed by the disposition or affections of the heart. This is one of the laws of our nature. And if in any case it should cease to be so, our volitions would cease to be either good or bad. If a man should have any volition, or

make any choice, which was not prompted by a disposition or affection of the heart; that volition or choice would no more be of a moral nature, than an accidental motion of the hand. This sentiment is recognized in all the judgments we pass upon the volitions and external actions of men. The moment you decide what was the disposition of heart, which gave rise to any particular volitions, or determinate acts of the will, you decide the character of those volitions. But if, in any case, you are unable to decide the former, you are of course unable to decide the latter. Or if, in any case, you could entirely separate particular volitions from the disposition of the heart; you could no longer regard them, as of a moral nature. This is the constitution of the human mind; the irreversible appointment of God. The prevailing disposition or affection of the heart prompts particular acts or determinations of the will, and satisfactorily accounts for them. For example, the particular choice or determination of Judas to accept the thirty pieces of silver, and deliver Christ to the rulers, arose from his avarice, or from his resentment, or from both. As long as men are free, they will follow their inclination, or choose and act according to their disposition. But was there ever any such thing in human nature, as that particular volitions or determinate acts of the will preceded and produced the disposition or affection of the heart? And if not,—then, how can any power or act of free-will be considered philosophically, as the cause of what is sinful in the human character?

There is another commendable motive which seems to have influenced Dr. Ware. He says, p. 37, “No difficulty so great and insurmountable meets us, as, on the opposite theory, is the moral difficulty in which it involves the character of the Author of our being.” My reply

is, first, that no proof has ever yet been given, that the doctrine of native depravity involves the character of God in any difficulty; and secondly; that if God's character is to be vindicated in relation to this subject, it must be by something better than sophistical reasoning.

But after all, Dr. Ware seems to have no kind of hesitation, as to the truth of his system, and the conclusiveness of his reasoning. He has told us, as though it were perfectly obvious and certain, (and the same may be repeated by others,) "that man is by nature capable of making a right or wrong choice, and no more inclined to one than the other; that he makes himself a sinner by yielding to temptation and obeying the impulse of passion; that all his wickedness may be accounted for without any native bias to sin; that it may all be but the effect of neglect to restrain appetites in themselves good, to give proper direction to powers designed to be useful, and in general, of a failure to exercise properly, in temptations and trials, the powers of direction and resistance, which were in themselves sufficient." Now I have already granted that these are ways in which men commit sin; ways in which they exhibit and increase their depravity. But I might say too, that mankind sin by worshipping idols, by taking the name of God in vain, by profaning the Sabbath, by covetousness and revenge. And why would it not be just as proper for me to account for the fact, that men are sinners, by these forms of sin, and to say, that their depravity is but the effect of idolatry, profaneness, covetousness and revenge, as to do what Dr. Ware has done? The plain fact is, that the neglect and perversion and abuse of our faculties, yielding to temptation, and the other things which Dr. Ware has mentioned, and all the more particular instances of sin, as idolatry, profaneness,

covetousness, slander, revenge, &c, constitute human wickedness. They make up the amount of man's sin; as the parts of any thing, taken together, make up the whole. But these various parts of human wickedness, or ways of sinning, are not the cause of the depravity of the heart, but spring from it; as our Saviour teaches, Matt. xv. 19. "Out of the *heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." These things *show* the depravity of the heart, but do not *produce* it, nor in any wise *account* for it. Name any form of human wickedness, any thought, volition, choice, action, which is sinful; any instance of yielding to temptation; any perversion or abuse of our faculties; and you name that which proceeds from depravity of heart. If you say it is not so, then you say, that man can commit sin with a sinless heart, or else without any heart at all. Now take the earliest act of sin which men commit, the first sinful thought, volition, or choice, the first yielding to temptation, the first neglect or abuse of God's gifts, which takes place in children; and even that implies a sinful disposition, or depravity of heart, and proceeds from it. The sinfulness of the heart must be resorted to, as the fountain of every act and every form of sin, from the commencement of moral agency. And when Dr. Ware says, all men are *sinner*s "as soon as they are moral agents," he does as much as to say, they have a *sinful or depraved heart* as soon as they are moral agents; as there is no other way in which they can be sinners. If then he would account for the origin of moral evil in man, he must account for the wrong disposition or sinfulness of heart, which is just as evidently presupposed in every particular act and every mode of sinning, as goodness of disposition is presupposed in every act of obedience, or as the principle of gravitation is presupposed

in every instance in which a stone falls to the earth, or any one body tends towards another. The first sinfulness or depravity of the heart is no more *produced* by a sinful volition or action, than the principle of gravitation is produced by the falling of a stone, or the descent of a river. My position is, that men have this sinfulness or depravity of heart by nature, and that it is not the effect of any preceding volition or action in them, nor the effect of any change they undergo after their birth. And in reality, this seems to be taught by Dr. Ware himself in some remarkable passages of his Letters. We gather from pp. 20, 21, 41, 45, that men are by nature accountable beings, or moral agents, but that they are destitute of holiness, and not inclined to holiness. And is it not sin, for those who are accountable beings, to be destitute of holiness, and destitute of all inclination to holiness? Is not this the very case, upon which our Saviour put the mark of his high displeasure, when he said, "I know that ye have not the love of God in you?" But every doubt as to Dr. Ware's views would seem to be taken away by what we find pp. 44, 47, where he represents all men as reasonable beings or moral agents by nature, and sinners as soon as moral agents; and where he represents Christians as delivered from the state of wrath in which they had lived *from their birth*. This is all I would contend for. Dr. Ware would hardly acknowledge this to be really a part of his system. But it is a little remarkable that, in a free investigation of the sense of Scripture, he should let fall expressions so contrary to his own theory, and so consonant to ours.*

* Dr. Ware appears to have been somewhat inadvertent in his language, or unfortunate in his argument on some parts of this subject. In his remarks on Ephes. ii. 3, "And were by nature children of wrath," he says, "it does not point to any thing inbred or native—not to the state of men as they come into the world;" but yet a few lines after, he says it denotes that very state, "into which they came *by their birth*." p. 45.

We have now come in our reasoning, to an *ultimate fact*. Man, in the state into which he is born, has a sinful heart, or is inclined to sin. If any one thinks this supposition inconsistent with moral agency; I ask, how it is any more inconsistent with moral agency for man to be a sinner, or to be inclined to sin at first, than afterwards? If you deny that man can begin to be a sinner at the commencement of his moral agency, or that his first moral affections or actions can be sinful; then tell me when he can begin to be a sinner. Can he the second hour, or month, or year after his moral agency commences? But if he has been exercising his moral agency an hour or month or year, without sin, he has been exercising a holy agency; and he must have done something towards acquiring a habit of holiness. Now is it more easy and more consistent to suppose, that he will begin to sin after such a habit of holiness is formed, than before? No supposition can be made of sin's commencing in man at any period subsequent to his first existing as a moral agent, which will, in the smallest degree, relieve the difficulty attending the supposition of its commencing at first. A being constituted, as man is, an accountable, moral agent, must be blame-worthy for every affection and action which is not conformed to the rule of duty, *whenever* that affection or action takes place. If you deny this, you deny that the rule of duty is just. If you allow this, you allow that sin's commencing at the commencement of man's moral existence does not prevent its ill-desert.

I have wished to dwell upon this point long enough to make it perfectly plain, and to prevent, if possible, the endless repetition of the saying, that man cannot be culpable for any thing which he has by nature—for any thing which is not the *fruit* or *consequence* of his own choice.

Nothing can be more groundless than this notion. For whenever, and in whatever way, man has what the divine law forbids, or is destitute of what it requires, he is culpable ; unless the law itself is in fault.

Mankind will indeed have difficulties respecting that agency, which God is supposed to exercise in this case, and the consistency of it with his infinite holiness and goodness. An outcry is raised against the Orthodox for charging it to the fault of sinners, that they are what God made them. And though it has been shown a thousand times, that our doctrine is liable to no valid objection in this respect ; the objection is still reiterated ; just as though the writings of the Edwardses and others on this subject had never been published, or had been fairly confuted.

My general remark on this topic is, that, in regard to the divine agency, and the divine goodness, the theory which I advocate is liable to no such objection as that above suggested, more than the theory of my opponent. The difficulties attending his theory, are perfectly obvious to every intelligent man. Human beings, he would say, are brought into being in a state where they are exposed to danger. But if there must be danger, still why are they not fortified against it ? Why are not poor, frail creatures, who have as yet no moral principle to guide them, so aided by divine goodness at the outset, that they shall take a right direction ? They are at first, it seems, in a state of perfect equilibrium, inclined neither one way nor the other. Their Maker sees this. He has put them in this state. Why does he not, at this critical period, when they are so weak, and so dependent on him, just interpose, and turn the scale in favour of holiness ? Why does he leave all, when they first act as moral beings, to act wrong—to catch the fa-

tal contagion of sin? Why does he expose them to that contagion? And how does it happen that, without any predisposition to evil, they all run into it? The scale equally balanced, without the least tendency one way or the other, always turns the wrong way. And God stands by, and sees it, and lets it be, when a very little help from him would prevent. And is there no difficulty in this?

But considering the importance attached to the particular subject now before us, I shall extend my remarks a little farther; making it my object to show, that the scheme of Unitarians is attended with as many, and as great difficulties, as that of the Orthodox.

It will doubtless be consistent with Dr. Ware's views, to admit any divine agency in dependent beings, which is necessary to their existing and acting, and which is suited to their rational and moral nature. Philosophical Unitarians, who respect the authority of Hartley, or Priestley, will maintain, as strenuously as any of the Orthodox, that all the volitions and actions of men, whether good or bad, result from causes, which operate according to the settled laws of our nature; and that those causes are entirely under God's control, and are made efficacious by his will. Indeed I see not how any man can deny this, without falling into atheism. To prevent misapprehension in the minds of any of my readers, I will here add, that the agency which we ascribe to God in the formation and preservation of moral agents, and in the direction of those causes which determine their moral actions, is not to be illustrated by the agency of God in the natural world. God's forming a moral agent is not like his forming a stone or a tree. His giving activity to man, and efficacy to the moral causes which operate upon him, is not like his giving efficacy to

the causes which relate to the growth of a tree, or to the motion of the planets. The influence by which God, in any case, leads men to act, is an influence suited to their rational, active nature. It is not only consistent with their moral agency, but is its grand security. The causes which, according to the divine appointment, act upon moral agents, do indeed produce *effects*. But what are those effects, but rational, moral actions, actions of such a nature, that those, who perform them, are justly and in the highest degree accountable?

After these explanatory observations, I request my opponents candidly to inquire, whether the Orthodox theory is involved in any difficulty with respect to the divine agency, from which theirs is free. Is more divine agency necessary to account for moral action in the first stage of our existence, than afterwards? Or in accounting for men's beginning to sin as soon as they begin to be moral agents, is it necessary that the influence which God exerts, or the causes which he appoints, should be applied to them in a different manner from what they are in regard to sins afterwards committed? Are not men at all times equally dependent on God? Are not their feelings and actions regulated by the same causes at the beginning of their moral existence, as at any other period? And are they not as really accountable, when they first exist as moral agents, as when they have been moral agents for years? I speak not here, as to the degree in which they exert their rational powers, or the degree in which they are praise-worthy, or blame-worthy; but as to the fact of their really exerting them, and the fact of their being accountable. Now how can it be supposed, that the theory of native depravity involves any greater difficulty in regard to the divine agency, than any other theory which admits that man is a

sinner ; inasmuch as the only difference in this respect is, that, according to one, man begins to be a sinner earlier, than according to the other ? Those who assert that men begin to be sinners at a later period, are as much obliged to account for that fact without involving a divine agency that is inadmissible, as we are to account for the fact that men are sinners from the first. The fact which they are to account for, is, that men who have been moral agents for some time, and have, by the exercise of holiness, done something towards forming a habit of holiness, should then become sinners. The task of accounting for this is, to say the least, as hard as what falls to us. For how is it that the holy affections, which have for some time been acquiring strength by exercise, should, in every human being, so easily give place to sinful affections ? and that a habit, which has attained more or less confirmation, should be so easily overcome ? How is it that men can, according to the fixed laws which regulate the mind, be uniformly induced to sin, by any causes whatever ? Are not all the causes, which operate upon them, under the direction of the Almighty ? Suppose they are drawn aside from duty by temptations arising from external objects. Who is it but God that formed and arranged those objects ? And who is it but God, that has given man that constitution of body and mind, which exposes him to receive an impression from those objects, and to be drawn aside by their influence ? Who is it that places him in such a situation, that those objects acquire so mighty a sway over his feelings and his actions ? How easy would it be for that God, who contrives and rules all things, so to direct the circumstances of man, or, in all circumstances, so to influence his mind, that he should never fall into

sin? Or suppose he is drawn into sin by his appetites and passions. Who gave him those appetites and passions? And who gave them power thus to influence his conduct? Or who gave him a moral constitution so weak, as to be uniformly overcome by such an influence? Or to go back a little farther. When God formed the plan of this world, did he not clearly see how the mind of man, placed under the influence of such causes, would operate? Did he not see how it would evolve its powers and its affections; how it would be impressed by other objects; and what would ultimately be its moral aspect? Did he not foresee all this? Did he not form things as they are, with a perfect foreknowledge of the result? Was it possible for him to adopt such a scheme, made up of causes and effects in the moral as well as in the natural world, with any other view, than that the consequences which have actually taken place, should take place? Say, if you please, that man's conduct and character are owing to his own free will. Did not God give him his free will? And when he gave it, did he not know exactly what it was, and how it would operate? And is it not according to his plan, that man's free will is influenced as it is by the various causes which affect it? Should it be said, the will is prompted to act by no motive or cause extraneous to itself; my reply would be, first, that this would relieve no difficulty in regard to the character and agency of God. For if the will were not actuated by external motives or causes, then we should be under the necessity of concluding that God so constituted the will, that it should be moved to act by *causes within itself*, those causes, and the influence they should have on the mind, being as much dependent on a divine arrangement, as any thing else. But I should reply, secondly, that as man is in

fact constituted, such a supposition is not admissible. Because acts of the will, not prompted by the disposition of the heart, nor by any other motive, could have no moral character. Of this any man may be satisfied, who will allow himself to think. It is perfectly plain, that any determinations of the will, in order to be virtuous or vicious, must be influenced by motives, and by motives of a moral nature. Motives are the proximate causes of all voluntary actions; and must be so, or we cease to be moral agents. But are not these motives wholly under the divine control?

Now let Dr. Ware, in view of the whole subject, clearly show, how the concern which God must have with moral actions, in any instance of transgression, which takes place in any period of life, can be admitted, without dishonour to his character; and I will show how it can be admitted in the case of that early transgression, which our doctrine asserts. I insist that a moral depravity, existing from the first, involves no greater difficulty respecting the divine agency, than the scheme advocated by our opponents.

The truth of Dr. Ware's declaration, that "we have not faculties which enable us in any cases to trace things up to the first cause and spring of action," I do not admit, without some limitation. It is indeed true in all cases, where God has not, in one way or another, given us sufficient information. But as to the subject now under consideration, God has not left us in such profound ignorance, as seems to be signified by the above cited remark. And is there not an appearance, in this place, of Dr. Ware's shrinking back from the task of tracing the universal wickedness of man up to its cause or spring, lest he should run himself upon the same difficulty, which he charges upon the Orthodox doctrine? But in reali-

ty, how can he excuse himself from attempting, by some adequate cause, to account for that universal wickedness which, as a matter of fact, he frequently acknowledges? It behoves him at least, to admit candidly, and without fear of consequences, the natural, obvious meaning of those texts of Scripture, which expressly assign such a cause; and not to impose upon himself, or his readers, by a representation, which does nothing more or less, than to make sin the cause of itself. He surely could not mean to say, that it has no cause; for this would be the same as saying, that it takes place by chance—that it is a mere accident, or mishap. And who ever thought himself accountable for the freaks of chance?

Possibly Dr. Ware might allow, that our rational, moral nature has settled laws, and always acts under the influence of moral causes, and yet say, it is not for us to know, what those laws or causes are. But most certainly, this must be regarded as a suitable subject of inquiry. “The proper study of mankind is man.” Nor does modesty or humility forbid us to extend, as far as possible, our knowledge of the properties of the mind, and of the causes which influence its actions. Nor does honesty permit us to stifle or conceal our convictions. Knowledge in regard to this general subject is of the highest practical importance. For there is no way, in which we can exercise any salutary discipline over our own minds, or attain any thing like self-government, unless we have learnt, in a good degree, the attributes and laws of our intellectual and moral nature. But how is this knowledge to be obtained? Plainly, by experience and observation. From ourselves and others we learn in what manner, and under what causes the mind acts. Now it might be easy enough for Dr. Ware to account for the moral disorders which prevail in the world, if the single

fact were admitted, that men are actually depraved, or have become sinners. For it is what every body knows, that men will act according to their prevailing disposition, and that their disposition is strengthened and confirmed by repeated acts. But the difficulty, which it behoves my opponent to solve, is, that reasonable, moral beings, coming into existence with a nature perfectly pure—with a nature not in the least inclined to evil, should universally become sinners, as soon as they are capable of action. No act of the *will* can account for this fact. Certainly no *right* act of the will can account for it. And there can be no wrong act of the will, before there is a wrong disposition or affection of heart. But if men have a wrong disposition, they are already depraved, and their being so is not by any means to be accounted for, by that sinful act of the will, which takes place after they become so.

The corrupting influence of bad example is mentioned by Dr. Ware and others, to account for the early and general depravity of mankind. But is this satisfactory? Upon the supposition that men are free from all wrong bias, and perfectly pure, they can have no disposition to follow a bad example, or in the least degree to be pleased with it. And if they have no disposition to follow it, or be pleased with it, it surely cannot injure them. There is no conceivable way, in which any bad example, any temptation or solicitation to sin from without, can be injurious to us, but by meeting with a disposition in us which concurs with it, and draws us into compliance. The power of temptation, whenever it prevails, lies in such a disposition in us. But such a disposition is sinful. Where it exists, even in the smallest degree, sin is already begun. Jesus was always, from the first, perfectly free from any sinful disposition: and

therefore no temptation had any effect upon him, but to exercise and confirm his virtue. Temptation never produces its effect upon moral agents, either in a compulsory manner, or by chance. They have a propensity, often unperceived by themselves, to the sins, which they are tempted to commit. The prevalence of temptation to draw them into sin is always considered a proof, that there is something wrong in their disposition. Were it possible that temptation should in any case have influence to lead men into sin, when there is no sinful inclination mixing with it, and giving it influence; their compliance might be a misfortune, but could not be a crime. It appears therefore, that the influence of temptation, though it may account for the first display of moral evil, or for the first outward, palpable act of sin, cannot account for the first existence of that which is the root and essence of all sin, namely, a corrupt disposition of heart.

The attempt of Dr. Taylor to account for the corruption of the world by the influence of bad example, is particularly answered by Edwards. The following is a summary of the answer.—It is accounting for the corruption of the world by itself. For the universal prevalence of bad examples is the very corruption to be accounted for. If mankind are naturally no more inclined to evil than to good; how comes it to pass, that there are, in all ages, so many more bad examples, than good ones? Or if there are not more bad ones than good, how is it that the bad are so much more followed? And when opposition has been made by good examples, how comes it to pass that it has had so little effect to stem the general current of wickedness? There have in different ages been examples of eminent piety and goodness, as that of Noah, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, of the Pro-

phets, apostles, and martyrs, but especially the example of Christ, which was in all respects perfect, and was exhibited in a manner and in circumstances to excite the highest possible interest. These examples are constantly held up to view in the Scriptures, and by the ministers of religion, and would surely produce a general effect in Christian lands, were there not a propensity in man to follow bad examples rather than good ones.

Again. The influence of bad example, without corruption of nature, will not account for children's universally committing sin, as soon as they are capable of it, especially the children of eminently pious parents.

Several Unitarians have triumphantly repeated of late, what Dr. Taylor said long ago, that the occurrence of sin in Adam, who is admitted on both sides to have been at first sinless, invalidates the grand argument of the Orthodox in proof of *native* depravity.

I frankly acknowledge that this fact does invalidate the argument of the Orthodox, so far as they have attempted to prove the *native* depravity of men from the naked fact, that they all commit sin. Although all who have come to adult years, are sinners; this, *by itself*, is no conclusive proof, that they were sinners, *from their birth*. For if an individual, and that individual the parent of our race, may change from native innocence to sin; we could not, by our own reason, certainly determine, that it would be impossible for the whole race to change in like manner. We must look then for facts. And for the evidence of facts, we must rely wholly on our own experience and observation, and on the word of God. If we could call to remembrance several years at the commencement of our life, in which we were wholly without sin; or if we learnt, by careful observation, that children generally live a number of

years in a perfectly sinless state; or if the Scriptures taught us that such is the state of human beings at the beginning of their life; we should be obliged to admit the original purity of their nature, as we do that of Adam, though they all become sinners afterwards. In regard to Adam, there is satisfactory proof of the fact, that he was, at first, in a state of holiness, and for a time continued in that state. But where is the evidence that such is the first moral state of his posterity? We have seen abundant evidence, that the contrary is true. In the case of Adam, we have evidence, that his transgressing the divine law implied a *change* of his moral nature, from holiness to sin. But respecting his posterity, both experience and the word of God lead us to conclude, that the only moral change they are capable of, is from sin to holiness. The two cases then are materially different. And we can by no means reason respecting the one, as we do respecting the other. The sin of Adam can afford no evidence, that his nature was corrupt from the first. But the sin of his posterity, *circumstanced as it is*, affords the most conclusive evidence, that they are, from the first, subjects of a corrupt nature. Just as the case may be in bodily diseases. A man may have a consumption, when there is no proof that it is a native or constitutional disorder. But a consumption in other cases may be attended with circumstances, which prove beyond a doubt, that the disorder was founded in the original constitution. Both in regard to the bodily and the spiritual disorder, our single inquiry is, whether the circumstances of the case prove it to be natural. What I have said, Chapter III, is the substance of the argument, by which I prove the moral depravity of mankind to be *native*. But there is no evidence at all that Adam's depravity was native. I say then, we cannot reason from one to

the other, because the circumstances of the two are materially different. I do not rely on the fact, taken by itself, that mankind are all sinners; because if there were any reason to suppose that mankind exist for a time in a sinless state, as Adam did, their being sinners afterwards would not show what their state was originally. But it is as true of Adam, as of any other man, that every sinful volition and act of his presupposed a sinful disposition, and must have arisen from it. And the first existence of that sinful disposition in his case is a fact as hard to be accounted for, as the existence of *native* depravity in his posterity. The commencement of sin in both cases, as also in the case of the angels who kept not their first state, is to be regarded as an ultimate fact in God's empire; a fact perfectly consistent with the holiness of his character, and with the principles of moral agency. I should be content to consider it in this light, though I should be compelled to leave it totally unexplained, and should find it encompassed with a host of difficulties, still more formidable than any I have seen. But if Unitarians choose to call up again the reasoning of Dr. Taylor in order to show the weakness of one of the arguments employed by the Orthodox; I must say, their success in this attempt will appear less complete than they have imagined. It is a principle founded on the laws of nature, that the fruit shows not only what the tree now is, but what it was from its origin, from its first vegetation, unless there is evidence that it has in some way undergone a change since. I do not mean to make an argument of a simile, nor to carry the analogy implied in it beyond due limits. But in truth, it is as plainly according to the general constitution of heaven, to consider the life of man to be a development of his intellectual and moral nature, under the influence of

those various causes which act upon it from the first, as to consider the growth and fruit of a tree to be the development of its original nature, acted upon by correspondent causes. This principle holds good in all cases, unless there is proof of such a change as has been suggested above.

CHAPTER VI.

I SHALL now consider the manner in which Dr. Ware confutes several arguments, which the Orthodox derive from Scripture in support of the doctrine of depravity.

In my Letter, I cited Gen. vi, 5, not as a direct, but an indirect proof of the Orthodox doctrine of depravity. My object in quoting this particular passage was to illustrate the general nature of the argument from the Old Testament. I shall not take time to expose again the objection, which Dr. Ware urges against it, as it is the same with that, which I particularly noticed in Letter V. Dr. Ware has made no attempt to invalidate the argument, on which I chiefly relied for the confirmation of my theory. I had stated, that the Apostle quotes promiscuously from the Old Testament, passages descriptive of the wickedness of mankind formerly, as equally applicable to the human race at all times, and that, if the passages referred to are not applicable to mankind universally, the Apostle has given us sophistry instead of argument. My reasoning on the subject is given at length in my fifth Letter, to which I beg leave to refer the reader. It was the

reasoning on which I rested for the truth of my position; and it deserved the attention of Dr. Ware, as much as any thing I had written. But without any particular attention to my reasoning, he repeats the very objection which I had endeavoured to answer. See *Letters to Trinitarians* p. 32. The passage in Gen. vi. 5, he says, “relates not to mankind universally, but to the degenerate race of men of that age, so remarkably and universally corrupt, beyond all that had gone before or have followed since, as to call for the most signal tokens of the vengeance of heaven.”

I begin my remarks on this quotation by saying, that there is not the least reason to think, that the men of that age were corrupt beyond all who have appeared since. There is certainly no evidence of this from the description given of their character; for the Bible contains many a description of human wickedness, as dreadful as that. There is no evidence from the fact, that the world was destroyed by a deluge; for God might intend to accomplish some important ends, by making such a display of his holy vengeance once, though he might not, on account of equal or even greater corruption, think proper to repeat it. It is clear too, that many portions of the human race have suffered more distressing calamities, and of course more dreadful tokens of the divine vengeance, than being destroyed by a deluge. Besides, there is no probability from the circumstances of the case, that men, at that early period of the world, and with privileges comparatively small, could be guilty in so high a degree, as men often have been since. And in addition to all this, our Saviour expressly cautions us against inferring the degree of men’s wickedness from the evils they suffer in the present life. See *Luke* xiii. 1—5. So that, from the sig-

nal tokens of divine vengeance, which the contemporaries of Noah experienced, we could not safely conclude that they were corrupt above all others.

This however is a point of minor consequence. To invalidate my reasoning, Dr. Ware first remarks, that the text, quoted from Gen. vi. 5, "relates not to mankind universally, but to the degenerate race of men of that age." He means by this remark to prove, that we cannot, in any proper sense, apply such passages to mankind generally. I had attempted to show that we can learn what *human nature* is, or what *man* is, from the highest descriptions of human wickedness found in the Old Testament; that those descriptions are *substantially* true in relation to all men; not that all men are criminal in the same degree, but that all have the *same nature, the same original propensities, the same ingredients of character*. In all this he thinks I expressed myself rashly or carelessly. "Are we," he says, much in the manner of Dr. Turnbull,—“are we to consider those places, which, singled out and distinguished from all others, are expressly declared to have been destroyed for their enormous and incorrigible wickedness, as fair representatives of the usual state and character of the human race? People, who were ordered to be wholly extirpated for the very purpose of stopping the contagion of their vices &c.? Are Pharaoh, Jeroboam, and Judas fair examples and representatives of human nature?” I answer, yes. For had they any nature but the *human*? If they were not examples of *human nature*, of what nature were they examples?—of some nature above the human, or below it? The actions of an individual man always result from his own nature, influenced as it is by external causes. But his own nature is *human nature*. And have not others the same? And admitting the moral

nature of men to be the same, may we not satisfactorily account for the variety of characters among them, from the different circumstances in which they are placed, and the different combination of causes under which they act? Or are we to resort to the strange supposition, that all the different degrees of wickedness, which men exhibit, are really to be traced back to a corresponding difference in their original character? That is, are we to suppose, that Pharaoh, Jeroboam and Judas had originally a moral nature as much worse than Moses, David, and Paul, as their ultimate characters were worse? Nothing could be more unphilosophical; nothing more contrary to the word of God, and the common sense of Christians.

Now just try the correctness of the principle which Dr. Ware's reasoning involves; namely, that the account which the Bible gives of the wickedness of men at one period, or in one country, does not make a fair display of *human nature*, and does not show, what is substantially the character of men at any other period, or in any other country. If this principle is correct, of what use to us are the writings of historians, either sacred or profane? It has generally been held up by the best writers, as a peculiar advantage of history, that it gives us useful lessons respecting *human nature*, or makes us acquainted with the character of our species. But if Dr. Ware is right, this cannot be admitted. For according to his opinion, history only gives us a description of the passions, and dispositions, and conduct of particular men or societies of men, who had no common nature, and to whom no one can reasonably suppose that *we* bear any moral likeness. We may read of the envy and malice of Cain; but it is of no use to us, as it cannot be supposed that men nowadays have any tendency in their

nature to envy and hate others who are better than they. And when the Apostle John referred to the conduct of Cain, for the purpose of counselling and warning those to whom he wrote; he must have done it inadvertently, unless there happened to be something in their character, which was different from what was common, and which would render such a procedure suitable. History may tell us of the great corruption and violence of the antediluvian world. But at this day, we can have little concern with what was so distant, except to gratify curiosity. For it would be very unreasonable to suppose that there is any thing in men generally, especially in those who are born in a Christian land, which would lead them into the same excesses, even if they should be placed in the same circumstances. We may read the history of the children of Israel in Egypt, at the Red Sea, at Sinai, in the wilderness, and in the promised land, and our astonishment may be excited at their fickleness, unbelief, ingratitude, and obduracy. But what is all this to us, who live in these better days, who are born Christians, and who cannot, with the least degree of justice, be charged with any disposition or tendency in our nature like theirs? Admit that they were fickle, unbelieving, ungrateful, and obdurate. Does that show what *we* are, or what we should be likely to be in similar circumstances? Are we to learn the character of human nature generally, from their nature? "Would you go to a lazaret-house or hospital to know what is the usual state of human health?" And what shall we think of the Apostle to the Romans, who says, "Whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning;" and who actually uses the passages of the Old Testament which were descriptive of the wicked-

ness of the Israelites at particular times, as applicable to men generally.

History tells us of the ambition, despotism, and cruelty of wicked kings and commanders. But are men, holding similar stations now, to be suspected of any propensity to similar vices? Indeed, as the moral constitution of different parts of the human species, or the basis of their character is not the same; no individual can be presumed to have any thing like what appears in any other. If I see some of my neighbours proud, selfish, envious, revengeful, in willing servitude to their passions; I am not warranted to conclude that any others have similar traits of character. Those few men may be the only ones in a whole nation, who have their nature so infected. Of the thousands and millions of their contemporaries, supposing them placed under the influence of the same external circumstances, there may not be a single individual, possessing radically the same dispositions. And even if it should be found, that they all have substantially the same traits of character; that they all in fact show themselves in a higher or lower degree proud, selfish, envious, revengeful, slaves to their passions; still I am not to suppose that they have previously any likeness of moral nature, which occasions this likeness of visible character. It may be quite an accidental thing, or it may be owing to some unfortunate motion of free-will, happening to be the same in all, that they have come universally to be subject to the same corrupt passions. It is very certain that the sinful passions or conduct of individuals, or of a nation, or of the whole world from generation to generation, does not show at all what the nature of man is. The conduct of the antediluvians does not show this, nor the conduct of heathen nations, nor of the Israelites, nor of Christen-

dom generally. Indeed there is no common nature among men. Human nature in one may have no substantial likeness to human nature in another; and what is said truly of some cannot be in any sense safely applied to others. The description which was given of men in the Psalms and in the Prophets, cannot be a true description of other generations or societies of men. And when the Apostle, Rom. iii, applied what had been said of men in seasons of uncommon corruption, to the generality of those who lived in his day, did he not do it rashly? Or if he actually knew that the whole multitude, on whom he heaped the reproaches contained in that chapter, were so uncommonly depraved as to deserve them; it would still be the height of injustice to suppose they are deserved by men in general at the present day. And according to the same scheme, there is not one of all the declarations of the Bible respecting human corruption and guilt, which can be safely applied to the men of this generation. For those declarations, whatever appearance of universality some of them may have, were all made with a view to men who lived in times very distant from the present, and exhibited a grossness of character now seldom found. The Apostle Paul declared the carnal mind to be enmity against God, and represented the Ephesian converts as having been enemies to God. But it was a carnal mind which existed and yielded its hateful fruits at that particular time. Who will be so uncandid as to look upon the bulk of mankind now, especially in Christian lands, as having that carnal mind which is enmity against God? We find also that Christ said, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and on the ground of human corruption, thus expressed, asserted the necessity of regeneration. But he must have said it with reference to that carnal

race of men, by whom he was surrounded. Of those who are born among us now, it cannot be said that they are *flesh* in any such sense, as implies the necessity of being born again; any more than David's singular acknowledgment that he was "shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin,"—made in very peculiar circumstances, and under great depression of spirits, can be understood as signifying any thing in regard to the native character of men generally. The Bible contains commands, exhortations, and warnings to saints and sinners, which were occasioned by the depravity of their hearts, and referred directly to their sinful passions and habits. But such commands, exhortations, and warnings may be altogether inapplicable to us, on account of our exemption from that depravity which would render them suitable to our case. The Apostle says; "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." He says all this of those Christians who lived in his day. To them it properly related. But it cannot be supposed essential to the character of the present generation of Christians, that they should be the subjects of any such change. Indeed we must go still farther. To give consistency throughout to the system, on the ground of which these remarks have proceeded, we must maintain that we are under no obligation to obey the commands of the *decalogue*. For to whom did God speak, when he said, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me; thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image; thou shalt not take the name of God in vain; remember the Sabbath day," &c? Did he not speak to those particular persons who then surrounded the holy mount? Is it said, or intimated, that men of future ages should come under the obligation of these strict and holy commands? Has God ever spoken particularly to us, and required us

to observe the precepts of the decalogue? What authority then have the ministers of religion to urge the high obligation of these precepts upon us, just as though God had actually spoken to us in these last days, and given us commands, as he did the Israelites encamped at the foot of Sinai? Surely when they do this, they overlook the vast difference between us, who live in an age of such intellectual and moral refinement, and the posterity of Jacob, at that time in so uncultivated a state, and just let loose from "the house of bondage." We cannot look to any of the commands which God gave *them*, to learn what he requires of *us*. Even supposing that, by the authority of Prophets and Apostles, they were enjoined on other generations of men who came after; where is the Prophet or Apostle, who has expressly declared that men, living in the nineteenth century, and in this particular part of the world, would all be under obligation to obey those very commands, which were enjoined upon men thousands of years ago?—The same also as to the New Testament. Jesus said, *repent*. But he said it to his *contemporaries*, not to *us*. He said too, "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned." But that awful alternative was pressed upon that generation of Jews, not upon *us*. And in fact, all parts of the Bible were addressed to men of other times, and in other circumstances; and there is no doctrine contained in it respecting the present state or future prospects of men, how true soever it might have been when first declared, which can be assumed as true and applicable now; and no command, however just and important in relation to those, to whom it was first addressed, which can bind us; and no warning of danger, however alarming once, which can properly alarm us; and no promise of good, however cheering and animating

once, which can cheer and animate us. 'The whole Bible, as really as that part which describes human corruption, was spoken and written in other times, and to another race of men ; and nothing short of a new revelation can convince us, that the book can be of any practical use to us, except to inform us what the inhabitants of the world once were, and how God once treated them.

I hope to be excused for exhibiting at such length what seems plainly implied in the system, which has here come under notice, and what are its legitimate consequences. The principle, on which that system sets aside the descriptions of human depravity contained in the Bible, as not in any way applicable to us, would, if closely adhered to, lead on to all the extremities above suggested. It would set aside one part of the Bible, as well as another. It would invalidate, in regard to us, the doctrinal and preceptive part, as well as that part which is descriptive of man's depravity. The same principle, which would free us from the mortification of applying to ourselves the high charges of corruption and guilt, contained in the Bible, would also deprive us of its high promises of divine mercy. If any man who sets aside the account of human wickedness found in the Scriptures, as inapplicable to us, still thinks the moral precepts applicable ; I ask, on what principle such an application is founded ? Is there any express declaration in the Scriptures themselves, that the moral precepts, which were given thousands of years ago, are to be thus understood ? Is it any where in the Bible said, that the commands of God, there announced, should be obligatory upon men in every country and in every age ? Not a word of this. In what way then are we satisfied, that every human being is under the same perfect obligation to obey the moral pre-

cepts of the Bible, as if God actually addressed them to him in particular? How is it that we immediately conclude that all men, now living, are proper subjects of the same law which God gave to men in former times, and feel it to be right for us to enjoin it upon them to love God supremely, to love their neighbours as themselves, and to keep all the precepts of the Bible? When the ministers of Christ go to pagan nations, how is it that they feel themselves authorized to do just what the apostles did,—to call upon all men to forsake the vanities of heathenism, to repent, and to worship the true God? What could render all this proper, but the obvious principle that, as to the essential properties of moral agents, men in all ages and climates are alike? Whenever we meet a human being, we instantly take it for granted, that he is a moral agent like ourselves, and like those who first received the law, and that the law is as suitable to him, as it was to them. When we see an infant, we take it for granted, as we have a right to do, that he is born to be a moral agent, and that it will be proper to inculcate the divine precepts upon him, as soon as he can understand them; just as proper as though the divine Lawgiver expressly directed us to inculcate them upon that particular child. To all this I think the opposers of Orthodoxy would readily agree. But it is upon the same general principle that I proceed in my reasoning, with respect to the subject under discussion. There is as real evidence that men in all ages and climates are alike in regard to the essential traits of *moral character*, as in regard to the properties which constitute them proper subjects of law. This is in truth the practical judgment of men universally. Who does not know enough of human nature to satisfy him, that it always has the same essential attributes? Who doubts that a man, whom he now

for the first time meets, will exhibit the same characteristics, as other men—the same *substantially*, though perhaps not in form? The man whom we never saw before, we doubt not has pride, and that, in circumstances which are likely to occur, he will show pride,—not in this or that particular way, but in some way, according to circumstances. We doubt not he has a culpable self-love, which will lead him, in a manner not to be justified, to prefer his own interest to that of others; a self-love therefore, which will require strong motives, and watchful discipline, and powerful influence from above to subdue it. We doubt not he has a tendency to resent an injury, and to recompense evil for evil; and to envy those above him, especially if their superiority operates sensibly to his disadvantage. And so of the rest. If in any case we should regulate our conduct towards particular men upon any other principle, than that they are subject to the same corrupt affections with others, and that, acting under the influence of similar causes, they are likely to exhibit similar traits of character; we should be charged, and very justly, with being deficient in the knowledge of our own species. And if any man thinks *himself* exempt from the moral depravity which men have generally exhibited, and forms his judgment and his maxims of conduct in regard to himself, on the principle, that he has little or none of the wickedness which has disgraced and ruined others; he gives conclusive proof of self-ignorance.

It is on this plain principle of the sameness of human nature in all ages and countries, that I would apply the mortifying description of human wickedness, found in the Bible, to men of the present generation; just as the Apostle applied the description, which had been given of other generations of men, to those who lived in his

day. It is on this principle that I have said, we may draw practical instruction in regard to ourselves from the history of Pharaoh, of Saul, of Jeroboam, and of the Jews who crucified the Son of God. That history shows me not only what was in those particular men, but what is in *human nature*, what is in *my nature*. It shows me what is man. In ourselves we may find those very sinful dispositions which, after having been strengthened and matured by various causes, constituted those men just what they were; and which, operating in similar circumstances, would render us like them. We are as truly like them in a moral view, as a man in an intellectual view, is like those who have risen somewhat above him in the acquisition of knowledge, but whom he would have equalled, had he been in their circumstances.

Dr. Ware tells us, what indeed deserves special attention, that the very passages of Scripture, which represent men as universally corrupt, “teach us with what qualifications they are to be understood.” He refers particularly to Psalm xiv, and says, “that while it asserts in the strong language of emotion and eastern hyperbole, that all are gone aside,—that there is none that doeth good, *no, not one*; it goes on to speak of a generation of the righteous.” I might mention it as a fact of the same kind, that an exception was made in favour of Noah, Lot, and others, who lived in the midst of abounding wickedness. And the Orthodox make just such an exception now. When they understand the language of the Bible, which was descriptive of the great wickedness of men formerly, as expressive of the universal depravity of those who live at the present day; they have no doubt there are many exceptions;—many good men, who obey God, and are entitled to the happiness of heaven. The question is, how these two representations of Scrip-

ture can consist together, and in what manner we are to modify the sense of the one by the other. Here we come to the grand principle of interpretation; namely; that *the Bible, taken as a whole, must explain itself*. How then does the Bible account for the fact, that some men are holy, while the generality are sinful? Does it ever represent them to be holy *by nature*? No, never. It may sometimes speak of their being holy, as a matter of fact simply, without assigning the cause of it. But in other places, it does, with the greatest explicitness, account for this fact. It represents the children of God as being holy, in consequence of regeneration. They who are in Christ, are *new creatures*. *Old things are passed away; all things are become new*. The Bible teaches all who are holy, to ascribe their holiness to the new-creating Spirit of God; while it represents their natural character to be like that of others, and describes it in the same language. So that the exception made in their favour does not respect their own native character, but the new character which they possess in consequence of being *born of the Spirit*. The principle I am contending for, may be easily illustrated by natural things. It may be said of a certain species of shrub or tree, for example, the thorn-bush, that it bears no useful fruit; although in consequence of a scion being ingrafted into it from another tree, it may bear fruit that is delicious and salutary. Still the proper nature of the shrub, and the just description of it, remain the same; and we never think of representing it as a property of the thorn-bush, that it bears delicious fruit. Thus in the passages above referred to, the universal terms which describe human wickedness, instead of being limited as Dr. Ware proposes, are truly applicable to all men without exception, *in regard to their own proper, original char-*

acter. Those who are now Christians, are naturally subjects of the same depravity with others; and their being different now is owing to “the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

Here we are furnished with an easy answer to some of Dr. Ware’s questions, p. 33. “Let it be asked,” he says, “why the cruelty and obstinacy of Pharaoh, rather than the humanity, and piety, and meekness of Moses; why the idolatry, and unprincipled ambition and selfishness of Jeroboam, rather than the piety, and tenderness of conscience, and public spirit of Josiah; why the single wretch who was so base as to betray his master, rather than the eleven who were true and faithful to him, should be selected as specimens of the race to which they belong?” The answer is, that all these vices and iniquities are the natural, spontaneous growth of human nature. They are what the Apostle calls “the fruits of the flesh;”—of that flesh which, according to John iii. 6, belongs to us by our natural birth; while the virtues enumerated are the fruits of the Spirit, or the effects of that divine influence, by which men are delivered from their natural character, and made new creatures. Those men are justly selected, as specimens of the race to which they belong, who are just what their own proper nature makes them, or whose traits of character result from their own moral constitution or nature, unchanged by the Spirit of God. But it would be obviously unjust to select, as specimens of our race, or of the moral character which properly belongs to us, those who are what they are, not by nature, but by grace, or by the new-creating Spirit of God. And if the Bible is made its own interpreter, this must be allowed to be fact with regard to every human being who is the subject of holiness. But the case which Dr. Ware afterwards brings into view, is

altogether different. He asks, "would you select the period of seven years' famine, as an example of the usual fertility of Egypt? The desolating pestilence in the days of David, as a fair specimen of the salubrity of the climate of Israel?" I answer, no. Because the famine does not show the proper character of the soil of Egypt, nor the pestilence, of the climate of Israel. They were real exceptions to what was natural; and Dr. Ware cannot justly adduce them, as he does, unless he can show, that great depravity is as foreign to the moral nature of man, as the famine was to the soil in one case, and the pestilence to the climate in the other.



CHAPTER VII.

Dr. Ware's reply to the argument from John iii. 3. Rom. v. 12. Ephes. ii. 3.

DR. WARE is convinced that the universal necessity of regeneration, asserted in John iii. 3, may consist with original innocency. Still, in his apprehension, the passage implies "the absence or want of that which was necessary to becoming a subject of the kingdom of God;" p. 41; or as he expresses it, p. 42, "that men do not possess by birth that character of personal holiness, which is necessary to their being Christians." Let the reader consider a moment the consistency between this, and what is found in other places. Here, he says of all who are born into the world in every age, that they are by birth destitute of that holiness which is necessary to their being Christians. But soon after, p. 47, he affirms, that "those now born into the world in Christian lands, are as the Ephesians were after their conversion to

Christianity, saved—quicken—fellow-citizens of the saints.” What he has written on this point, taken together, stands thus. According to one place, men by their birth receive no moral character. According to another, they are destitute of that which is necessary to their becoming subjects of God’s kingdom. And according to a third, “Jews and Gentiles were by nature, what they were *before* they became Christians.” But here, p. 47, men are Christians by birth. In that very state in which they are born, instead of being as before described, without a moral character of any kind, they have a character that is good. Instead of wanting that which is necessary to their becoming subjects of the kingdom of God, as before, they are by their birth, of the household of God, fellow-heirs with the saints. Instead of being by their birth destitute of holiness, they are subjects of holiness, quickened, sanctified, as the Ephesians were *after* they became Christians. Little children or infants, generally, instead of being mere human beings, without any disposition or propensity whatever, “are what men are to become by regeneration.” p. 31.

I hope the reader will not attribute these contradictions to the fault of Dr. Ware’s understanding, so much as to the fault of the system, which he has the misfortune to defend. A man like him would not expose himself in this manner, if his cause did not mislead him. With this apology for him, let me proceed to a few more observations on these remarkable passages, compared together.

In p. 41, men are represented as “reasonable, accountable beings by their natural birth.” If accountable beings, they are moral agents, they are under the divine law, and must be judged according to that law. And

this is the same as saying, they will be condemned, if they are not conformed to the law, and approved, if conformed to it. But while treating the same subject in other places, our Author gives us “reasonable, accountable beings,” or moral agents, who have nothing in their disposition or character which is either right or wrong, and nothing for which they can be judged. Accountable beings, without any thing, either good or bad, for which they are accountable! Moral agents, without moral affections!

According to Dr. Ware’s statements, it would seem that the circumstances of our birth have an astonishing and mysterious efficacy as to the formation of moral character. Those who are born in Christian lands are, *by birth*, what the converted Ephesians were,—*Christians, children of God, heirs of heaven*. But the moment you pass the line which bounds Christendom, and enter a pagan land, you find it quite different. There, in consequence of an arrangement of divine providence, in which human beings could have no agency, and over which they could have no power, they are born without any moral disposition; and of course are destitute of that holiness, which is necessary to their being admitted into Christ’s kingdom; so that it is plainly necessary that they should be born again,—should undergo “a great moral change,” and form “a new character.” But here in Christendom, it is not so. Either the atmosphere of a Christian land, or the character and privileges of their parents, or some other causes have so salutary an influence upon their birth, that they possess at once, as soon as they are born, the character of converts. They are sanctified, quickened, and members of God’s household, by their natural birth. So that, in regard to them, regeneration is not necessary. They are as good by their

first birth, as the Ephesians were, after they were "born again."—Now we should be much indebted to Dr. Ware, if he would tell us by what arguments, from Scripture or reason, he supports such an opinion as this. He indeed makes it a subject of strong affirmation. Referring to the description of the converted Ephesians, he says; "All this language was applied to the Ephesians universally after their conversion, and *all of it is as applicable now universally to those who are Christians by birth.*" We receive his affirmation, as showing clearly what his opinion is. This is all we would ask of him in a similar case; and this no doubt is all he would ask of us.

Dr. Ware considers the whole passage, Rom. v, as so intricate and obscure, that it can afford no solid support to any doctrine, farther than it is explained by other passages; and he seems to think I must view it in this light. I did indeed say that the passage is "*in some respects very obscure.*" And so it may be, though in other respects it is very clear. It is surely nothing uncommon, either in inspired or uninspired writings, that a passage should contain a particular doctrine with perfect plainness and certainty, while its import, in regard to some other points, can hardly be ascertained. Such in many instances is the nature of the subject, that while, in some parts it is plain and obvious, in other parts it is necessarily obscure. The passage, Rom. v. 12—21, does, in my view, teach an important Christian doctrine more plainly and fully, and in language less capable of being misconstrued, than any other passage of Scripture. The writer declares his main doctrine again and again. He declares it in a great variety of forms, and with great strength of expression. He treats his principal subject, as though he was determined, in that one passage, to make it so plain, that no man could ever be at any loss

respecting it. And would not the opposers of Orthodoxy consider any passage in this light, if it should happen to teach, in the same clear, diversified, and forcible manner, some doctrine in their creed? Dr. Ware pleads the different meanings of the phrase *Ἐφ' ὧ*, translated, *for that*, as a reason why we should not attach much consequence to the passage. I will only say, that the signification of the phrase, which is given in the common version, and which is the only one that leaves to the Apostle the credit of speaking good sense, fully supports our scheme. Whatever variety of signification the phrase may have in other circumstances, its signification here is obvious, and the argument derived from the passage, conclusive.

I have no objection, as I have before suggested, to the manner in which Dr. Ware proposes to limit the sense of the assertion, that *all have sinned*. He says, it is the assertion of a fact, which none will deny; and that, all circumstances being taken into view, it must mean, "all who are capable of sinning, all as soon as they are moral agents." I presume Dr. Ware would be reluctant to undertake the task of determining, at what precise period human beings become moral agents. If he should undertake this, we might reasonably expect him to determine it, as he seems already to have done in his Letters, where he gives it as his opinion, that men are moral agents by their birth. Speaking, p. 21, of what men are by nature, he represents them as having passions implanted in them, natural affections, reason and conscience; which, taken together, make them accountable beings, capable of right and wrong. This is perfectly equivalent to saying, they are moral agents. He asserts nearly the same thing, p. 41. If these passages are put together, and understood according to the fair import of the words, they teach quite as much, as any

friend of Orthodoxy believes, namely, that *all men are sinners as soon as they are born*. I beg the reader to review and compare the passages to which I have referred, and see whether I have not given the just result of Dr. Ware's own representations. And if he does indeed entertain these views, we should suppose he might be relieved from the difficulty he feels, in conceiving that Adam's posterity should be subjected to death and other sufferings, as penal evils, without admitting that they are charged with the sin of another. See his Letters, p. 43. He says, "if this clause (all have sinned) be understood in a sense which shall prove any thing to the purpose, it will prove the genuine old Calvinistic doctrine, the imputation of Adam's sin." But in the course of his discussion, he makes it prove something to the purpose, without any regard to that doctrine. We have seen his representation to be, that all are sinners as soon as they are capable of sin, or as soon as they are moral agents, and that they are reasonable, accountable beings, or moral agents, by their birth. The conclusion from these premises must be, that they are sinners, or sinful moral agents, by their birth. And if they are sinners, or have a sinful disposition or character by their birth, then obviously, in view of that sinfulness, death and other evils which they suffer, may be *penal evils*, without any thing like a literal imputation of Adam's sin. I stated in my Letters, as the sentiment of the Apostle, that in consequence of Adam's transgression, his posterity were constituted sinners, and subjected to death and other sufferings, *as penal evils*. Dr. Ware says, if this means any thing to the purpose, and yet short of the common notion of imputation, he is unable to perceive what it is. But it is strange, that his own representation did not help him to perceive.—All are sinners. This is a fact;

and according to the divine constitution here set forth by the Apostle, this fact is the first or nearest consequence of Adam's transgression. The fact intended is, that all are sinners *really*, not in pretence; *in their own persons*, not in the person of another; and that the evils they endure relate directly to their own sinfulness, as the *meritorious cause*, and remotely to the sin of Adam, as the *occasion*; that is, the occasion of the existence of that *personal sinfulness*, on account of which penal evils are suffered. I do not admit that they are sinners by the sin of Adam, in such a sense that they suffer *directly* on his account, they themselves being free from moral pollution; or in any sense but this, that they are constituted and actually exist, *sinner*s, that is, sinful, ill-deserving creatures, not by the transfer of another's guilt to them, (a thing utterly incongruous and inconceivable,) but in their own persons; in short, that they are essentially what they show themselves to be in their subsequent life. Speaking of the representation of Stapher, that God gives Adam a posterity like himself, Dr. Ware very justly says, "if this means any thing, it must mean *sinner*s like himself;" that is, sinners in their own persons, sinful in their character, ill-deserving in themselves, and so justly liable to suffering. Such they are, or they are not like Adam.

On this part of the general subject of Dr. Ware's Letters, I have only a few more remarks. Page 49 and elsewhere, he makes much of man's having a natural or communicated power to resist his sinful propensities, and to be otherwise than what he is. Now in regard to man's *power*, properly so called, our notions are probably as high as Dr. Ware's. We conceive man's power, understood in its literal, proper sense, to be always com-

mensurate with his obligation. There can be no duty without it, and none beyond it.

I hope Dr. Ware will reconsider what he has written respecting a propensity to sin; namely; “that the propensity itself is no sin, and implies no guilt.” p. 49. Every man must decide, and does decide, that a propensity, inclination, or disposition to sin, is the very essence of sin, and the only thing which makes any outward action or any volition sinful. Before we impute real blame to a man for any action, we either know, or take it for granted, that he has a wrong disposition or propensity. And in regard to ourselves; if, in any case where our actions appear exceptionable in the view of man, we are conscious of no bad disposition or propensity; we charge ourselves with no real guilt. But how fair soever our actions may appear to man, if we are conscious of having a sinful propensity or disposition, we condemn ourselves,—we condemn ourselves for the disposition itself, as being the essence of sin.

In connexion with this subject, Dr. Ware makes one representation of the scheme of Calvinism, on which I beg leave briefly to remark. He says, p. 50; “If I rightly understand the scheme of Calvinism, divine punishments are not, according to that scheme, disciplinary, but vindictive. God punishes his offending creatures not to reform them, but to vindicate his authority. The sufferings of the wicked have no tendency to reform,” &c. But this cannot be admitted as a just account of Calvinism, unless the remarks are understood to relate exclusively to *future* punishment. So far as my information extends, all Calvinists, whether higher or lower, consider the sufferings of the present life, not only as tending to vindicate the character and law of God, but as *disciplinary*, that is, as having a real tendency, under the dis-

pensation of mercy, to reform the wicked; a tendency, which is in many cases effectual, and which would be so in all cases, were it not counteracted by other causes. In respect to this subject, the Scripture leads us to make a clear distinction between the state of probation, and of retribution. In the former, the evils which God inflicts on men are corrective or disciplinary, though at the same time suited to show God's justice, and to vindicate his authority. In the latter state, as we understand the word of God, the reformation of the wicked does not come within the design of punishment. 'The end to be secured relates wholly to the divine character and kingdom. But we cannot accede to Dr. Ware's notion, that *disciplinary* punishment may be inflicted by a righteous and benevolent God, without real ill-desert in those who suffer. Is not disciplinary punishment intended for correction and reformation? But what place can there be for *correction* or *reformation* in regard to those, who are not faulty, or blame-worthy? What need of reformation? And what occasion for correction? Suppose punishment is laid upon them. How can it produce any good effect? Certainly not according to any physical laws. The effect to be produced is in the *mind*, and must be produced, if produced at all, according to the laws of our intelligent and moral nature. Punishment, to be salutary, must relate to some fault, some moral evil, and must express to us the divine displeasure on account of it. Where this is the case, there is correction; and if we are not refractory, there will be reformation.

I can spend but a few moments upon the views of our Author, p. 52. He thinks that the scheme of Unitarians on the subject of depravity is suited to produce

much greater humility and self-abhorrence, than that of the Orthodox. Those, who are familiarly acquainted with what the advocates of Unitarianism and of Orthodoxy have written on the subject of human corruption, and with the views they respectively entertain as to the proper estimate of our own character, must, I think, be surprised at this opinion of Dr Ware. The truth is, Unitarians have constantly complained, that the Orthodox make too low an estimate of human virtue; that they indulge too debasing views of human nature, and paint the wickedness of their species in too strong colours. At the same time, Unitarians of an independent, liberal judgment, like Dr. Priestley, have freely acknowledged the tendency of our doctrine of depravity, erroneous as they think it, to promote deep humility. And I have been greatly mistaken, if the repugnancy of the doctrine to the *pride* of the heart has not occasioned the chief objection against it. Dr. Ware indeed says; “we certainly have no cause to feel ourselves humbled under a sense of any thing we are *by nature*.” But he says it very incautiously. For whatever he may think of those born in Christian lands; he hesitates not to allow that the Ephesians “were *by nature* children of wrath;” that is, sinful, and deserving of wrath. Was not this a cause for humility in them? The foundation of Dr. Ware’s misapprehension must, I think, be, that he considers *native* sinfulness to be, in its essential properties, different from the sinfulness exhibited in our life; whereas these two must be regarded as only the commencement, and the continuance of the same thing. “Humility and self-condemnation,” Dr. Ware says, “should spring only from the consciousness of a course of life not answering to the powers, and faculties, and privileges of our nature.” Now which should be the occasion of greater humility and

self-condemnation to a man, the consciousness that such a course as this has extended through one or two years, or that it has extended through his whole life? Sin must be considered as essentially the same thing, whether it begin sooner or later. And other things being equal, a man's guilt is proportionate to the duration of his sinfulness. Dr. Ware and other writers distinguish *native* wickedness from *active, voluntary* wickedness. But they do it without reason. For that which is *native* may be as *active* and *voluntary*, as that which gets into the mind afterwards. We certainly do not make such a distinction in regard to other things. For example; those appetites which are given us with our original constitution and are therefore called natural, are as *strong* and *active* as others. It is true, these appetites have no direct relation to the moral law, and in regard to that law, are neither right nor wrong. But we do not deny their relation to the law because they belong to us from the first. It is simply from a consideration of the real nature of any affection or action of man, and not from a consideration of the time or the occasion of its beginning to exist, that we denominate it good or bad, praise-worthy or blame-worthy. If man began to exercise love to God at his first existence, surely our opponents would not, on that account, consider it, as any the less excellent and worthy of approbation. Let any one read what Dr. Ware has written respecting that gratitude, that love of truth, that kindness, and those other dispositions and tendencies to good, which he represents as *native* properties of man, and see whether there is the least appearance of his considering them any the less amiable or praise-worthy, on that account. Why then should bad dispositions, or tendencies to evil, which are natural, be, for the same reason, considered as any the less odious and blame-worthy?

Dr. Ware has no difficulty in representing men who are born in Christian lands, as having by their birth just what the Ephesians had after their conversion; that is, religion, holiness. But where does he intimate that their holiness was less estimable, because it was a *native* property?

Our author seems fond of saying and of repeating, that our doctrine ascribes human wickedness to the agency of God; that it traces sin to that constitution which was given us by our Creator, &c. But though all this is admitted, even in the offensive terms he uses; the difficulty is not a whit greater, than what attends his system. He says, that human beings, created innocent and pure, afterwards fall into sin by their own choice, and in the exercise of their own free agency. Now if there is any truth in Philosophy or Revelation, it can be proved that their falling into sin, at any period of their life, is a thing as really to be ascribed to the operation of their Maker, or to the constitution he has given them, as *native* sinfulness. For suppose, according to Dr. Ware's scheme, that a man, influenced by strong temptation, at any time falls into sin. Who gave him a constitution of mind, fitted to be wrought upon by temptation? And who ordered things so, that he should be exposed to temptation, and to those particular temptations which prevail to draw him into sin? Did not God know the result beforehand? Was it not a result which naturally flowed from causes, which God directed and controlled, operating upon a moral nature which he created, and according to laws which he established? The question I would ask him to solve, is, how, in such a case, there can be any blame? I am far from saying, that no difficulty attends the scheme of native depravity, in this respect. But the difficulty is, in my view, no greater, than what attends any other scheme.

But I must check my inclination to pursue this metaphysical mode of reasoning ; though it must be allowed that I have an apology, in the metaphysical nature of the arguments to be confuted. I will just add, that the habit of attributing moral evil to God in such a way as to destroy or diminish its criminality, is, in my view, one of the worst habits, of which the human mind is capable. It produces alarming stupidity of conscience and hardness of heart, and leads to the most destructive fatalism.



CHAPTER VIII.

As to the practical importance of the subject of native depravity, which has now been discussed at such length, any man may be satisfied, who will maturely consider what connexion it must have with our views, generally, of Christian truth and piety. It is not enough to say, that the denial of the original, native corruption of man does *in fact* go in company with such and such notions of Christianity. It may be shown, and it must be remembered, that the connexion, which exists in fact, is not accidental, but arises directly from the nature of the subject. If we believe that our moral disease results from our moral constitution,—that it is inwrought in our very nature ; we shall surely have different views of the remedy that is necessary, from what we should have, if we considered our disease as merely accidental, or as less deep and radical. Just as it is in regard to a bodily disease. If it is a slight, superficial disorder, which first appeared but yesterday, or which has appeared but a

few times, the original constitution being sound and vigorous ; we have little concern. Some gentle remedy will be sufficient to remove it ; or perhaps it will shortly disappear of itself. But if the disease is rooted in our constitution ; if it began to show itself very early, and evidently results from our original structure ; especially, if there is evidence of its being hereditary ; it becomes an alarming case. Some powerful remedy is necessary ; something that will effect a great and salutary change in our very constitution. If this cannot be had, we despair of a thorough cure. In like manner, those who seriously believe themselves and others to be the subjects of a native and entire depravity, must be convinced, that a mighty operation of divine power is necessary to make them holy. They must view it as indispensable, that they should be born again. Passing by human efforts, and all slight, common remedies, as totally inadequate, they must found every hope of moral purification on that energy of God, which gives men a new heart and a new spirit,—which creates them in Christ Jesus unto good works. Though they have been born in a Christian land ; though they have enjoyed the best instruction, and witnessed examples of the greatest purity ; though distinguished by the most correct habits, by the most useful actions, and by the highest improvement of their rational powers and natural sensibilities ; and though applauded for their virtues by those who look only on the outward appearance ; yet, while unrenewed, they find in themselves that corruption of heart, which is the fountain of all iniquity ;—they find the utter want of that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. The disease of their nature, that is, the earthly, selfish, unholy disposition, which has from the first borne sway in their hearts, and influenced all their actions, spoils the

beauty of their fair exterior, lays them low in the dust, and brings them to rely solely on the purifying grace of God. They have a strong, humbling conviction that, amiable and excellent as their character may appear to others, they must be saved, if saved at all, *by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*. Through their whole course, their religious feelings and duties are materially affected by their belief of the radical, native depravity of their hearts. While sensible of this deep-rooted evil of their nature, they suffer no proud self-complacency to possess their minds. New reasons constantly occur for self-distrust and self-abhorrence. In a greater or less degree, the fountain of evil still remains within them. They never account themselves to have attained complete victory over sin. They have perpetually an inward warfare, and in every part of their warfare, they confide in that divine grace, which gives purity and strength to the soul. In their latest moments, they deplore that obstinate, hateful malady of their nature, which has so long kept up its resistance to the best means of cure; and, with their dying breath, they cry for the Spirit of God to complete their sanctification, and fit them for the presence of him whom their soul loveth.

Consider now, how different are the views of those who deny the native corruption of man, and believe him to be originally pure; and how different the whole aspect of their religion. On this subject, I would gladly excuse myself from saying what the case seems to require; because my controversy is with a man, whose talents and office I would treat with invariable respect, whose coolness of judgment and sobriety of character I wish to copy, and whose candour, civility, and kindness towards me I am most cordially disposed to reciprocate. I trust

it will be well understood, that, my animadversions relate not to him, personally, but to the system which he has undertaken to unfold and vindicate. What then is the scheme of practical religion, with which the denial of innate depravity is associated? If I believe, as a general truth, “that young children are what men are to become by regeneration;” that is, if I believe them to be friends of God, subjects of real holiness; if I believe that all, who are now born into the world in Christian lands, are already “saved by the grace of God, and fellow citizens with the saints;” I must treat them accordingly. I must treat them as persons, who have no need of conversion, or of the grace of God to effect it; inasmuch as they are born Christians, and already possess the character of converts. And if at any time I seem to see some mark of depravity common to children, I must apologize for it, and soothe their feelings by telling them, it can “fairly be traced to causes which imply no degree of depravity, and no fault of character or disposition;” so that they have no occasion for uneasiness, or for reformation. And if I address sinners at large, either in public or in private; instead of depicting their guilt, as the inspired writers do, and labouring to make them feel, that they are dead in trespasses and sins, and justly under the wrath of God; I must not hesitate to say to them, as our Author does, p. 24, “that as much as there is of wickedness and vice, there is far more of virtue and goodness;—that wickedness, far from being the prevailing part of the human character, makes but an inconsiderable part of it.” And if I ever have occasion to speak to men of the worst character, to liars, thieves, adulterers, blasphemers, men of revenge and blood, infidels, atheists,—I must soothe *their* feelings too, not by persuading them to apply to that blood which

cleanseth from all sin—not by pointing them to mercy higher than the heavens;—but by so far forgetting the word of God, as to tell them, “that even in the worst of men, good feelings and principles are predominant,” and that, as “the greatest liar” may comfort himself with the idea, that “by the constitution of his nature he speaks many truths to every lie he utters;” so other monsters of wickedness should not deprive themselves of the satisfaction of believing, “that in the course of their lives, they perform many more good than bad actions.”* And if I am to carry such a flattering message to “the worst of men;” with what sincere congratulations must I address myself to the generality? As to men who are destitute of holiness, enemies to God, dead in sin, men whose imaginations and desires are only evil, and who are ready to perish,—none can be found among us. Through the healing influence of being born in Christian lands, another race of men has sprung up, saints by nature, needing no renovation; of the household of faith and of the kingdom of God by their first birth; to whom it would be altogether superfluous to be born again of the Spirit of God.†

If men transgress the rules of morality, I must indeed, according to Dr. Ware’s views, tell them, they are sinners, and urge them to repent. But here is the difference. If I am duly impressed with the common doctrine of depravity, I shall endeavour to convince them, whether old or young, not only of the impropriety and guilt of the particular acts of sin they have committed, but of the corrupt principle, the depravity of heart, from which they have proceeded, and from which, if it remain, sinful acts will continue to proceed; and to show them, that it is not more evidently their concern to re-

* See Letters to Trin. and Calv. p. 25.

† Do. p. 47.

pent of the particular sins committed, than it is to be renewed in the Spirit of their minds. I shall take occasion from what they have actually done, to turn their thoughts within, to make them acquainted with the plague of their own hearts, and lead them to feel that the word of God does indeed address them, when it says, "ye must be born again." And as to any repentance or reformation short of this, I shall most seriously assure them, it will avail nothing.

These are cutting, humbling truths, marring the beauty of all external virtue, where the heart retains its native alienation from God. They make the great force of that conviction, which the Holy Spirit produces, to relate to that very inbred, entire depravity of the heart, which is the subject of this controversy. Thus the doctrine, as I have exhibited it, is a practical truth, confirmed by Christian experience. They who, being thoroughly illuminated by the Spirit of God, judge themselves by the divine law, and receive salvation by grace, are as really convinced of this doctrine by their own experience, as by the plainest declarations of Scripture. And they who have this deep, heart-felt conviction, can no more be induced to deny the doctrine, than to deny any truth whatever which they know by their own consciousness.

But if I should deny the doctrine of innate depravity, and entertain those opinions of human nature which are set forth in the Letters to Trinitarians and Calvinists; my treatment of those, who transgress the rules of morality, would be materially different. I should indeed exhort them to repent and reform. But I should never occasion any uneasiness to their conscience, by directing their attention to the badness of the tree which bears bad fruit, or to the impurity of the fountain from

which impure streams flow. Only let them be careful to guard against those particular sins to which they have been inclined, and maintain a regular, decent behaviour; and I should bid them be quiet, and give no place to any gloomy apprehension respecting the necessity of an inward change. Thus the thing would pass off, without any great solicitude on my part, or on theirs.

I mean to treat this subject exactly according to truth. If I exaggerate or discolour any thing, and by such means do the least degree of injustice to those who differ from me; it is totally contrary to my intention; and the temper of mind which would lead to this, I most heartily reprobate. But if I mistake not, the general conduct of those ministers, who hold the opinions of the book, to which I have undertaken a reply, corresponds substantially with the representation I have made. Such I am well persuaded would be my conduct, should I adopt those opinions. If sinners, deeply convinced of their depravity, and of the total inefficacy of any reformation, or any doings of theirs, while their heart remains unrenewed—convinced too, that they are enemies to God, without excuse, ready to perish,—and suffering the agony of soul, which such conviction naturally produces; if sinners in this condition should come to me, and in the language of anxiety and distress should say, as multitudes, through the mercy of God, are constantly saying to their ministers, *what shall we do to be saved?*—I should indeed pity fellow creatures in such distress; but at the same time, if I entertained the sentiments of Unitarians, I should endeavour to satisfy them, that their distress was without reason, and was occasioned by false views of religion, or by some fright of imagination, or some derangement of the nervous system. I should labour to relieve their sense of guilt, their anxiety and fear, by in-

culcating more comforting views of the nature which God has given them, of the service he requires of them, and of the treatment they have a right to expect at his hand. In a word, I should look upon such persons to be in a state more deeply to be deplored, than if they were living in fashionable vice, totally regardless of God and eternity.—If there are any ministers, who embrace the prevailing system of Unitarianism, but still do not feel and converse thus in reference to such cases ; I rejoice that they have something within them to counteract an influence, which I am persuaded would produce upon *me* all the effect above described.

The denial of man's innate corruption must have a direct influence on our views of the nature and necessity of *the divine influence*. It may indeed seem desirable to Unitarians, that God should afford to men all the assistance they need in regulating their passions, and in pursuing a course of virtuous conduct. But their scheme implies that, comparatively, but little divine aid is necessary. It ascribes to the Holy Spirit no such achievements, as we ascribe to him, when the heart is renewed, and the sinner savingly converted. When rebels against God—when those who have felt an entire hostility to the spiritual religion of the Gospel, become penitent and humble, friends to God, and obedient to his law ; the work performed by the Spirit of God has, in our view, a greatness and glory, which entitle it to the admiration of heaven and earth. But in what language do Unitarians describe it ?

In regard to the whole of religion, our belief of human depravity has an influence on the mind, of the highest moment. It is one of the elements of a holy life. It produces in Christians a strong conviction, that, in respect to their good affections, their duties, and their

enjoyments, they are in a state of total dependance on the Spirit of God. They apprehend their moral disease to be so deep-wrought in their nature, that it will yield, in no degree, to any power, but that which is divine. If they have any degree of holiness, they ascribe it, not to any goodness of disposition naturally belonging to them, but to the grace of God. To God alone they give the honour of all their success in resisting temptation, in subduing the evils of their hearts, in cultivating pious affections and habits, and in doing good to their fellow creatures. They are fully convinced that, without his effectual operation, they can have nothing truly excellent in their character or life; nothing consoling in affliction, or peaceful in death. In the best moral state which they ever attain on earth, they perceive so much want of conformity to God's perfect law,—so much unlikeness to their Saviour, that the language of the Apostle becomes the sober expression of their feelings; “O wretched men that we are! Who shall deliver us from the body of this death?” Thus they are led, as Jeremy Taylor directs, “so to live as if they were always under a physician's hand.” In short it is manifest, that those Christians, who admit, in all its extent, and with suitable impressions on their own minds, the Orthodox doctrine of depravity, must find in it a variety of motives, powerfully constraining them to constant and fervent prayer, to self-denial, to a godly jealousy over their own hearts, to a watchful avoidance of every thing which can minister to their moral corruption, and to efforts of the greatest intensity, to “put off the old man with his deeds, and to put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” I must decline here, as I did in my Letters, any formal comparison between the gen-

eral character exhibited by the Orthodox, and that exhibited by Unitarians. Indeed I am perfectly ready to confess, that among those who profess to believe the common doctrine of depravity, and even among those who preach it, instances of wickedness sometimes occur of the most hateful aspect, and stamping the perpetrators with indelible infamy. These instances I regard as painful proofs of that very corruption, that deep, inveterate corruption of human nature, which has been under discussion. At the same time I contend, that the cordial belief of the doctrine tends to produce, and actually has produced all the salutary influence above described ; and that those views of the human character, which my opponents attempt to vindicate, lead on to all the hurtful consequences which I have suggested.



CHAPTER IX.

MR. CHANNING and others have accused the Orthodox generally of maintaining certain opinions on the subject of Election. We have repelled the accusation, by saying, that *we do not maintain those opinions*. Dr. Ware's apology for Mr. Channing is this ;—if the Orthodox “do not maintain the opinions, against which the sermon of Mr. Channing is directed, there seems to have been no good reason why they should feel themselves at all concerned in the charge. Calvinists only who *do* maintain them, can fairly consider their opinions as attacked, and themselves called upon to defend them.” This apology would have been satisfactory, if Mr. Channing had directed his sermon against *opinions* merely, and not against *men*. But as

the charges contained in the sermon are made against *the Orthodox*, we have this to do with them at least, that is, to declare them untrue. And as Mr. Channing has been distinctly informed that we disclaim the sentiments which he has charged and has been understood to charge upon us ; it would be no unnatural expectation, that *he* would have something to do, besides repeating such groundless charges. Indeed it has become a question of difficult solution with many, how it can be reconciled with fairness or integrity for him to continue, without abatement or correction, to publish charges, by which the great body of Christians in the world are really as much injured, as he himself would be, if the same charges were published against him.

It must not be forgotten that the doctrine of Election, which Orthodox Christians believe, and Orthodox Ministers preach, is not the doctrine, which our opposers ascribe to us. The picture which Unitarians and Arminians draw of the doctrine is, in its *essential features*, very unlike the doctrine which we maintain. John Wesley says, and one of his late biographers thinks he has stated the case with equal force and truth ; “The sum of all is this ; one in twenty (suppose) of mankind, are elected ; nineteen in twenty are reprobated. The elect shall be saved, *do what they will* ; the reprobate shall be damned, *do what they can.*” Now the fact is, that human ingenuity could not make a representation of the doctrine, more uncandid, distorted, or false. And if, after all the explanations which have been given of our doctrine, any man still chooses to represent it in this manner, I will leave it to him to assign his reasons for doing so.

In my Letters, I represented the doctrine of Election, in a general view, as implying *the eternal purpose of God*

respecting his own acts in the work of redemption ; that is, the eternal purpose of God to do what he actually does in saving sinners. Dr. Ware thinks no Unitarian would dissent from this form of the doctrine. It would seem then, from this concession of his, that the eternal purpose of God, as we understand it, is thought by Unitarians to differ, in some important respects, from *what really takes place*, and that it is on this account simply, that they object to our doctrine. If this should prove to be the case, the limits of the controversy would be very much narrowed ; as all the objections against the doctrine of an eternal purpose, from its alleged inconsistency with man's freedom and accountableness, with the invitations of the gospel, &c. would be superseded, and the simple inquiry would be, whether our doctrine gives a representation of the Divine purpose, correspondent to the facts which occur in divine providence.

The *existence of an eternal purpose* in a mind possessed of *eternal intelligence*, is self-evident. And nothing is more certain from Scripture, than that God eternally entertained a design respecting human salvation. As to this there can be no dispute. And it is equally clear, that the purpose of God must correspond with what actually takes place ; so that, by observing what comes to pass in divine providence, we learn not merely that there was a purpose in the divine mind, but what that purpose was. The events which take place show us at once, what God actually does, and what were his purposes. This, then, I lay down, and repeat, as a universal truth, and a truth of special importance in this controversy, that God's purposes respecting the salvation of men, and all other subjects, correspond perfectly with his administration, or rather, that *his administration corresponds with his purposes*.

There can be no unforeseen occurrence, no event not predetermined. I would say then, in pursuance of the views expressed in my Letters, and to make the subject still more plain, that so far as the acts of the divine administration are right, the divine purposes are right. In the discussion of this subject therefore, I find it most convenient and satisfactory, to fix my attention on *the divine administration*, which is a visible, definite thing, actually exhibited before me, and from that to regulate my opinions respecting the divine purposes. If I find what God does in the government of the world, for what ends he does it, and in what order ; I learn what was the plan of the divine mind from eternity. If the acts of the divine administration are holy, just, and good ; equally holy, just, and good is the divine purpose respecting those acts. So that whatever there may be in our doctrine which is exceptionable, it cannot be our believing that God has a purpose, or that his purpose is eternal and immutable. For if the thing purposed, that is, the divine administration is wise and benevolent ; the purpose also is wise and benevolent. And it is surely far enough from being a dishonour to God, that he should eternally and unchangeably entertain a wise and benevolent design. Nor can our doctrine be excepted to, because we maintain that the purpose of God relates to *all events* which take place. For if all events do in fact take place in such a manner as is consistent with the perfections of God ; then clearly, his purposing that they should take place in just such a manner is equally consistent with his perfections. It is then altogether unreasonable to object to the declaration in the Catechism, that God has “ foreordained whatsoever comes to pass ;” that is, that his purpose extends to all events in his administration. For if every part of his

administration is right ; his having *purposed* every part is right. There is then no danger of carrying the doctrine of the divine purposes, *properly understood*, to too great an extent. For it is as proper for God to determine *all* his own acts, and *all* that shall result from them, as to determine a part, if all are as wise and good as a part. I say then, that no man in his senses can think we carry the doctrine too far, when we assert that God predetermines every thing which is comprised in his whole administration. There is indeed something faulty in our doctrine of the divine purposes, if we say that God determines any particular thing, which in fact he never does determine, and which never takes place ; or if we say he determines it in a different manner from that in which it actually takes place ;—in other words, if we give a representation of the divine purposes, which, in one respect or another, does not agree with the divine administration. For example ; if we should maintain that God determined to save Judas, or to cast off Paul ; we should be chargeable with an error, in maintaining that God determined what in fact he did not determine, and what never took place. Or if we should say, God determined to cast off and punish Judas for any reason, but for his wickedness ; we should be chargeable with misrepresenting the proximate reason of that particular purpose. And our mistake would be of the same nature, if we should maintain that God determined to bestow the rewards of heaven upon Paul, without any regard to his holy character and actions. And as to his character, we should mistake, if we should maintain, that God determined it should be formed in any way, except that in which it was really formed. My inquiry is, how was the character of Paul and of Judas actually formed ? Under

the influence of what causes, or series of events; and in what circumstances? The actual formation of character in such circumstances, and under such an influence, exactly answers to the divine purpose; and the divine purpose, to be stated correctly, must be stated as agreeing, in all respects, with what thus actually occurs in the course of divine providence. By fixing our thoughts in this manner on the things which really come to pass, and on the *order* and *manner* in which they come to pass, we may arrive at a view of the divine purposes, which is liable to no uncertainty, and no difficulty.

These remarks are as applicable to the purpose of God, which is called Election, as to any other. I have represented Election, in a general view, as *the purpose of God to do just what he actually does in saving sinners*, and to do it in the manner in which he actually does it. To this Dr. Ware thinks there is no objection. He allows then, that there is an eternal, immutable purpose of God respecting human salvation. And he must allow that God eternally purposed *all* which he actually does in the work of salvation. We cannot make God's purpose either too extensive or too particular, if we make it agree entirely with his work. Now God does in fact save a certain number of human beings. At the judgment day, Christ will say to the multitude on his right hand, consisting of a *certain, definite number of individual believers*, "come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." God must have eternally designed to do just what he does in the present life, and what he will do at the judgment day; that is, he must have designed to save that same definite number of individuals. And if we thus represent the divine purpose as agreeing

with the divine acts, no one can have the least reason to object to our doctrine, because we assert that God eternally designed to save just such a number of human beings, and just such individuals. For is it not granted that God's purpose and his acts perfectly agree ; or that he eternally purposed to do just what he actually does in time ? Now God actually saves a definite number of *individuals*. He saves *that definite number*, and *no more, or less*. He must then have determined to do it. If any man denies this, he must say, either that God does not in fact save a certain definite number of individuals, or that he does this without previously intending to do it.

By these remarks I wish to make it clear to every reader, that there can properly be no dispute respecting the doctrine of the divine *purposes*, taken by itself. The controversy really respects the divine administration. The proper inquiry is, *what God actually does*. If we agree in this, we shall of course agree as to his purposes. By conducting the controversy in this way, we shall simplify the subject of inquiry, and free it at once from more than half its perplexity.

My object in this chapter is not to attempt a particular and full discussion of the subject, but merely to exhibit, in its outlines, the manner in which I think the doctrine may be satisfactorily stated and defended, and in which it may be effectually guarded against the difficulties which are supposed to attend it, and the misconstructions often put upon it. If we take care first to learn from scripture and observation, what God actually does, and in what manner he does it ; we can have no difficulty in passing from this to a correct and satisfactory view of his purposes. In this way it is easy to correct

various mistakes which have been made in stating the doctrine. Do you ask whether the doctrine of Election implies, that *only a small part of mankind are chosen to salvation?* To make out a proper answer, we first inquire whether there is any thing in the word of God, which shows this. And here we do indeed find some passages, which declare the small number of good men who lived at particular times; but none which declare that there will be only a small number saved, in reference to the whole human race from the beginning to the end of the world. The word of God plainly teaches the contrary. Secondly. We inquire what our own observation and the history of past ages teach. Here we think the evidence clear, that, through all generations past, only a small part, comparatively, of the human species, have been saved from sin. But this proves nothing as to the proportion that will be saved, of our whole race. There is abundant reason to believe that, in the ages to come, it will be exceedingly different from what it has been heretofore. Hence we conclude that the Scripture doctrine of Election does not imply, that only a small part of mankind are chosen to salvation. It is therefore a manifest error, to state the doctrine thus. And any one who gets advantage against it from such a view, gets it unfairly. And any one who justifies the representation often made of our doctrine in this respect, justifies what may justly be called *religious calumny*.

Again. Does the Scripture doctrine of Election imply, that the elect will be saved, let them do what they will; that is, whether they repent, and obey the gospel, or not? Here, according to our general principle, we consult the Scriptures to learn what God actually does. The question must be considered in two views. First:

making salvation mean the blessedness of heaven, we inquire whether God admits men to this, without any regard to their character and conduct. Every thing in the Bible stands against such a notion. Heaven is granted only to the penitent, the obedient, the holy. Secondly; salvation may denote the *regeneration* or *first conversion* of sinners. Agreeably to this view, the question stands thus; does God renew sinners, or begin the work of salvation in them, on account of their previous character or conduct? The Bible and observation both teach that he does not. Men possessing all the varieties of character which the world has exhibited, have been converted, or brought to repentance. If I should name Saul of Tarsus as an instance, my opponents might object, and say, it was a *miracle*. My reply would be, that God works no miracle, which violates the principles of a just administration of government; and that Paul makes no such distinction between himself and others, but expressly represents his case, as a pattern to others who should afterwards believe. 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. So that his declaration is obviously just; in regard to *Christians generally*, that God first calls them and saves them from sin, “not according to their works but according to his own purpose and grace.” This we consider as a universal truth. Whenever God first makes men holy, he must do it without regard to any goodness in them. He can look at no “works of righteousness which they have done,” but must act from the impulse of his own infinite love. And we are to view the purpose of God in relation to this subject, as in all respects corresponding to the manner of his acting. It seems then perfectly clear, that God did not determine to regenerate men, or make them holy, from any foresight of repentance, faith, or good works,

“as conditions or causes moving him thereunto.” The *first* production of holiness cannot surely have respect to any *previous* holiness. But I could not say, in the same sense, that God determined to give men the blessedness of heaven, without any foresight of repentance or good works, as conditions; because the Bible represents repentance and good works, and perseverance in them, as necessary conditions of final happiness. And if God now in fact makes them conditions, he must have regarded them as such, in his eternal purpose. That act of divine grace which, so far as the conduct of sinners is concerned is *wholly unconditional*, is, as I understand it, the first formation of a holy character, or the commencement of real goodness in the heart. Without enlarging here, I would just say, in accordance with the general principle laid down above, and more fully expressed in my Letters, that the divine purposes are just as conditional, and in the same sense, as the divine acts.

If then there is any objection against our doctrine of the divine purposes, the objection must in reality lie against what we assert to be matter of fact in the divine administration. The two things, which seem to be regarded as particularly objectionable, are, 1, That the conversion and salvation of men is a matter of mere grace, all regard to personal merit being excluded; 2, That the grace of God in the conversion of sinners is distinguishing; in other words, that it is so dispensed, that of those who are equally unworthy of favour, and equally deserving of punishment, some are renewed, and others not.

The proper way to dispose of the first of these particulars, is to place it by the side of those texts, which describe the moral character and state of all men, as

by nature entirely sinful, and those which represent the death of Christ, as the grand procuring cause of all the good conferred on human beings, and those which declare, that salvation is wholly of grace, to the exclusion of all works of righteousness. To these texts, I might add others which show the actual views of good men respecting themselves; and then might refer to the feelings of Christians generally.

As to the second point, namely, the difference among men equally undeserving;—it is clear that we cannot properly decide against it; because with our limited and obscure views, we cannot possibly determine that infinite wisdom may not see it to be necessary to make such a difference in order to the highest interests of the universe. To say that, because we can see no reasons for it, therefore there are none, would ill become creatures like us. It is easy to show from Scripture, that such a difference has been made, and from common observation, that it is now made. That divine grace, actually makes a difference among those who are equally sinful, renewing some and not others, is a plain, historic fact, just as well attested, as that God makes a difference, with respect to longevity, among men who live in the same climate, and possess equal vigor of natural constitution.

I am fully aware of the objection, that making such a difference is *unjust*. My first remark in relation to this objection is, that if it is in fact *unjust* to make the difference, it cannot be admitted that God would ever do it in a single instance. For God will no more do injustice in a single instance, than in ten thousand instances. But I think it is generally admitted by my opponents, that a difference like what I have asserted, has been made in some extraordinary instances, as that of Paul and Mary

Magdalene. But can they mean to admit that God does, in any instance whatever, commit an act of injustice?

But *to whom is it unjust* for God to make such a difference? To those who are saved? Our opponents will not say this. The injustice which they allege, must relate to those who perish. But how is the bestowment of gratuitous blessings on *others*, any injustice to *them*? I might rather say, how can it be unjust to inflict on them an evil which they deserve, or to withhold a favour which they deserve not?

Dr. Ware endeavours to show that the method of designating the heirs of salvation, which the doctrine of Election implies, can neither be reconciled with our natural notions of the moral government of God, derived from the use of the faculties he has given us, and our observation of his conduct in the government of the world, nor with what he has made known to us of his character, and purposes, and government in the Christian revelation."

His first objection is from our natural conceptions and feelings. "Following," he says, "the light of our reason and the natural impulse of our feelings, we find it impossible to imagine, that the Author of our being can regard and treat his offspring in the manner, which the doctrine in question attributes to him."

This argument it is evident can have no weight, if it is found, that our natural conceptions and feelings are so disordered, as not to be a safe guide. Human reason, when freed from wrong bias, and properly instructed, and the feelings of the heart, when sanctified by the divine Spirit, do, in my apprehension, perfectly approve every thing contained in the doctrine of Election. That reason, disordered as it is by sin, should mistake on this subject, is no more strange, than that it should mistake

on a thousand other subjects. And that the feelings of a world, which lieth in wickedness, should rise up against the purpose of God in respect to salvation, is no more strange, than that they should rise up, as they do, against various dispensations of divine providence. “The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord.” I allow, indeed, that the doctrine of Election, *as set forth by Dr. Ware*, p. 59, admits of no defence. He represents it as implying, that without any foreseen difference of character and desert in men, God regarded some with complacency and love, and others, with disapprobation and hatred and wrath; that is, that God regarded *with complacency* that same character in the elect, which, in the non-elect, he regarded with *disapprobation* and *hatred*. This representation has no resemblance to the Orthodox doctrine. It is an imagination, a shadow. Any man will be convinced of this, who examines what Dr. Ware quotes from my Letters, or from the Westminster Divines. Our doctrine is, that God regards those sinners who are to be saved, not with *approbation*, or *complacency*, but with that *benevolence*, or *compassion*, which is perfectly consistent with the highest *disapprobation*; that he chooses them to salvation through sanctification of the spirit; that he determines to renew them, and so to *make* them objects of his complacency; they being naturally objects of his strongest disapprobation. We maintain that God regards things just as they are. And any representation of our opponents, different from this, is at variance with our doctrine.

I must make similar remarks on another clause, p. 59, in which we are represented as holding that, “without any reference to the future use or abuse of their nature, God appoints some to everlasting happiness, and the rest

to everlasting misery ; and that this appointment, entirely arbitrary, is the cause, not the consequence of holiness in the one, and of the defect of holiness in the other." Our doctrine does not imply, that God appoints some to happiness and others to misery, without any reference to their future conduct. We maintain that God does, indeed, give the blessedness of heaven to his people, as an *unmerited gift*,—that is, without seeing any thing in their character which renders them *deserving* of such a gift ; but not without a regard to that *holiness* in them, which is a necessary *qualification* for heaven. He does not admit them to heaven, *as impenitent, unholy*. He first makes them holy ; and then receives them to heaven. In his purpose he determines things in the same order.

As to the non-elect, God will actually doom them to punishment, not without reference to their character and conduct, but *because they have been workers of iniquity*. He will do it for this reason, and for this only. And for this same reason, he predetermines to do it. So the Westminster Divines. "The rest of mankind God was pleased to ordain to dishonour and wrath, *for their sin*." If it is proper for God to *inflict* such an evil upon men for their sin, it is proper that he should previously determine to do it. No man can deny this. Yet we, who assert this, are charged with making God a monster of malevolence and caprice. And to give this charge some colour of truth, we are represented as asserting, that God appoints men to everlasting misery without any regard to their conduct ;—a thing as far from our belief, as atheism.

It really excites no small degree of surprise, that Dr. Ware should assert what follows, as though it were something different from the belief of the Orthodox and incompatible with the doctrine of Election. He says,

p. 64, "The final distinctions that are to be made between men, we are again and again told, are to be wholly according to the difference of moral character. It is that these are righteous, and those wicked; these have done well, and those have done ill."—This is a view of the subject upon which I have insisted a thousand times, with more zeal than upon almost any other. This I consider to be one of those plain truths of revelation, which ought to limit and regulate our conceptions of other subjects, and I make it a rule, not to admit any views of the doctrine of Election or of salvation by grace, or of any other doctrine, inconsistent with this.

It would be aside from my present purpose to enlarge on this topic. The difficulty, at which Dr. Ware and others stumble, seems to arise from their not taking into view the whole subject. The Westminster Divines and the Orthodox generally say, that God not only appointed the elect to glory, but appointed *all the means thereunto*. This is the same as saying, that those whom he purposed to save, he purposed first to sanctify; or in the language of Scripture, he chose them to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit. How, and in what order does God actually proceed in saving sinners? First, he provides for them a Redeemer and invites them to accept him. Secondly, he calls them with a holy calling, leads them to repentance, pardons their sins, and by an effectual discipline prepares them for heaven; and then he shows his approbation of them, and graciously rewards them. Their holiness is a condition, and on their part, the only condition of their title to heaven. Such is the order of God's acts in the salvation of sinners. Exactly answerable to this is the purpose of God. His purpose, perfectly wise and benevolent, is the exact counterpart of his administra-

tion. And as in his administration, the propriety of one event depends entirely upon its connexion with another; so it does in his purpose. And it is altogether unjust to represent that God predetermines *any event whatever*, without regard to its connexion with other events. It is neglecting that order and connexion of things, on which the character of the divine administration essentially depends. But it is from overlooking or denying this order and connexion, that the opposers of our doctrine get all their advantage against it. With these views, we cordially subscribe to the following declaration of Dr. Ware, though he seems to think our belief very different. "So far are the reasons of the final distinction to be made between those who are saved and those who perish, from being concealed in the divine mind, that nothing is more distinctly made known. The New Testament is full of it." I will only add, that it is, in my apprehension, revealed with equal clearness, that *God makes a difference among men in respect of character, without making known the reasons of what he does.*

But some of Dr. Ware's positions on this subject deserve more particular consideration. He says, p. 64, that "in the appointment of men to privileges and means, God has indeed given no account of his motives, nor assigned his reasons for the infinite variety that appears. He has exercised an absolute sovereignty, of which no account is given, and the reasons of which we are not competent to understand." And p. 76, he expresses his approbation of "a free and unconditional appointment to the participation of privileges." Now if Dr. Ware will look through this subject, as he has stated it, he may possibly discover as formidable difficulties, as those which attend our doctrine. For what is the *tendency* and *use* of means and privileges? Does not

their whole value consist in their influence upon the character? The word of God, which is the greatest and best of our privileges, and which makes the principal difference between Christians and heathens, is the means of turning men from sin, and bringing them to love and obey God. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." When God, in the exercise of that absolute sovereignty, which Dr. Ware ascribes to him, appoints one part of the human race, say the inhabitants of New England, to the enjoyment of the Scriptures and other religious means, he doubtless does it to promote virtue and piety, or to render men holy. And the actual consequence of these privileges is, that many become penitent and holy. Now does Dr. Ware see no difficulty in asserting that God, by an act of "absolute sovereignty," grants to some in distinction from others, privileges which are designed to produce, and to a certain extent, do in fact produce, a sanctifying effect upon their character?—privileges without which, according to the apostle, Rom. x, men cannot believe? In regard to the general difficulty, where is the difference between Dr. Ware's doctrine, and ours? We say, God determines to bring some men to repentance, and make them holy, and therefore gives them those means which, by his blessing, will produce the effect. According to Dr. Ware, God in the exercise of his *absolute sovereignty*, appoints some men in distinction from others, to the participation of those means, by which they are in fact, formed to holiness. Their holiness is the real and proper effect of the means which God gives them. And he would doubtless allow too, that God gives them these means, knowing infallibly what will be the consequence, and intending that just such a desirable consequence shall take place. Now is not this, in effect,

making a difference among men in respect of *character*, as well as of *means* and *privileges*? If means and privileges do not tend to make a difference in respect of character, of what value are they? Why are they bestowed? Dr. Ware would doubtless go as far as we, in extolling the happy consequences of the Christian revelation upon those communities which enjoy it. Those consequences respect moral and religious character chiefly. To give that revelation is to contribute directly, and in many cases effectually, to the formation of a holy character. And a previous determination to give that revelation is, in effect, a determination to make men holy. On the other hand, to withhold the Sacred Oracles and the other means of religion, is to leave men without any reasonable prospect of being brought to repentance. The truths and precepts and promises of Scripture are the only medicines, which can cure the moral diseases of men. To withhold the Scriptures is to leave men to the fatal influence of those moral diseases, thus rendered incurable. Had the inhabitants of Tyre and Sodom enjoyed the same means with those, who were favoured with the Scriptures and the personal ministry of Christ; "they would have repented." The means would have been, to a greater or less degree, effectual. If those means had been afforded to the inhabitants of one of those places, and not of the other; a difference between the inhabitants of those two places in point of moral character would unquestionably have been the consequence. In Great Britain and America there is a large number of enlightened and sincere worshippers of God, while among other equal portions of the human race in Asia and Africa, none can be found. How can this be accounted for? According to Dr. Ware, it must be ascribed to difference of circum-

stances. And difference of circumstances is traced by him to "the absolute sovereignty of God." Thus then his scheme stands. In "the exercise of absolute sovereignty," God has given some men and not others, the Scriptures and other means. These means are given for the very purpose of producing an effect on the character; and to a great extent they actually accomplish this purpose. The character, thus formed, determines the condition of men in the future world. In all the instances, in which men are thus turned from sin, and fitted for the kingdom of heaven, these things make a connected series;—means of moral culture,—formation of character,—condition in the future world. Condition in the future world depends on character; character, on the enjoyment of means; and the enjoyment of means, according to Dr. Ware, on "the absolute sovereignty of God." Now just so far as these things are connected, if God appoints one, he does in effect appoint the other; especially as the connexion itself, whatever it is, depends wholly on his will. And yet Dr. Ware objects strongly to considering God's appointment as relating either to men's character, or to their future condition. But why should he object? What difficulty can he feel in admitting that the appointment of God relates to all these,—and relates to them just in the order and manner in which they take place? The position which I would defend in relation to this subject, is, that *the purpose of God exactly agrees with the acts of his administration.* This is the faith of the Orthodox, though expressed in different ways. Some choose to say that God, by a sovereign act, first appointed the eternal condition of the elect; and then "appointed all the means thereunto;" that is, purposed to give them his word, and, by means of that word, to make them holy, and thus prepare them

for heaven. Others prefer a different order, and say, that God first determined to give men his word and make them holy, and then to bestow the rewards of holiness. But both come to the same thing. For according to the first, the design of God to receive men to heaven must be connected with a design to make them holy, and that must be connected with a design to give them the means of holiness. And according to the other, his design to give them the means of religion must be connected with a design to produce, by those means, a proper effect upon their character; that is, to make them holy; and his design to make them holy must be connected with his design to make them happy in his kingdom. Thus things are connected in fact; and thus, according to both statements, must they have been regarded in the divine purpose.

If with Dr. Ware and others, we should assert a *conditional* purpose of God, in regard to men's character; how should we be less encumbered with difficulty? God determined to make men holy on condition of their faithfully using the means he should afford them. But in respect to those, who will actually be saved, he knew that the condition would be performed. And he knew it would be performed, not as a matter of chance, but under the influence of proper causes,—causes of a moral nature,—causes wholly under his control, and deriving all their efficacy from him. Or thus. He determined to put them in such circumstances, to hold up such motives, and to exert such an influence, as he knew would persuade them, as moral agents, to use their privileges aright, and to obey the gospel. Now this is substantially, though not in form, the same with the doctrine of the Orthodox. They maintain, that God purposed to admit to heaven a certain number of our race. But how? As

unsanctified sinners? No; but in consequence of their previous deliverance from sin, and their preparation for heaven. Their possessing real holiness is an essential prerequisite to their being admitted into heaven; and, in this sense, must be regarded as a condition of their final happiness. The Orthodox maintain too, that God determined to make his people holy. But how? By a physical influence, operating upon them as machines? No; but by an influence suited to their moral nature. He determined to sanctify them *through the truth*. Now this statement of the subject is as honourable to God, as conformable to reason, scripture, and fact, and as free from difficulty, as the other.

The doctrine of Election is represented by my opponent as not reconcileable with the notions of the divine character, "which we derive from our observation of his conduct in the government of the world;" that is, it is not reconcileable with what we learn from fact. But my apprehension is, that fact helps to prove the doctrine. For what is fact? A difference really exists among men in respect of character. How is this difference to be accounted for? If it is *original*, or if it springs from any thing original in our nature, it must be traced to the purpose and agency of the Author of our nature. This Dr. Ware would by no means allow; and of course must say that the good and the bad are originally of the same character. I ask then for the cause of the present difference. Is it owing, as Dr. Ware in another place suggests, to education, example, and other outward circumstances? All these circumstances are ordered by divine providence. In the appointment of men to these, Dr. Ware asserts, that God "exercises an absolute sovereignty." And if it is more or less owing to means, privileges, and outward circumstances, that some men

are holy, while others are not ; the difference is, in the same degree, to be traced to what Dr. Ware calls the “ absolute sovereignty of God.” But the characters of men, who have the *same* outward privileges, differ ; and it will be said by Dr. Ware, that this difference depends on the manner in which they use the means afforded them. Some men voluntarily use their faculties and privileges aright, and so acquire the habits of real goodness ; while others abuse their faculties and privileges, and exhibit the marks of obstinate wickedness. Suppose now this voluntary conduct to be the proximate cause of the difference existing, among men in regard to character, and that a part of the human race become holy, because they rightly use their privileges. This right use of their privileges is, then, a *fact*,—and a fact on which their everlasting interest depends. How is this fact to be accounted for ? Is it owing to the influence of any causes, either physical or moral ?—Does it result from their disposition or choice ? How then is this disposition or choice to be accounted for ? The Scripture accounts for it by the divine influence. It represents God as working in men *both to will, and to do*. If Dr. Ware is satisfied with this mode of accounting for the fact, the controversy is ended. But if he should say, that the gracious influence of God is always granted on the condition of men’s having previously some right desire, or choice, or conduct ; I would ask again, how we are to account for that desire, choice, or conduct, which is not produced by the spirit of God ? Where shall we look for the cause ? Is the right desire or choice owing to the influence of motives ? And is it not God, who has given men a mind suited to be influenced by motives ? And does he not so order things in his providence, that those motives

shall be presented before them, which will effectually excite such a choice or desire?

Thus common observation first leads us to notice what exists in fact,—what God does in his providence with respect to the characters, and consequently with respect to the future condition of men; and from this we infer what his design was.

To the following remark of Dr. Ware it is hardly necessary to make any additional reply. He says, that according to our doctrine, what men are to be and how they are to act, is determined beforehand, without any reference to their exertions. A strange notion truly, since it is impossible to conceive that men should *be any thing*, or *act in any way whatever*, without including their *exertions*.

Dr. Ware thinks that God's sovereign appointment of the everlasting condition of men is "inconsistent with all that implies the influence of motives." But he could not have thought so, if he had only considered the divine purpose as agreeing exactly with fact; and, finding it a fact that moral agents are, and from the nature of the case must be, influenced by motives, had concluded, that God's appointment was, that they *should be influenced* by motives just as they are. The position of our opponents if well examined, will evidently amount to this,—that *God's determining* that men shall act from motives, *hinders* them from acting in this manner; that his determining that they shall be moral, accountable agents, makes it impossible they should be so. Whereas we have been very much inclined to think, that God's determination, if it has any influence, must tend to *accomplish* the thing determined, not to *prevent* it.

This subject is placed in a very clear light by those texts which show, that men have acted with perfect

freedom and voluntariness, while fulfilling the divine purpose. The apostles declare, Acts iv. 26, 27, 28, that the murderers of Christ did what *the hand and counsel of God determined before to be done*. But did they act without motives? Here is a plain case. In those very actions, which were predetermined, they were influenced by motives, and were in all respects moral, accountable agents. Nor is this a singular case. So far as our subject is concerned, it is on a level with a thousand other instances of wickedness,—yea, with all the instances which have ever occurred. From the single case of Pharaoh, the Apostle draws arguments to establish a general principle; that is, he considers the conduct of God in respect to Pharaoh, as proving that the same conduct would be proper in respect to others. So I reason here. If God predetermined the actions of those who crucified the Saviour, he must have predetermined the actions of other sinners. This none can reasonably deny, unless they can offer some satisfactory reason why God should determine the actions of Christ's enemies, but not of others. And if the enemies of Christ, whose actions were predetermined, were still influenced by motives, and were in the highest degree moral agents; so may *others* be, whose actions were predetermined.

In some respects, Dr. Ware well illustrates the general principle for which I contend, in a passage of his Fourth Letter, p. 78. Speaking of the design of God in raising up Pharaoh, he says; "How did God actually show his power in him, and make him the instrument of his glory? It was by giving him the opportunity to act out his character; by allowing him full scope for displaying the incorrigible obstinacy of his disposition, and by then inflicting upon him exemplary punishment for the instruction and warning of mankind; thus making

him the instrument of promoting some of the best purposes of heaven, in the free and voluntary exercise of his power." Here the perfect consistency of free and voluntary action with the accomplishment of God's purpose is fully asserted.

It will be seen then, how little reason Dr. Ware has for what he has written, p. 61, 62, in which he represents the Orthodox doctrine as inconsistent "with all that implies the influence of motives"—"with all that implies guilt, ill-desert, blame-worthiness in the disobedient"—"and with all those promises, threatenings, warnings, &c. which imply in those to whom they are addressed, a power of being influenced."—If the divine purpose leaves men, I should rather say *makes* them, *free, moral agents*, as we see is implied in the case of Pharaoh and the murderers of Christ; they are certainly capable of being influenced by *motives*, so that promises, threats, warnings, &c. are proper and useful; and if guilt can exist in any case, it may here.

Dr. Ware says, p. 62, that this doctrine "represents God as unjust,—exacting endless punishment for sins committed in following the nature which he had given us, and acting in pursuance of his decree." I reply. If sin exists, it must be committed in following our dispositions, or the propensities of our nature. And I have before shown, that the circumstance of our dispositions or propensities being natural or original, cannot render them, or the actions resulting from them, less criminal. As to the other part; can Dr. Ware, after giving the explanation, above quoted, of the divine conduct respecting Pharaoh, think it unjust for God to punish men for sins they commit, while acting in pursuance of his purpose? Did not Joseph's brethren, though their hearts meant not so, act in pursuance of God's purpose? Did not

those who carried the Israelites into captivity, and those who murdered the Prince of life, act according to God's purpose? And was God unjust and cruel in punishing them?

I regret that Dr. Ware has made use of expressions and arguments like those above recited. They are such as men of liberal minds, who examine subjects profoundly, and judge without prejudice, ought never to employ. It would be easy enough, by means equally plausible, to oppose those doctrines of Scripture, which Dr. Ware believes, and to discredit the Scripture itself.

I will allow myself here to turn aside from the book, to which I am attempting a reply, just to notice the ravings of one of the most able opposers of the doctrine of Election. To those who assert this doctrine, he says; "You represent God as worse than the Devil; more false, more cruel, more unjust. But you say, you will prove it by Scripture. Hold! What will you prove by Scripture? that God is worse than the Devil?"—"Upon the supposition of this doctrine, one might say to our adversary the Devil, thou fool, why dost thou roar about any longer? Hearest thou not that God hath taken thy work out of thy hands, and that he doth it more effectually?"—"Oh how would the enemy of God and man rejoice to hear these things were so! How would he lift up his voice and say, to your tents, O Israel! flee from the face of this God.—But whither will ye flee? Into heaven? He is there. Down to hell? He is there also. Ye cannot flee from an omnipresent, omnipotent tyrant."

My apology for introducing these extracts from Wesley is, that the Reviewers in the *Christian Disciple* for Nov. and Dec. 1820, profess to have perfect fellowship, on this subject, with one, whom they consider

as mad with enthusiasm, and call this strain of violent misrepresentation, scurrility, and outrage, "an overwhelming flood of eloquence as well as argument."

Our opposers are much inclined to look at the difficulties and objections, which attend our doctrine of the divine purpose respecting the characters of men. Why will they not pay equal attention to the difficulties, which attend the *denial* of this doctrine? If they deny that the characters of men exist in accordance with the eternal purpose of God; they must maintain either that God had no design at all in regard to their characters, or else that he designed they should be different from what they really are. Will you say, God had no determination respecting the moral characters of men? Then he could have had no determination respecting any of those natural or moral causes, which contribute to form their character. And if so, then he could have had no determination respecting "the privileges, means, and external condition" of men, to which it is perfectly obvious their characters are generally owing. But Dr. Ware asserts that God has appointed men's privileges, means and external condition, *with absolute sovereignty*. So it comes to this; he has appointed every thing, which can operate as a cause or means of moral character—every thing to which the formation of character can be traced, but has carefully abstained from determining what the *character* shall be. And why? Because his determining what it shall be would be inconsistent with its being what he determined.

But if you say, God *had* a determination respecting the characters of men, but that his determination was that they should be different from what they are; then God is disappointed. But every disappointment must

be owing to some defect of wisdom or power, and of course must belong to an imperfect being. Let any man who denies our doctrine, take which position he pleases,—either that God has no design at all respecting men’s characters; or, that he designed they should be different from what they are in fact; and let him compare the difficulties attending either of these positions with those which attend the only remaining position, namely, that of the Orthodox above stated.

I pass over many things in Dr. Ware’s Letters, of the same general nature with those on which I have already remarked, and proceed to notice the manner in which he attempts to invalidate my arguments from Scripture.

My first argument was founded on those passages, particularly in John xvii, in which Christ speaks of a part of mankind, as given him of the Father. As an example I quoted verse 2. “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” The sense which I gave to the text was this; that the Father has given to Christ a part of the human race, and that those who are thus given to Christ, are the persons who shall have eternal life.

Dr. Ware thinks our Saviour could not have meant to assert the common doctrine of Election in this text, because in Chapter xv, “he addresses the same persons of whom he here speaks as given him of the Father, in language implying that they might abide in him and bring forth fruit, or failing to abide in him, might be taken away,” &c. “But,” he says, “according to the doctrine in question, there could be no such contingency in the case.” The reasoning is this. If God had a real design to save those particular persons, whom he finally

does save, Christ could not have exhorted his disciples as he did, to abide in him, and enforced his exhortation by telling them the plain truth as to the consequences of their faithful adherence to him, and the consequences of their forsaking him. Which is the same as saying, if God does certainly determine to save a particular number of human beings, he cannot speak to them in the language of direction, exhortation, and warning,—cannot address them with motives,—cannot do any thing to excite their hopes or fears, or persuade them to obedience. And all this seems to me to be the same as saying,—if God determines to train up a certain number of men for eternal life, he cannot use proper means to carry his determination into effect. I must confess that all the reason, which it has pleased God to give me, leads to a conclusion directly opposite. If God really determines to guide a certain number of men in the way to heaven, it seems reasonable to expect, that he will use the means best suited to accomplish his determination. And admitting those who are to be saved, to be moral agents, I should think that God would of course, make use of all those precepts, warnings, promises and threats, by which moral agents are most effectually influenced. What would Dr. Ware say, if we should apply the reasoning he relies upon in this case, to events in the natural world. The reasoning would stand thus. If God certainly determines to give us an abundant harvest, it will be altogether inconsistent for him to cause the sun to shine or rain to descend, or to use any other means to secure that harvest which he has determined to give. And I am sure it is equally absurd to reason thus in regard to the moral world. If God determines to accomplish an event of a moral nature, I ask whether it is consistent that he should use any means whatever; and

then, whether it is consistent for him to use those which are suited to moral agents. The remaining question would be, whether warnings, exhortations, promises, and threats, are suited to influence moral agents. It must be perfectly obvious, that they can be influenced in no other way; and that if God determines to bring a larger or smaller number of men to serve him faithfully, and so prepare them for future happiness, he must influence them to do it by such means as those above mentioned, or not at all;—unless men cease to be moral agents, and become capable of being moved like senseless machines. We see then, that the very thing which Dr. Ware thinks conclusive against the doctrine of Election, naturally and necessarily results from it, supposing it to be true. We see also, that all the contingency, which is implied in the use of exhortations, conditional promises, and threats, is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of Election.

If it were necessary still farther to defend the position I have taken in regard to the use of means, I could easily adduce particular instances, in which it appears from Scripture, that God has actually determined the characters and actions of men, and yet, in those very instances, has made use of all the means suited to moral agents, and made use of them in such a manner as to carry his determination into effect.

Those who urge the above-named objection against our doctrine, commit one great mistake; that is, they do not consider that the divine purposes, like all parts of the divine administration, respect men, *as moral agents*, and are accomplished by a system of moral means, exactly suited to operate upon such agents. Did they not lose sight of this plain principle, they could not help seeing, that it is just as consistent with our doctrine for God to use warnings, exhortations, promises and threats

to influence his people, as to give them *commands*, or to use proper means to accomplish any of his designs.

Another argument which Dr. Ware urges against my reasoning from the passage in John xvii, is, that in a previous chapter, we meet with the following sentence ; “ For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me,” &c. John xvi. 27. “ Here,” Dr. Ware says, “ the love of God is represented, not as the cause, but as the consequence of the faith and love of the disciples.” This view is admitted, so far as the meaning of this particular text is concerned. But if we would understand the subject fully, we must compare this text with others, particularly with two passages from the same writer ; 1 John iv. 10, 19. “ Not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” “ We love him because *he first loved us.*” Dr. Ware thinks if our doctrine of Election or distinguishing grace is true, “ it is impossible to see with what propriety it could be said of the elect, that God loved them, because of their love to Christ ; for his distinguishing love was, by that supposition, the *cause* of their love.” I contend that in a most important sense, it *was* the cause ; and that in the two texts last quoted, it is clearly represented in this light ; though in another sense, it is as represented in the passage cited by Dr. Ware ; that is, God’s love to Christians does, in the order of nature, follow their love to him. Now to avoid a contradiction between the different passages above cited, we must refer to a very obvious distinction between the different significations of the word *love*, as used in these passages. When we speak of the love of God in the sense in which it is used in the texts quoted from the Epistle, and elsewhere, that is, *as benevolence towards sinners, operating powerfully for their salvation*, we must consider it as the cause of their love to him, yea, the cause of

every thing excellent in their character, and every thing happy in their condition. And is it not common for devout Christians, of all denominations, to attribute all good in creatures to the benevolence or goodness of God? The love of God in this sense is mere good-will, kindness, compassion; and is exercised towards men, considered as sinners, or enemies. Of course, it implies no *approbation of their character*, no *complacency* in them. But the word, as used John xvi. 27, evidently denotes *complacency*, or *approbation*, and *actions expressive of it*, and so necessarily presupposes *moral good* in those who are its objects. They enjoy the divine *approbation*, because they love Christ. The love of God, thus understood, is the reward of our faith and piety; but it has no respect to the doctrine of Election; and the passage in John xvi. 27, can no more disprove the doctrine, than any other passage in the Bible. Thus the error, which lies at the bottom of Dr. Ware's reasoning on this subject, becomes obvious. He says; "If by those who are given to Christ we are to understand all to whom Christ will actually give eternal life, and this appointment to Christian faith and eternal life is wholly independent of any thing in them as the ground of this distinction from the rest of the world; it is impossible to see with what propriety it could be said, that God loved them, because of their love to Christ." But how impossible? God's love, here spoken of, most evidently does not signify his original act in choosing men to salvation, but his *approbation* of them and his peculiar favour towards them, in consequence of their faithful attachment to Christ. But how did he regard them *before* they had any love to Christ, and when they were *enemies*? Did he not look upon them with *benevolence* and *compassion*, and send his Son to die for them, and his spirit to renew them? It is

impossible for any one to show the least incompatibility between God's originally exercising infinite *benevolence* towards a part of mankind, and choosing them to holiness and salvation, independently of any thing in them as the ground of this distinction, and his regarding them *afterwards* with *complacency*, and manifesting himself to them as their friend, on account of their love and obedience to Christ.

Dr. Ware has another passage, p. 68, which must not pass without notice. He represents "coming to Christ, believing on him, &c. as events not flowing from a sovereign appointment of God, but the result of the faithful use of means, in the exercise of a right disposition, and that the difference of character thus appearing between Christians and others, is the ground, not the consequence of their being given to Christ." Now I ask whether it is not a doctrine clearly taught in many parts of the Bible, that believing in Christ, and the possession of a right disposition and character, are fairly to be ascribed to the divine influence as the cause? And if so, whether the effectual operation of that cause, being a divine act, must not have been before settled in the divine mind? Nothing can be more evident, than that the text, John vi. 37, represents coming to Christ as the consequence of being given to Christ. "All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me." Their *coming* follows as the consequence of their being *given*. So this mode of expression always means. There is an instance of it in the same verse. "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." His not being cast out, i. e. his being accepted, is the consequence of his coming to Christ. And it is equally evident from this passage, that men's coming to Christ is the consequence of their being given to Christ. The mode of expression, here used,

always denotes, that the second thing mentioned is the consequence of the first. Thus we say, those who repent, shall be forgiven. All who seek God, shall find him. All who are pure in heart, shall see God. Whosoever believeth, shall have life. In all such cases, the meaning is undoubted. And so I think Dr. Ware would understand the phrase in John vi. 37, if instead of forcing the passage to agree with a preconceived opinion, he would attend to the established principles of interpretation. Suppose we should find in any book the following declaration; *all who hear the gospel, shall be converted.* Or this; *all who are born in a christian land, shall be saved.* Could we doubt that the writer meant in each case to assert that the latter would follow as the consequence of the former, and that the former would have a special influence in producing the latter. But Dr. Ware inverts the two parts of a sentence just like these, and makes that which is set forth as the consequence, to be the antecedent, or cause. The text is; “All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me.” Dr. Ware’s sense of it is; *all who come to me, the Father shall give me.* He says, “those only are given him of the Father, who come to Christ.”

I would just remark that the construction which Dr. Ware has put upon the text quoted, p. 70, at the bottom, overlooks the idiom of the New Testament, as might easily be shown.

The next passage I cited to prove the doctrine of Election, was Eph. i, 3—11. On supposition that the Apostle actually believed the doctrine as we do, it is inconceivable that he could have asserted it more plainly and emphatically, than he does in this passage. He teaches us that God had a purpose, or choice, respecting those who are saved; and he teaches us what

the purpose or choice was. "He hath blessed us, &c.—according as he hath chosen us in him, that we should be holy—having predestinated us to the adoption of children, &c." Here also we learn the date of the divine purpose; "before the foundation of the world." 2 Tim. i. 9, is of the same general import. "Who hath saved us and called us, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace."

As the principle concerned in the interpretation of these passages must be considered of great consequence, and must determine the sense of other passages also, in relation to the same subject; I ask the attention of the reader to a particular investigation.

Dr. Ware undertakes to prove that the passage in Ephesians has no relation to the doctrine of Election. And one argument which he adduces to prove this, is, that the passage *refers not to individuals as such, but to the Christian community.*

I will begin the examination of this subject by admitting what Dr. Ware supposes, namely, that the passage relates to the Christian community, or, to Christians taken collectively. Now does this supposition remove any difficulty? If it is inconsistent for God to choose *individuals* to holiness and salvation; it is surely not less inconsistent for him to choose to the same blessings a large society of men. If any purpose or conduct relative to individuals is improper; certainly it cannot be less improper, because it relates to a community, comprising a large number of individuals. So that whatever the purpose or conduct, which Dr. Ware supposes to be ascribed to God in this passage; that same purpose or conduct must be as just and proper in regard to individuals, as in regard to a community. It seems to me impossible that any man should doubt this. On this

account it has long appeared to me utterly irrelevant, for the opposers of our doctrine to introduce this distinction between the choice of individuals, and the choice of a community. If in any respect a divine purpose in relation to individuals, is improper ; that divine purpose is, in the same respect, equally improper in relation to a community. There is no principle in ethics or theology, according to which an act of injustice or partiality towards individuals, changes its character when directed towards a community.

The fact that *a distinction is made*, occasions certainly as great difficulty, when considered in relation to a community, as in relation to individuals. It is indeed an affair of great magnitude for particular persons to be chosen to enjoy important blessings, while others are passed by, and left without those blessings. But certainly it is an affair of no less magnitude, for a community, or large society of men to be chosen to enjoy those blessings, and yet other communities be left without them. Whether the blessings intended are temporal or spiritual, the distinction which the divine purpose makes must occasion as great difficulty, when it relates to communities, as when it relates to individuals ;—as great surely, when it relates to the larger object, as when it relates to the less. I confess I should much sooner think of objecting to the purpose of God, or any distinction he makes in his providence respecting large bodies of men, than respecting individuals. I say then that whatever may be the nature of that eternal purpose of God which is spoken of in the text, and whatever blessings it secures to some in distinction from others ; it is wholly without use for Dr. Ware to say, that purpose relates to communities, not to individuals ; since upon any supposition the same divine purpose or conduct can-

not be less objectionable, when it relates to communities or nations, than when it relates to individuals. It is the opinion of Dr. Ware, that the divine purpose or choice spoken of, refers to temporal blessings, or to religious privileges, means and opportunities. Be it so then, just as he supposes. I ask what occasion he can have to represent it as relating to *communities*, and not to *individuals*; since he must be as well satisfied, as I am, that *such* a divine purpose may with perfect propriety relate to individuals. And on the other hand, if the divine purpose spoken of by the Apostle is to be understood as securing the actual bestowment of spiritual blessings, that is, sanctification, pardon, and eternal life, upon those who are its objects; then surely Dr. Ware must find as many difficulties in supposing, that *such* a purpose relates to a community, as to individuals. Why then has this distinction been made? What end does it answer? And why is it so much relied upon by Dr. Ware and others in their reasoning against the doctrine of Election?

Thus I have endeavoured to show that if the purpose of God mentioned above, should be understood to refer not to individuals, but to the Christian community; it would still be of no use to Dr. Ware's argument. But there are reasons, which seem to me quite conclusive against this.

First. A community is a collection of *individuals*, who retain perfectly their individual existence, properties, and relations. Now is it possible, that any purpose or conduct of God should refer to a *community*, or *society of men* without referring to the *individuals* of whom that society is composed? Is it possible, for example, that a *community* should be visited with sickness or famine, and yet the *individuals*, who

compose that community, escape? Is it possible that a community should receive any *blessing*, and yet the individual members continue destitute of it? Is it possible that any *law* should be *obligatory* upon a public body of men, which yet is not obligatory upon the individuals composing that body? Is it possible that we should *love a society*, or that we should promote the welfare of a society, without loving its *members*, and promoting *their* welfare? How then could Dr. Ware think it proper to assert, that the purpose of God mentioned in the passage under consideration, relates *not to individuals*, but to the Christian community?

Nor can it be of any use to Dr. Ware's argument, for him to say, that this divine purpose does not relate "to individuals, as such;" that is, to individuals, *as individuals*, or in their individual capacity. Suppose we admit this. What then? The divine purpose does not refer to them in their *individual* capacity; still it must refer to them, *as members of the body*, or in their *collective* capacity. Now do men cease to be *men*, by being collected together in society? Do they lose any of their intellectual or moral powers? Does their existence or their happiness become less important? Do they not stand in the same relation to God? Have they not as good a title to a just and proper treatment from God in their *collective*, as in their *individual* capacity? If any purpose or act of God, which relates to men as individuals, is liable to a charge of injustice or partiality; certainly it is not less liable, if it relates to them as collected together in society; since after being thus collected, they retain all their relations to God, and have an undiminished right to expect from him all that is just and equal.

That the purpose of God referred to, could not af-

fect men as members of a community, without affecting them as individuals, will appear very evident, if we consider the *nature* of that divine purpose, and to *what kind of blessings* it related. The Apostle here speaks of Christians being chosen in Christ, *that they should be holy, —predestinated to the adoption of children,—having redemption through Christ's blood, the forgiveness of sins, and having obtained an inheritance.* This is the nature of the divine purpose or choice. These are the blessings to which it related. Now of which of these blessings can it be said, that it respects Christians not *as individuals*, but *as a community*? Is not a man *holy* in his individual capacity? Is he not adopted to be *a child of God*, as an individual? Do not a man's *sins* belong to him as an individual; and must not *forgiveness* respect him as an individual? And is it not as an individual, that a man is *redeemed*, and made *an heir of heaven*? There is no blessing here spoken of, which is of such a nature, that it can relate to men in any other capacity, than *as individual moral agents*.

But Dr. Ware says, the passage now before us, refers “not to final salvation, but to Christian privileges.” It is indeed true that being made “holy,” “forgiveness,” and “redemption through the blood of Christ,” are Christian *privileges*. But they are privileges connected with “final salvation,” and evidently involving it. And in the Epistle to the Thessalonians, the Apostle expressly mentions salvation, as the blessing secured by the divine purpose,—a salvation attained through sanctification of the spirit. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” Does not this refer to final salvation? And does not the predestination spoken of.

Rom. viii. 29, 30, refer to final salvation? Let the reader examine for himself.

But we must attend to *the arguments*, by which Dr. Ware proves, that the passage under consideration refers not to final salvation, but to Christian privileges. His first argument is, "that the Epistle is addressed to the whole Christian community at Ephesus, without any intimation that any expressions in it are applicable to some, and not to others." And where would have been the propriety of intimating that any of the expressions were applicable to some and not to others, when the whole community was made up of those, who had openly renounced their sins, and, in the face of persecution and death, boldly professed their faith in Christ. A Christian community *then* was not what we generally call so *now*. The population of Ephesus, before the introduction of Christianity, were "without God in the world,"—*atheists*. It was among such a people, that Paul gathered a Church, that is, a society of those whom God had "quicken'd," and "made nigh by the blood of Christ," and "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise;" whom, in short, he had made entirely different from what they were by nature. The rest of the Ephesians remained as they were, "enemies to God by wicked works." Accordingly, the Christian community among the Ephesians comprised those who were apparently quickened, saved by grace, holy. But what is called a christian community among us, comprises all, both saints and sinners, who live together in any place or country, where the Christian religion has been established. If any man should proceed in his reasoning, on the supposition that a church, or Christian community among the Ephesians was the same, as what we call a Christian community here; he would betray great want of attention to facts,

and would disregard one of the most important helps to a right understanding of the Scriptures ; namely, that we carefully consider the circumstances of those who wrote them, and of those to whom they were written.

But Dr. Ware proceeds in his argument ; “ That this choice or predestination was not that of individuals to eternal life, but of all who received the Christian faith, to the profession and privileges of the gospel—appears still farther from other expressions addressed in the same manner. It is for these same persons, saints, chosen, &c, that the Apostle thought it needful very earnestly to pray to God, ‘ that they might be strengthened with might by his spirit,—that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith ; that they might be rooted and grounded in love ;’ very suitable to be addressed to professed believers as a promiscuous body ; but such as we should hardly expect, if the persons designated, were by the very designation understood to be those only who were certainly chosen to eternal life, and were already grounded in love, &c.”

Nothing can be plainer than that this reasoning of Dr. Ware does not answer his purpose. For every Christian on earth, however advanced he may be in holiness, and however strong his hope of heaven, does offer up just such prayer as that above mentioned, *for himself*. And is it not perfectly suitable that he should ? And if it is suitable that the true Christian should pray thus for himself, it must be suitable that he should pray thus for other true Christians. Although the Christian has repented, and believed, and is holy ; his repentance, faith, and holiness are but begun. He prays that they may be continued and increased, by the constant influence of divine grace. The prayer is perfectly consistent with the attainments of the best man on earth. It

is plain then, that Dr. Ware's attempt to prove, from the nature of the Apostle's prayer, that he did not mean to address the saints at Ephesus as being true Christians, already grounded in love, is entirely unsuccessful ; since no prayer could have been more proper, on supposition of their *being* true Christians.

Dr. Ware allows that the prayer, above referred to, is very suitable to be offered up for "professed believers as a promiscuous body." He doubtless means the whole body of professing believers, including the sincere as well as the hypocritical. Certainly he cannot mean that sincere Christians are to be excepted. But if they are not to be excepted, then the prayer is suitable in relation to them. Prayer cannot be properly offered up for a promiscuous body, unless those, who compose that body, have something in common, on account of which the same prayer is suited to them all. In the case before us, those for whom the prayer was offered, had common wants. Whether they were all sincere Christians or not, they all needed what the apostle supplicated for them. So that the prayer would have been perfectly proper, had they *all* been truly sanctified. And none the less proper surely, on supposition they were "certainly chosen to eternal life." Could such a choice prevent their needing the blessings of the gospel? If because men are chosen to eternal life, they do not need the blessings mentioned in the apostle's prayer; then they do not need conversion, or faith, or any other blessing,—not even that very eternal life, to which they are chosen. What dream of Antinomianism or fatalism was ever so strange as this?

But Dr. Ware says, the apostle "thinks it proper to exhort these same persons to walk worthy of their vocation, to put off the old man, and put on the new man,

and not to grieve the Spirit.”—“Very suitable to be addressed to the *promiscuous body* of *professing Christians*;—very suitable, if by saints, chosen, predestinated, this only were meant; but certainly not so, if by these terms were designated persons chosen from eternity to final salvation, and already saints and faithful in the highest and literal sense. Such, as distinguished from the rest of the world, are not proper subjects of exhortation to walk worthy of the Christian vocation.”

But I ask why they are not proper subjects of such exhortation? Is it not the *duty* of *all* men to walk worthy of the Christian vocation? And can it cease to be the duty of any, because they are already real saints, and are chosen to salvation? God has chosen them, *that they should be holy*. Can this release them from the *obligation* to be holy? The grace of God in choosing men to salvation, and in making them saints, is represented by the apostles, as a new motive to duty, not as a reason for neglecting it. Now if walking worthy of their vocation is the *duty* of those who are chosen to salvation and are already saints; then clearly it is proper that they should be *exhorted* to walk thus. For to what can the Scriptures more properly exhort men, than to do their *duty*.

But we may take another view. If God has determined to bring men to final salvation, he has determined to do it by certain means. These means are repentance, faith, and increasing, persevering holiness. But these are *active duties* of *rational moral agents*. Men must perform them, *as moral agents*. And *as moral agents* they must be *excited* to perform them. But how are moral agents excited to perform duty, but by exhortations, commands, promises, and threats? Now do men cease to be moral agents, because they are “al-

ready saints in the literal sense?" Dr. Ware's reasoning implies that they do. If he would allow that they continue to be moral agents, he must allow it to be proper that they should be *treated* as moral agents, and be exhorted and commanded to do their duty.—He thinks "they cannot be exhorted to be renewed,—because by the supposition their renewal is already certain." But suppose it is certain that they are renewed, that is, that their renewal is begun; is it not necessary that it should be continued and increased? Because they have *begun* to obey, is their increasing, persevering obedience unnecessary? But if persevering obedience is necessary, they must be influenced to it, and must be influenced by motives. I spoke of *active* duties. To put off the old man, and put on the new man, to be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner man, &c. is to love God with increasing ardor, and obey with increasing constancy and delight. What in the creation can be more active than this? But Christians cannot be active without active powers; and they cannot exert their active powers in doing their duty, without motives; and what better motives can be used with them, than the exhortations and warnings of Scripture?

Dr. Ware says, renewal, being certain, "is what they have no power either to prevent, or to bring about." But does it follow, that because it is *certain* a man *has* acted or *will* act in a particular way, he has *no power* to act thus, and no power to act otherwise? Christ's word rendered it very certain, that Peter would deny him, and Judas betray him. But did that certainty take away their power to do what they did, or to refrain from it? Dr. Ware asks, "And with what propriety can such," that is, those who are already saints, and chosen to eternal life, "be exhorted not to grieve the Spirit of

God?" I answer, with the same propriety that they can be exhorted to avoid any sin, or perform any duty. I answer again, that the Apostle makes the very consideration, that those, whom he addresses, *are holy*, and that they are the objects of God's special favour, a motive to *enforce* such exhortations. He tells them they are the temple of the Holy Ghost; that they are the members of Christ, and are not their own; and makes use of this as a reason for glorifying God by a pure and holy life. See 1 Cor. vi. 15—20. 2 Cor. vi, 16, 17. So in a multitude of places, the very consideration, that men are Christians indeed, and that God has conferred so great a blessing upon them as to make them heirs of heaven, is urged as a powerful motive to gratitude and obedience. And a powerful motive it must surely be, if our being real Christians, and heirs of an eternal inheritance, is to be regarded as a divine favour.

The farther I proceed, the more am I satisfied of the total mistake of Dr. Ware in supposing that the divine purpose, which makes any future character or action of men *certain*, is inconsistent with their moral agency, or with the proper influence of motives. This supposition, which mixes itself more or less with the reasoning of all who oppose the doctrine of the divine purposes, may be proved, and has been proved, both false and absurd, by arguments which I think no man is able to invalidate.

Reasoning from Rom. ix.

Dr. Ware thinks that a similar method of investigation to that which was applied to the passage in Ephesians, will convince his readers, "that this passage has no relation to an Election to eternal life." The candid reader must decide whether his method of investigation serves his purpose, in respect either to that passage or

this. In relation to Rom. ix, I have scarcely any thing to add to my reasoning in my Letters, which, in its main points, Dr. Ware has not even attempted to confute. Most of what he says about the general scope of the first part of the Epistle is doubtless correct. What then? Does that disprove the doctrine of Election? No more than it disproves any thing else. As to national distinctions, and religious privileges, I have already expressed my views. If Unitarians will consider the real influence of religious privileges, and the momentous consequences of the distinction which God has made respecting them, upon the character and future condition of men; they may find as great difficulty in what Dr. Ware has said respecting Jacob and Esau, p. 76, 77, as in the Orthodox doctrine.

Dr. Ware admits what I advanced in my Letters, that the reflection of the Apostle, on the case of Jacob and Esau, v. 16, implies a general principle of the divine government, but thinks it must be confined to cases similar to that of Jacob and Esau, and that it cannot relate to *final salvation*. But it seems clear to me, that the whole reasoning of the Apostle *makes* it relate to final salvation, and that, without such a relation, his reasoning is weakness itself. For he shows, as Dr. Ware remarks, that those distinctions on which the Jews valued themselves, *were done away*. If the particular distinction he speaks of had been of the same nature with these, he would have said at once, *it is ended*. But he shows that a real distinction is *still made* among men, and justifies God in making it. What was that distinction? Not a national one—not one in regard to religious privileges; for that we are informed, was done away. It must have been a distinction, *then really existing*,—a distinction, with which *the Jews would find fault*, but which *Paul would justify*.

It must have been, a distinction, which would answer the account the Apostle gave of it, a distinction between the children of the flesh and the children of God ; between those who were fitted to destruction, and those prepared unto glory. What distinction was this ? I hope when Dr. Ware shall find time to review his remarks on this subject, he will keep in mind, that the Apostle spoke of a distinction then really existing, a distinction offensive to the Jews, but which he meant to justify. He first brings the distinction into view, v. 6. "They are not all Israel who are of Israel." This distinction between true saints, and those who had merely the name and external privileges of saints, he illustrates and justifies by the distinction once made between Isaac and Ishmael, and between Jacob and Esau ; and then by what God said to Moses, asserting his sovereign right to have mercy on whom he will, in another case ; v. 15, referring to Exod. xxxiii. 19 ; and again by what he said of Pharaoh, affirming that he raised him up for the purposes of his glory, as Dr. Ware sets forth, p. 78.—Now mark well, it is *immediately upon this*, the Apostle affirms, that God exercised the right of *hardening whom he would*, and this *in opposition* to showing them *mercy*. This he represented as a distinction then actually made, and against which he knew the Jews would raise such objections as he mentions, v. 19, though they would be far enough from raising them against that external, national distinction, which they had always gloried in, but which was then done away. This was the very distinction, which the Apostle defends in the following verses, where he speaks of God's making *of the same lump, some vessels to honour, and others to dishonour*, and where, with his eye upon the same subject, he speaks of *vessels of mercy prepared unto glory, and vessels of wrath fitted to destruction*.

And let me say, finally ; it was to this distinction, *then actually existing*,—*then objected to by the pride of Jews*, but *defended by the Apostle*,—it was to *this distinction*, the Apostle applied that general principle of the divine administration which he vindicated, by referring to distinctions of another character, formerly made.

With these remarks, I leave this interesting passage to the consideration of the attentive reader, especially the discerning biblical critic.

As to the difference, which Dr. Ware mentions, between my statement of the doctrine of Reprobation, and the statement generally made by the Orthodox, I have but a word to say. I did not mean to state it in the same terms. But to what does the difference amount? I represented the decree of Reprobation to be, “the determination of God to punish the disobedient *for their sins*, and *according to their deserts*.” The Assembly of Divines say, in regard to the non-elect, “God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, &c. to pass by them, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath *for their sin*, to the praise of his glorious justice.” If it is to the praise of his *justice*, it must be, as I stated, not only *for their sin*, but *according to it*. Now, in reality, what difference is there between God’s determining to punish the finally disobedient for their sins, and his passing by the same persons, and ordaining them to dishonour and wrath for their sins?

The last paragraph of Letter iv, displays a frankness and kindness of heart, which I love to acknowledge and to honour in my opponent, and which I will ever strive to copy ; though in this case, their exercise is attended with misapprehension. Dr. Ware seems to suppose that I shrink from the doctrine of Reprobation, because I find it cannot be defended consistently with the moral

character of God, or that I think it desirable to keep out of view the most offensive feature of Calvinism. But this is not exactly the case. I do indeed think the doctrine has often been stated injudiciously and harshly, and that it is very liable to be *understood* in a manner, which really makes it inconsistent with the character of God. And this is the reason why I deem it necessary to state it with peculiar caution. A subject may be put into such a posture in the minds of those whom we address, that whatever we say concerning it, will be in danger of being perverted, or misapplied. When we are apprised that this is the case, we ought certainly to be very guarded in our language, and to take special care to bring into view those parts of the subject, which are apt to be overlooked. This is what I have attempted to do. My object is not to *conceal* the truth, but to make an exhibition of it, which shall be just and scriptural, and which, at the same time, shall, if possible, be so well guarded, that men can find nothing in it to oppose, except the *truth itself*.

I am happy that Dr. Ware exhibits none of the violence, bitterness, or scurrility, with which many oppose this doctrine; though he is not wanting in zeal. But when I soberly consider the real nature of the doctrine against which he and others make such strenuous opposition, I hardly know what to say. It would seem as though creatures of yesterday, as we are, instead of wishing to limit the extent of Jehovah's dominion, would rejoice in the highest degree of sovereignty which he can exercise. 'Tis true, there are reasons enough against our committing our eternal or even our temporal interests absolutely to the will of man. But is not the infinite perfection of God sufficient to secure our implicit and unlimited confidence in his administration? And if

he tells us in his word, that *he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy* ; that is, exercises a sovereign control over our character and destiny ; why should we not say, Amen, fully persuaded that a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness will, in all respects, do right ? Why should we not cheerfully say, the Lord reigneth, and doeth all things after the counsel of his own will ? since the more extensive his dominion, the safer are the interests of the universe.

CHAPTER X.

ATONEMENT.

All that I can do on this subject is to give a statement of Dr. Ware's scheme, and make a few general remarks upon it.

Doctrine of redemption, as held by Dr. Ware.

“ Christ was our Redeemer by those miracles, which proved him to be a messenger and teacher from God ; by those instructions and that example, which were to remove our ignorance, and deliver us from the slavery of sin ; by those high motives to repentance and holiness, which are found in the revelation of a future life and righteous retribution, and the persuasive efficacy given to his example by his sufferings, &c.” p. 92. “ Christ's sufferings are the means of delivering us from punishment, only as they are instrumental in delivering us from the dominion of sin. They are the grounds of our forgiveness, only as they are the means of bringing us to repen-

tance, only as they operate to bring us to that state of holiness, which has the promise of forgiveness, and qualifies us for it, p. 93.—“Christ’s being made a curse for us redeemed us from the curse of the law, by its influence in bringing us back to repentance.” p. 97.

The same views are expressed in a sermon of Dr. Ware, and still more largely in Dr. John Taylor’s treatise on the atonement.

Although this notion of atonement, redemption, &c. is affirmed with as much confidence as it could be, if it were supported by the strongest evidence, and were perfectly free from difficulty ; I must be allowed to pause a while before receiving it, and to state briefly some of the objections which seem to lie against it.

First, Dr. Ware’s scheme *assumes, that there is nothing to hinder the forgiveness of sinners, but their continuance in sin* ; that it is an established principle of God’s moral government, that *repentance* shall put an end to the consequences of sin.

Now I ask, in the first place, whether *the divine law supports* such a principle. The law promises a reward for obedience, and threatens a penalty for disobedience. But where does it give us the least hint, that repentance will set aside the penalty?—Should we expect this, from considering *the nature of the case*? Suppose transgressors repent. Does that alter the guilt of their past transgression? Does God therefore cease to look upon past transgression with displeasure? “We may as well affirm,” says a learned Divine, “that our former obedience atones for our present sins, as that our present obedience makes amends for antecedent transgressions.” But if the guilt of past transgression remains the same as before, and God looks upon it with the same displeasure ; how will he do justice to his own character, or to the principles of his

moral government, if in his conduct he *shows* no displeasure? How is it with a civil government? Does it hold out to criminals the prospect of pardon, in case they repent? What would be the consequence, if it should? But the consequence of such a principle in the divine government would be as much more dreadful, as the interests of the divine government are more important, and require to be more watchfully guarded, than those of any human government.

We may learn something on this subject from the analogy of God's government in the present world. "In the common occurrences of life, the man who, by the practice of vice, has injured his character, his fortune, and his health, does not find himself instantly restored to the full enjoyment of these blessings on repenting of his past misconduct. Now if the attributes of the Deity demand, that the punishment should not outlive the crime, on what ground shall we justify this temporal dispensation? The difference in *degree*, cannot affect the question in the least. It matters not, whether the punishment be of long or short duration; whether in this world or in the next. If the justice or the goodness of God, require that punishment should not be inflicted, when repentance has taken place; it must be a violation of those attributes to permit any punishment whatever, the most slight, or the most transient. Nor will it avail to say, that the evils of *this life* attendant upon vice, are the effects of an established constitution, and follow in the way of natural consequence. Is not that established constitution itself the effect of the divine decree? And are not its several operations as much the appointment of its Almighty framer, as if they had individually flowed from his immediate direction? But besides, what reason have we to suppose that God's treatment of us in a fu-

ture state, will not be of the same nature as we find it in this; according to established rules, and in the way of natural consequence?"* Is it then consistent with reason and propriety to assume, without proof, that nothing could ever hinder the forgiveness of sin, but impenitence? Were there no appearances *directly against* this assumption, I should think it altogether unsafe to adopt it, without positive evidence in its favour. For even if *civil* government could always grant forgiveness to offenders on their repentance; and if under the divine administration in the present life repentance should be found to put an immediate end to the visible consequences of particular sins; how could we certainly conclude that the Governor of the world will not judge it best to guard the *everlasting* interests of his kingdom by higher sanctions? How could we certainly conclude, that rebels would find no other obstacles, besides their impenitence, in the way of final impunity? I should certainly charge myself with inexcusable temerity, if, without the best evidence, I should venture to decide on a subject so vast and incomprehensible. And further; if we would be secure against a wrong judgment in this case, we must not forget, that we ourselves are transgressors, and as such, are extremely liable to be blinded by self-interest, and to adopt any opinion favourable to our wishes, though ever so destitute of evidence.

I have not intended by any thing which has now been advanced, to admit, that repentance could ever have actually taken place under the moral government of God, if no atonement had been made. Indeed there is no more reason to think that any instance of repentance would have been found among apostate men, than

* Magee.

among the apostate angels, had not salvation been provided through an atonement. The supposition of repentance, without regard to an atonement, has been intended merely to assist in the investigation of principles.

Second objection. *Dr. Ware's scheme assumes, that the words redemption, sacrifice, &c. have the same signification when applied to the work of Christ, as they have in the few passages he has selected, where they relate to other subjects, and are obviously used in a very different sense.* Dr. Ware finds a few places, where *redemption* denotes mere deliverance from temporal judgments, without any price being paid. And these examples of the use of the term, he says, "may lead us to some just notions of its meaning, when it is said, we have redemption by the blood of of Christ."—"He redeemed us by his blood, as the children of Israel were redeemed by the mighty power of God." See pp. 90, 91, 92. Now is it consistent with sound principles of interpretation, to take it for granted, that because the word *redeem* is sometimes used in this secondary and imperfect sense, in relation to the deliverance of men from temporal evils, it is used in the same sense in regard to the eternal salvation of sinners? Is this to be taken for granted, when the Bible itself makes a most obvious and important difference, representing the deliverance of men from temporal bondage to be effected by the mere exercise of God's power, but representing expressly, and in various forms, that redemption from eternal destruction by divine power is *through the blood of Christ, through the death of a Mediator*, and ascribing the whole of salvation to this, as the great means of procuring it? How can we reason from one case to the other, when the Scripture represents them as so widely different?

I have the same general remarks as to *saerifice*. I admit the word is sometimes used in a very imperfect sense, denoting a mere offering to God of prayer, praise, or obedience, or a mere act of kindness. But upon what principle can Dr. Ware draw from this unusual and imperfect sense of the word, the broad conclusion, that it is in a similar sense, "that sacrifice is applied to whatever was done by Jesus Christ for our benefit?" Because such is the meaning *sometimes*, does it follow that it is so *here*? This, then, I state as a serious objection against the scheme of my opponent; that it overlooks entirely the proper method of determining the meaning of the words *redemption*, *sacrifice*, &c, as they are applied to the work of Christ, and rests on the assumption, that their meaning here is similar to what it is, not generally in the Scriptures, but in a few texts, where the words have a very unusual and imperfect sense.

My *third* objection to the scheme is, that *it denies the obvious sense of many passages of Scripture which relate to the subject, and gives them a meaning, in a high degree unnatural and forced.* Without supposing that Unitarians have a preconceived opinion which they wish to support, it is impossible for me to account for it, that they should interpret the word of God as they do. The passages which assert a real atonement are too many to be repeated here. The Scriptures declare that Christ is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; that he hath given himself for us an offering and sacrifice to God; that he is the propitiation for our sins; that he died for us; that he redeemed us from the curse, being made a curse for us; that we are forgiven through his blood, &c." If such declarations as these do not teach the doctrine of the atonement, as it is commonly held, nothing can. These texts assert it in lan-

guage as plain, express, and emphatic, as any which can be imagined. To say, they do not teach the doctrine, seems to me about the same as saying, the inspired writers could not teach it, if they would. But this scheme not only denies the plain meaning of Scripture, but gives it a meaning exceedingly unnatural and forced. When the Scripture declares that we have "redemption through Christ's blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" Unitarians make it mean, that his blood promotes our *repentance*. When the Scripture declares that Christ died for us, and is the propitiation for our sins; Unitarians make it mean merely that his sufferings confirmed his doctrines, and are instrumental in delivering us from the dominion of sin. When the Scripture declares, that Christ became a curse for us to redeem us from the curse of the law; Unitarians will have it, that this is only asserting its influence to bring us back to repentance. Now let men of sober sense collect the passages of Scripture which relate to the work of redemption by Christ, and set them down on one side; and the passages from Dr. Ware's Letters, which exhibit the Unitarian doctrine, and set them down on the other side; and then compare them, and see if they are of like signification. Let men of patient research and critical acumen do this, and see if there is any likeness between them.

My *fourth objection* is, that this scheme *takes away the difference which the Scripture uniformly makes between the sufferings of Christ, and of his apostles*. If the sufferings and death of Christ are really nothing more than Dr. Ware makes them; they are in no sense distinguishable from the sufferings and death of Paul. Who can say, that Paul did not give as much and as valuable instruction, as Jesus did? or that he did not as really con-

firm his doctrines by his miracles, his sufferings and death? Dr. Ware says, "Christ was our redeemer by those miracles which proved him to be a messenger and teacher from God; by those instructions and that example which were to remove our ignorance, and deliver us from the slavery of sin; by those high motives to repentance and holiness, which are found in the revelation of a future life and righteous retribution; and especially by the confirmation his doctrines and promises received, and the persuasive efficacy given to his example by his sufferings, his voluntary death, and his resurrection." Now in all these ways, except resurrection, Paul was as really a redeemer, as Jesus Christ. Why then is it not proper to speak of the redemption that is in PAUL, to celebrate the efficacy of his death, and to ascribe to it the forgiveness of sin? There is in fact, according to the statement of Dr. Ware's opinion just quoted, not a single point of dissimilitude between the work of Christ as redeemer, and the work of Paul, excepting the resurrection. And if Dr. Ware's opinion is true, I am unable to see why it would not be as proper to say of Paul, as of Christ; "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world;—he is the propitiation for our sins;—we have redemption through his blood." But the Bible does not speak thus of Paul. And why does it not? Can any answer be found, but in the peculiarities of the Orthodox doctrine?

This general argument acquires great weight, when we attend particularly to the manner in which the Scripture speaks of Christ, compared with the manner in which it speaks of prophets and apostles. Here we have a test of truth—a test of special importance, and less liable to be misapplied, than perhaps any other. Suppose I doubt as to the meaning of those passages,

which assert in direct terms, that Christ offered himself a sacrifice for sin ; that he died for us, redeemed us by his blood, &c. I go then to other passages of the inspired writers, particularly those, in which they freely express their feelings with respect to Christ, their gratitude for his kindness, their estimation of the work he performed, their reliance on his death, and their ascriptions of glory to him as a Redeemer. From such passages I learn what were the habitual feelings of the writers. I then ask, whether this expression of feeling on the part of prophets and apostles agrees best with the views of the Orthodox, or of Unitarians, respecting the *other* passages? Does it agree best with the notion, that the influence of Christ's death was like the influence of Paul's death? or with the Orthodox doctrine, that Christ's death was vicarious, and had an influence essentially different from that of any other?

My *fifth* objection, and the last I shall now state, arises from a *comparative view of the moral influence produced by the two systems*. Dr. Ware ascribes a certain influence to the death of Christ. But the death of Christ as we understand it, *has that same influence, and has it in a still higher degree*, than according to his scheme ; and besides this, answers *other important ends*, to which, according to his scheme, it has no relation. Dr. Ware says, Christ's sufferings "are instrumental in delivering us from the dominion of sin ;"—"they are the means of bringing us to repentance ;"—"they operate to bring us to that state of holiness, which has the promise of forgiveness, and qualifies us for it." My position is, first, that Christ's sufferings and death, as the Orthodox regard them, have the *same influence*. According to the scheme of Unitarians, Christ's sufferings and death *confirm his doctrines and promises, and give a persuasive efficacy to his*

example. They do the same according to our views. And Orthodox writers have described this influence abundantly, and with great force.

But my position goes farther. The sufferings of Christ, according to our scheme, have the same moral influence *in a far higher degree.* I mean, that the sufferings of Christ, as apprehended by the Orthodox, have a much more powerful influence to lead sinners to repentance, than as they are apprehended by Unitarians. What are the motives, which lead sinners to repentance? Certainly one of these is, *the evil of sin, and the abhorrence with which God regards it.* But these are made to appear much greater according to our scheme of the atonement, than according to the other. The sufferings of Christ, as we view them, are *a direct and unequalled display* of the evil of sin, and the abhorrence with which God regards it. They are intended primarily for this very purpose. And we believe they really answer this purpose in as high a degree as would have been answered, by God's inflicting upon sinners the whole penalty of the law. But as viewed by Unitarians, they are intended for no such purpose, and answer no such purpose. Now surely that scheme of the atonement which gives the highest view of the evil of sin, and the displeasure of God against it, must have the most powerful tendency to lead men to repentance. This is too plain to need any illustration. I might say the same in regard to the penalty of the law, or the *punishment* which sin deserves, as set forth by the death of Christ. To those who receive the Orthodox doctrine, the death of Christ shows the dreadfulness of that punishment, in the most striking light possible. But to Unitarians it does not show it at all. Again; to those who receive the Orthodox doctrine, the death of Christ

exhibits a far higher degree of divine love and mercy, than to Unitarians. These acknowledge indeed, that the death of Christ showed divine love by giving confirmation to his doctrines, authority to his precepts, and a persuasive influence to his example. But according to our views of the subject, the divine love was much more gloriously displayed. For there was, as we apprehend, a mighty obstacle in the way of forgiveness, which no penitence, obedience, or suffering of sinners could ever remove. But God, "for the great love wherewith he loved us," removed that obstacle by providing a vicarious sacrifice, or by sending his son to die for us. At such a vast expense, the love of God purchased our forgiveness. This divine love, so often celebrated in the Scriptures, is a grand motive to repentance. While it shows sinners their inexcusable wickedness, it forbids their despair, encourages their hopes and their efforts, melts their hearts with pious grief, and attracts them to obedience. In such ways as these, which I can only hint at, it becomes perfectly obvious, that our doctrine invests the sufferings of Christ with a power to lead sinners to repentance, greatly superior to any which can be derived from the doctrine of Unitarians. Thus the death of Christ, according to our doctrine, has the *same kind of moral influence*, which it has according to Dr. Ware's scheme, and has it in a far *superior degree*; besides all the other and higher ends which it answers, in relation to the perfections and government of God, and the interests of his universal empire. This then is my objection, that even in regard to that influence, which Dr. Ware considers as the only thing of any consequence in Christ's Death, his scheme is much inferior to the Orthodox. It takes away half the power of the cross to bring men to repentance.

After this general view, I shall think it wholly unnecessary to remark on all the particular passages in Dr. Ware's fifth Letter, which seem to me erroneous. I shall merely glance at a few of the principal.

I have been not a little surprised at Dr. Ware's saying, that I have not explained the figurative language, commonly used respecting the work of Christ. But I have been most of all surprised, that he should charge me with mixing the literal with the metaphorical sense, especially in the following case. He says, "When by a price paid by some friend, a captive is restored to liberty, or the punishment of a criminal is remitted; there is redemption in the original and literal sense of the word. In the same manner, if Christ delivers us from punishment by suffering an evil, which was equivalent, so far as the ends of the divine government are concerned, to the execution of the curse of the law upon transgressors; *that is a literal redemption*, and that, and the other correspondent terms, such as *bought* and *ransomed*, are applied in the *literal sense*," p. 89. But can this be correct? The restoration of a captive by the payment of a *pecuniary price*, is indeed redemption in the *literal sense*. But the procuring of a sinner's *spiritual* deliverance and restoration by an expedient of a *moral* nature is redemption in a *metaphorical* sense. To make the sense of the word *metaphorical*, it is not necessary surely, that the *spiritual* restoration should be procured *without any means whatever*, nor without means which are equivalent, in a moral view, to the execution of the penalty of the law. Nor is it necessary that the means used should have a less intimate connexion with the *spiritual* deliverance procured, than the payment of money has with the deliverance of a captive from *temporal* bondage. It is sufficient to make a perfect metaphor, if

a transaction of a *moral* nature is represented under the similitude of a *pecuniary* or *civil* transaction. Christ *redeemed* sinners, by paying a price equivalent, in a moral view, to their punishment. Here is no mixture of a literal with a metaphorical sense. The redemption spoken of is of a *moral* nature; and the *price* paid is of a *moral* nature; and so the words *redemption*, *price*, *pay*, are all used in a metaphorical sense. I said in my Letters; “as the debtor is freed from imprisonment by the friend who steps forward and pays his debt; so are sinners freed from punishment by the Saviour, who shed his blood for them.” On this Dr. Ware says, “the payment is as *literal* in the one case as in the other.” But how so? The deliverance of sinners from punishment by the death of Christ is represented under the similitude of a debtor’s deliverance from prison by the payment of his debt. It is this representation of the *moral* transaction in language derived from a common transaction in civil life, which constitutes the metaphor. Just so the representation of God’s pouring out his Spirit, or raining down righteousness, is a metaphor taken from the pouring out of rain upon the earth. The metaphor in both cases is perfect.—If in the case above referred to, Dr. Ware had said, the payment in one case is *an important reality*, as well as in the other, he would have said the exact truth. All the doctrines of religion are often expressed in metaphorical language. And this language is so far from rendering their meaning obscure and doubtful, that it gives them, and is designed to give them, greater clearness and force.

My respected opponent expresses a serious objection to our using the metaphorical language which the Scriptures use, and other similar language, on the subject of redemption, because it has been the occasion of mistake.

But I think, on further consideration, he must be satisfied that his objection is not valid, and that, with our best efforts, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, on such a subject, to avoid the use of metaphors. And if we should succeed in our efforts to do this, it would certainly have a most unhappy effect. The fact is, that in most cases, if we confine ourselves to language which is wholly free from a figurative sense, we cannot convey the truth, so as either to correspond with our own feelings, or to make a just impression on the minds of others. The importance and necessity of metaphorical language on moral and religious subjects, result from the very constitution of our nature. And Unitarians have no more right to expect that we shall lay aside the use of metaphors on the subject of redemption, than on other subjects in religion. It is admitted, that some men will misunderstand the metaphorical language now under consideration. They will also misunderstand the metaphors by which other divine truths are illustrated. Even the texts which represent God as having hands and eyes, have by some men been understood literally, and are often understood so now, especially by children. But shall we on this account cease to speak of the hand of God, to denote his active power, or the eyes of God to denote his knowledge? And shall we cease to pray, "forgive us our debts," because our sins are not debts *literally*? Or when we use such metaphors in religious discourse, or in prayer, must we always stop to explain them?

Dr. Ware, p. 85, speaks of our "charging Unitarians with denying or explaining away the doctrine of atonement, for the very reason that they explain the language in question as figurative." But he has quite mistaken our meaning. We do not charge Unitarians with error,

because they explain the language *as figurative*, but because they do not give to the *figurative* language its *true* and *obvious sense*. Just so we should do in other like cases. When the Scriptures assert that “the eyes of God are in every place,” we say the language implies that God is *omniscient*. But if, because it is a metaphor, any one should deny that it denotes a knowledge or discernment in God, answering to natural vision in us; we should charge him with denying an important truth, not because he considered the language *metaphorical*, but because he denied the *obvious meaning* of the figure. In explaining those texts which speak of our being *bought with a price*, we assert that they denote something in the work of redemption by Christ, which really answers to the price which is paid for the deliverance of a slave or captive; and we become very confident in our explanation, when we find that the Bible, in various ways, describes to us *the very thing* which is called the *price*, that is, *the death of Christ*, and that many texts both of a figurative and literal sense, represent that death as of the utmost importance in the work of redemption, and as the means of forgiveness and salvation to sinners. The texts above referred to, must denote something which fairly answers to the price paid for the deliverance of a captive, and which may justly be represented by it; that is, the death of Christ must be *the consideration* in the moral government of God, *on account* of which sinners are saved; as in the other case, the price paid is the consideration, on account of which a captive is delivered, not merely a means of preparing him to receive deliverance,—though such preparation must be included, as a necessary circumstance.

In my Letters I signified, what I very honestly apprehended to be true, that the denial of the doctrine

of atonement is “contrary to the humble spirit of Christian faith.” Dr. Ware, p. 102, seems to think it would follow from this, that “it is unsafe to allow ourselves to inquire about the doctrine.” But how would this follow? He would doubtless unite with us in saying, that the denial of *the divine existence* is contrary to the humble spirit of Christian faith, and clearly shows the want of moral virtue. But would this imply, that it is unsafe to inquire into the subject of the divine existence? We should certainly deem it proper in such a case, to persuade men to inquire with the greatest diligence; though we should set it down as conclusive evidence against them, if they were not convinced. So we consider it contrary to the humble spirit of Christian faith to deny the authority of the Scriptures. But is it therefore unsafe to inquire into the subject? Free inquiry, properly conducted, is important as well as safe, on all subjects; because it is the only effectual means of discovering the truth. But when, after all, the truth fails of being discovered; it becomes a serious question, whether the failure is owing to the want of evidence, or to something wrong in the state of the mind.

In pp. 103, 104, Dr. Ware has expressed an opinion which I cannot pass over unnoticed, though it is the same, substantially, with a principle which I controverted in my Letters. He says, that the Scriptures, “without any reference to any kind of atonement, refer the forgiveness of sin solely to the mercy of God, by which he is ready to accept reformation and a return to virtue.” His meaning undoubtedly is, the Scriptures do this in many instances. And so the reasoning is briefly this. The Scriptures, in many places, speak of God as merciful, and ready to forgive the penitent, *without ex-*

pressly referring to any atonement ; therefore forgiveness rests *solely* on the *mercy of God* and the *repentance of sinners*, and the atonement has nothing to do with it, except as it may be conducive to repentance. But what would Dr. Ware say, if I should reason in the same manner? Thus. The Scriptures in some places speak of the *death of Christ* as the cause or means of our forgiveness, without any mention of repentance or holiness in us ; therefore the death of Christ is the *sole* cause or means of our forgiveness, and neither our repentance, nor the mercy of God has any thing to do with it. Or thus. In some passages the Scriptures attribute our forgiveness and salvation to *faith*, without mentioning either the mercy of God, or the blood of Christ ; therefore *faith* is the *only* cause or foundation of our forgiveness, and neither the mercy of God, nor the blood of Christ has any thing to do with it. To just such conclusions shall we be led, if we attempt to learn the whole truth on the subjects of religion, from any particular passages, while we disregard other passages containing additional information on the same subjects.

There are indeed many texts, which declare God's readiness to forgive those who repent. But we find too that a propitiation for sin was appointed from the beginning, and that the appointed propitiation, which was set forth in the Mosaic law by various sacrifices, had the same influence respecting human salvation before the coming of Christ, as after. What that influence was, we learn most clearly from the New Testament. When all parts of Scripture are taken together, it becomes perfectly clear, that every declaration of God's readiness to forgive the penitent, *presupposes* the propitiation or atonement, made by the death of Christ. Now it is certainly a violation of every just princi-

ple of reasoning, to separate the declaration of God's readiness to forgive from the consideration of that atonement, which he appointed from the beginning as the medium of forgiveness. Whether the two things are always mentioned in the same passage or not, they are mentioned, and connected together in the holy Scriptures. These Scriptures we receive entire; and we learn from them, *first*, that the infinite love of God was the original fountain of salvation; *secondly*, that the sacrifice of Christ was the grand expedient adopted by the Governor of the world, to render human salvation, which would otherwise have been wholly inadmissible, consistent with law and justice; and *thirdly*, that the repentance of sinners is indispensably necessary to their enjoying the salvation thus graciously provided. So that when we assert that the blood of Christ is, in one respect, the sole ground of forgiveness, we do not, as Dr. Ware supposes, forget those texts which attribute forgiveness to the free and boundless love of God, nor those which represent repentance as an indispensable condition of forgiveness.

From p. 106, 107, it seems that Dr. Ware has misapprehended my meaning as to the entire worthlessness of all the good works and dispositions of men. What I said related simply to *justification*. But because good works and good dispositions are worthless in regard to *this single point*, we do not consider them worthless in other respects. Although we believe, what Paul abundantly teaches in his Epistles, that our good works must never be named in the presence of God, as the meritorious cause of our justification; I am confident we consider them of as high value, and enforce them by as many and as powerful motives, as any of our opponents;—and with perfect consistency too. For it can never be

shown, that, because our personal holiness is of no account as a *ground of our justification*, it is therefore of no estimation in the sight of God, and not worth our pursuit. Does our denying the value of a thing in *one* particular respect, certainly prove that we deny its value in all other respects? We not only reject with abhorrence the licentious consequence, mentioned by Dr. Ware at the close of his fifth Letter, but we assert that it does not by any means follow from the doctrine we maintain; nay, we think ourselves able to show, that our doctrine guards against it far more effectually, than any other.



CHAPTER XI.

ON DIVINE INFLUENCE.

MOST of what Dr. Ware has said, Letter VI, in regard to the use of means and motives, is perfectly agreeable to the faith of the Orthodox. And let me here inquire, what reason he has to suppose, that the special, the efficacious, or even the supernatural influence of the Spirit, which we believe to be concerned in regeneration, has any less connexion with means and motives, than that divine influence which he asserts. We make the peculiar character which we attribute to the divine influence, to consist, not at all in its setting aside the use of means and rational motives, but *in its giving them their proper effect, or producing its own proper effect by them.* And one would think, that a divine influence, which renders means

and motives *effectual* to bring men to repentance, must at least be more highly valued, than any influence which falls short of this. It seems to me to be indeed very strange, that any man should not see at once, that the influence of God's spirit must be desirable and excellent, *in proportion to its efficacy*, or in proportion to the certainty, with which it produces its effect.

Dr. Ware very justly and fairly represents our different views respecting divine influence, as intimately connected with our views respecting the natural state of man, p. 122, and elsewhere. Now if our views of man's depravity are admitted to be correct, our opponents must, I think, be satisfied, that just such a divine influence as we assert, is necessary to his renovation, and that no influence short of this would answer the purpose. They now think a less powerful influence sufficient, because they think man less depraved. Should they ever be convinced, that man has that degree of moral corruption which we attribute to him, they would at the same time be convinced, that he cannot be brought to a holy life, without a divine influence sufficient to overcome a strong and total opposition to holiness, and to effect a new moral creation.

In a variety of passages, Dr. Ware asserts that our notion of divine influence is inconsistent with human liberty and activity,—inconsistent with the moral character of God—with those texts which complain of the sins of men,—with the commands of the gospel to repent and believe, and with the sincerity of all the exhortations and encouragements given to men. But of this inconsistency, in any of the instances mentioned, what evidence has he produced? And what evidence can he produce? As to its inconsistency with human liberty and activity; I refer to the views I have already advanced. Our

doctrine is, that the divine influence *effectually directs* and *regulates* the liberty and activity of those who are saved ; that it induces them to use their voluntary and moral powers in a right manner. Now is it *setting aside* their liberty or activity, for the Spirit of God to *direct* it, and *regulate* its operations, or induce them properly to use it ? Dr. Ware says, that “ in those, upon whom this influence is exerted, its effects take place without any agency or cooperation of theirs, for they are wholly passive.” But although something like this seems, in not a few instances, to have been maintained by Orthodox men ; I can by no means assent to it. The subjects operated upon by the divine Spirit, are *active, moral beings* ; and the effects produced in them are, primarily, *right moral affections*, and secondarily, correspondent *external actions*. How can *these* “ effects take place, without any agency of theirs ;” when the effects are in fact *their agency itself*, properly directed ?

And how can it be supposed to be inconsistent with the moral character of God, for him to exert an influence upon sinners, which will certainly secure their repentance and salvation ? Should we not rather think, that a Being of infinite goodness would choose to exert an influence, so important to the highest interests of men ? Indeed, if there is any considerable difficulty in the case, it is the fact, that so desirable an influence is not actually imparted to all. But as to this, I hardly need to remark, that no blessing which God bestows, is ever thought to lose its value, because it is not granted to all. Nor, on the other hand, is there any room for those who are left destitute, to find fault, unless they can present a just claim to the blessings withheld. So far at least this subject is very plain.

Again. Is our doctrine “inconsistent with those

texts, which complain of the sins of men?" The reason which Dr. Ware assigns to prove such an inconsistency is, that, if our doctrine is true, "men act according to the nature given them, and could not act otherwise, without an influence which is not given them." The first part of the reason which is here assigned, and which has a pretty obscure relation to the subject, is, that on the supposition that our doctrine is true, "men act according to the nature given them."—And how do they act, on supposition the Unitarian doctrine is true? Is there any other way in which any accountable being in the Universe can act, but according to his nature, whether that nature be good or bad?—The other part of the reason is, that "men could not act otherwise, without an influence which is not given them." They "*could not* act otherwise." But are men destitute of any power which is necessary to moral agency, because they are not made holy? If they are not, then this reason has no force. If they are, then none, who are not holy, have the power which is necessary to moral agency; which is the same as to say, no *sinner*s can be *moral agents*. And this is the same as saying, that *no moral agents* can be *sinner*s; and if so, there can be no sin in the universe.

It is said, that our doctrine is inconsistent with the commands of the gospel to repent, believe, &c. But how does this appear? Why, because "they have no power to do this, till almighty power is exerted to make them willing." But surely we are not to consider men as wanting the power that is necessary to moral agency, because God does not actually bring them to repent and believe. Though they are sinners, and dependent on the spirit of God for sanctification, they are *moral agents*. Their being *sinner*s necessarily implies moral agency. And if they are moral agents, it is most clearly their

duty to repent, believe, and obey. And is it not proper that the gospel should command them to do their duty?

Finally ; Dr. Ware signifies that our doctrine is inconsistent with the sincerity of the exhortations and encouragements of the gospel to exertion, since it supposes men incapable of willing to perform their duty ; that it is not of themselves to will any thing good, &c. But our doctrine makes men no otherwise incapable of willing to perform their duty, than as they are *indisposed* or *disinclined* to perform it. And must the exhortations to duty contained in the gospel, and the promises to those who perform it, be considered insincere, because men are *not inclined* to perform it ? If so, there is but little sincerity in the Bible.



Dr. Ware's last Letter is a reply to mine, on the moral influence of Orthodoxy compared with the influence of Unitarianism. To many of the remarks contained in this Letter, I cordially subscribe ; but not to all.

“Love to Christ,” Dr. Ware says, “will depend on our view of the nature and value of the benefits we receive through him, and not at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being.” p. 127. This is saying, that our love to Christ will be the same, both in kind and degree, whether he be possessed of mere *human* perfection, or of *divine* perfection. And this is saying, that *human* perfection is entitled to as high a regard, as *divine*. And this is the same as to say, a perfect *man* may properly be the object of as high an affection, as *God*. And if this is true, it is of no practical consequence, whether we consider the Supreme Being as any thing more than a holy angel, or a holy man ; as our “love to him will not

depend at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being." Of course, all the labour of the inspired writers to invest his character with divine glory is of no value, as it can have no effect upon our feelings. Indeed, if Dr. Ware's remark is true, it is no more proper to require us to love *God* with all the heart and soul and mind and strength, than to require us to love a perfectly holy *man* in this manner; and the distinctions constantly made between Jehovah and all inferior ranks of beings are of no importance. For, whether he holds a higher or lower rank, our love, our confidence, our veneration, our worship will all be the same. On this principle, the practice of the Romish church in rendering divine worship to the mother of Jesus, and other saints, is not so faulty as Protestants have supposed. For those departed saints, being perfectly holy, may justly be regarded as objects of the highest religious affection, inasmuch as the propriety of this affection "depends not at all on the rank they hold in the scale of being." Such is the favourite position of Dr. Ware, and others;—a position hastily adopted by them, I am sure,—and confounding things which differ as much, as any one thing can, by the whole length and breadth of infinity, differ from another. What effect must it have upon us, to be told in earnest, that it is a matter of no practical consequence, whether our Saviour is the creator of the heavens and the earth, or a mere creature,—God over all, or a mere child of Adam; that, whether he is the one or the other, our love to him is to be the same,—our confidence and our worship the same? Certainly Unitarians have made the assertion, above quoted, rashly; and if they consider well what it implies, they will not be fond of repeating it.

But I have a word more on this point. If Unitarians do indeed think that "love to Christ depends not

at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being ;” why do they charge us with giving him too high a place in our affections ? Why do they charge us, as they often do, with idolatry ? According to Dr. Ware’s position, Christ deserves as high an affection, as if he were exalted to the rank of *divinity*. To say he does not, is to say, the degree of our affection must depend on his rank in the scale of being. Indeed, Dr. Ware himself *makes* it depend on this. He tells us, that Unitarians cannot give Christ the “*supremacy of affection, which is due to God only ;*” and that they cannot do this, because they ascribe to Christ, “*only derived excellences, and a subordinate agency.*” And this is the same as if he had said, they cannot give him their supreme affection, because he holds the rank of a mere creature ; thus making our love to him depend, directly and essentially, on the rank he holds in the scale of being. They justify themselves in not giving him their supreme affection, by alleging that he has only the rank of a derived, dependent being. And they are indeed justified, if that is his rank. On the other hand, our *supreme* affection is due to him, if he possesses *supreme excellence*. So that nothing can be more contrary to reason and to fact, than the position that “*our love to Christ, depends not at all on the rank he holds in the scale of being.*” The question between us and Unitarians respecting the character of Christ, is, in effect, a question respecting the degree of love and veneration which is due to him. And every effort of Unitarians to disprove the proper Deity of Christ, is, in plain truth, an effort to convince us, that we have exercised towards him too high a degree of veneration and love. But for ourselves, we are satisfied that in this respect, our great danger is that of falling below the affection, which his glorious attributes demand, and which the precepts and examples of the Apostles inculcate.

Dr. Ware asks upon what ground I can speak “of a future reward to be obtained by virtuous efforts,” since I have said that no works of ours must be named in the presence of God, and that we must rely on the blood of Christ, as the sole ground of forgiveness. But can there be any difficulty here? May not an undeserved favour, a *mere gift*, which has been procured for us by the kindness of another, be proposed to us, on conditions which we are to fulfil? The rewards of heaven are the rewards of *grace*—procured wholly by the merit of Christ. But may not our diligent exertion be the means of obtaining them? Suppose a man has servants, who owe him a just debt to a large amount, but, through their own fault, are rendered unable ever to make any payment. And suppose he is moved by compassion to forgive the debt, and besides this, to provide a charity fund to be disposed of for their benefit. May he not encourage good conduct in them, by making it still depend upon their own exertions, whether they shall receive the gratuity offered them? May not the gratuity be held up as a reward of their good conduct? And if they obtain the reward, must not their hearts be constantly turned towards the generosity of their disinterested benefactor? Deep in debt as they are, and depending on the mere kindness of another, will they ever name their exertions, as giving them any claim to their reward, or as making it, in any proper sense, a purchase?

At the bottom of p. 130, Dr. Ware says, that a *moral* inability is in fact, to all practical purposes, the same as a *natural* inability.” A *moral* inability is an inability which results from moral causes. Thus a man’s strong disinclination to do any particular duty constitutes a moral inability. But is this strong *disinclination* the same, as an inability consisting in the want of physical power?

As to "practical purposes," these two kinds of inability are extremely and totally different. The one *constitutes* blame-worthiness; the other *frees* from it. We are criminal in proportion to the one, and exculpated in proportion to the other.

On the reasoning of Dr. Ware, pp. 131, 132, I have several remarks to offer. The reasoning relates to the moral influence of punishment in preventing sin, and in reclaiming men from it. I had represented, in my Letters, that the salutary influence of the punishment threatened must be in proportion to the *greatness* of the evil which we apprehend to be involved in it; and upon this principle, had endeavoured to show, that the view which the Orthodox entertain of the inexpressible greatness and endless duration of future punishment must have the most powerful tendency to deter men from the commission of sin. The argument which Dr. Ware arrays against this reasoning is, in brief, that such a punishment is obviously disproportioned to the demerit of sin, and so cannot be firmly believed; that the "terror" it excites is so "vague and indistinct, and so mingled with incredulity," as to "destroy its practical effects." But has not Dr. Ware entirely mistaken the real question in debate? When we would ascertain the influence of any particular sentiment, we do not surely look to those who disbelieve and reject it, nor to those who half-believe it. Who ever attempted to honour Christianity, by showing its happy influence upon Mahometans or infidels? When Dr. Ware speaks of the influence of the *Unitarian* doctrine, does he mean to speak of its influence upon those who reject it, or upon those who receive it? No doctrine can produce its proper effect in any other way, than by being cordially *believed*. The influence which any doctrine has, is the same thing as the influence which the *belief* of it has. Let Dr.

Ware then come to the question, and inquire, what will be the influence of our doctrine upon those who seriously believe it. Let him look into the minds of those, who have so deep an impression of the evil of sin, that endless punishment appears to be its just desert; who as certainly believe that such punishment will be inflicted on the wicked, as that endless happiness will be conferred on the righteous. And let him inquire what will be the proper effect of the doctrine, thus cordially believed.

But Dr. Ware seems to think it *impossible to believe* the doctrine of endless punishment. Doubtless he speaks of an impossibility which *Unitarians* feel; for he surely would not charge us with insincerity, when we profess to believe the doctrine. Now I admit that Unitarians may find it difficult or impossible to bring themselves to believe the doctrine of endless punishment. With the same habits of thinking on religious subjects which they have, I should find it impossible too. But there can be no doubt that this doctrine would become perfectly credible to Unitarians, if their views of the law and government of God, and the evil of sin, should be like those which the Orthodox entertain. And if they should come really to believe the doctrine, they could easily judge of its influence.

In p. 135, and elsewhere, Dr. Ware represents the *obvious* sense of any passage, as being the same with the *literal* sense; whereas in a thousand cases, the *figurative* sense is the *obvious* one.

Dr. Ware speaks of the "little success, which has attended all endeavours in modern times to extend the bounds of Christianity by missions for the conversion of barbarous pagan nations." If Dr. Ware could have the pleasure of being fully acquainted with all the facts which are before the public, and which have been the

subject of so much joy, and so much thanksgiving to God, I am persuaded he would adopt language very different from this. And if he had known the character of *Missionaries* as well as some of us do, he would hardly have descended to notice, except with a sharp rebuke, the disgust or the uncandid surmises of those, who are unfriendly to the cause of missions. See pp. 142, 143.

To all that Dr. Ware says, pp. 148, 149, of the happy influence of Unitarian sentiments to bring the learned, the wealthy, the refined, and those in exalted stations to be "efficient friends, and serious professors" of religion, I have only this to reply; that I should most heartily rejoice in such an influence, and wish it increased and perpetuated, could I be well satisfied, that the religion, thus promoted in the higher classes of society, is indeed the religion which the inspired pages teach, and which will bear the inspection of him, who will judge the world at his coming.

Near the close of his Letters, Dr. Ware expresses some surprise, that I should speak of the Unitarian system as "*indeed another gospel.*" But why should he be surprised? Does not every thing I have said in the controversy imply a serious conviction of this? And have not the more bold and decided Unitarians in England and America given up all thought of any compromise, and all desire of any alliance, between the two systems? And does not Dr. Ware himself, in his last sentence, plainly signify, that one and only one of these systems is to be considered as the true gospel? "Christians," he says, "will venture to judge between the rival systems, and will take the liberty to decide, each one for himself, whether the gospel, as it is held by Unitarians, or as it is held by Trinitarians and Calvinists, be the *gospel of Christ.*" Now we only ask for ourselves the liberty, which belongs to all. Unitarians judge that *their* sys-

tem is the true gospel. We adopt a conclusion directly opposite. In regard to this subject, on which we have opinions so totally diverse, it would be inconsistent with plain truth to pretend that we agree, or to do any thing implying an agreement. On other subjects we may agree, and ought to agree. Let there be no interruption of the advantages or pleasures of civil, social, or literary intercourse ; no interruption of the offices of kindness, or of the feelings of benevolence. But in regard to the great subject of controversy between us, let us revere conscience and be faithful to the truth. If Unitarians soberly declare, that they regard us as guilty of idolatry in the honour and worship we render to Christ, and that they can have no communion with us ; instead of crying out against them for bigotry, we cheerfully allow them the rights of conscience and private judgment, and, in this case, give them the credit of a manly consistency. So on our part, if we declare our serious conviction, that their system is *another Gospel*, and that it is inconsistent with our allegiance to Christ to have any fellowship with them in the peculiarities of their faith and worship ; we request them to extend to us the exercise of the same indulgence and candour, and to suffer us, without reproach, to serve God according to our own consciences.

If Dr. Ware were not very distant from the boasting, which has characterized some Unitarians, I should be disposed to animadvert upon a few passages in p. 132, where he says not only that the moral influence of the Unitarian doctrine is "far more certain, and powerful, and salutary, and purifying," than the influence of Orthodoxy, but that the virtue of Unitarians "is of a more *pure, generous, and elevated* kind," than that of their opponents. I cannot bring myself to contest this last point with Unitarians. I doubt whether I ought to bestow upon any virtue, which we are conscious of pos-

sessing, the shining honours, which Dr. Ware here seems willing to bestow upon the virtue of Unitarians. But after all, the language he *generally* uses on this subject, is humility itself, compared with the inflated encomiums, which some of his brethren have bestowed upon themselves, and upon one another. And let me add here, because I love to honour my opponent, that the severest censures he casts upon us, are, as to manner, courtesy and mildness itself, compared with the spirit and language of some, who boast of liberality and candour. Let me be excused for one more remark in this place, and that is, that I shall think I have not written or lived in vain, if I may contribute in any measure to diminish the incivility, and violence, and, I was ready to say, barbarity, with which religious controversy has too generally been carried on, and to promote a spirit of benevolence, and kindness, and forbearance among those, who differ from each other. Let it not be supposed, however, that I wish, in any measure, to promote that timid, time-serving policy, which would either conceal the truth, or treat it as though it were of little consequence. The Lord deliver every friend of Orthodoxy from this. But I would still remember the rebuke, which our blessed Saviour administered to those, who in a moment of resentment and impatience, wished for divine judgments upon some who did not favour their cause. And I would ever impress upon my memory and my heart, the admonition of the Apostle, that "the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men," even opposers. And if in any thing which I have written in this controversy, I have violated this excellent precept, the Lord forgive such an offence against the spirit of love.





