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ART. I.—*Sectarianism is Heresy, in three parts, in which are shown its Nature, Evils and Remedy.* By A. Wylie. Bloomington, Ia. 1840. 8vo. pp. 132.

OUR church has occasion to rejoice whenever those who go out from her undertake to give their reasons. Who will venture to predict how many heedless lapses into high-churchism, on the one hand, and no-churchism on the other, have been already, or may yet be, prevented by the printed arguments of Mr. Calvin Colton and of Dr. Andrew Wylie? In this respect, if in no other, these distinguished writers may assure themselves, they have not lived in vain.

The work before us is a series of dialogues between one Gardezfoi, one Democop, and Timothy, an alias for Andrew Wylie. As he gives the outlandish names to his opponents, so he does his best to give them all the nonsense, but without success. The book is not so violent as we expected from the author's temper. He is a man of talents, and of reading, but inaccurate, and sadly wanting both in taste and judgment. He makes sectarianism to consist in bigotry and carnality. By bigotry he understands a disposition to lay stress on doctrines; and by carnality all zeal for particular denominations. His great point is, that faith is trust in God, not

great King of nations, the very land of slaves shall become the home of a people rejoicing in that blessed liberty where-with Christ makes free.

*Jonathan Edwards*

ART. IV.—*An Inquiry in the modern prevailing notions respecting the Freedom of the Will, which is supposed to be essential to Moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Rewards and Punishments, Praise and Blame.* By Jonathan Edwards. Gould, Newman and Saxton, New York, 1840.

THE appearance of a new edition of the standard work of President Edwards on the Freedom of the Will, furnishes an occasion, which we are glad to embrace, of calling the attention of our readers to one particular part of the subject which has of late been a matter of frequent debate.

No attentive and competent observer of the controversies, which of late years have harassed the Church, will dispute that in a great measure they turn upon the nature and functions of the human will. It is as evident that the chief of these questions, on which all others hinge, is that which relates to the Power of Contrary Choice. It will be agreed that whatever goes to determine concerning the reality, nature and operations of this power, does in that degree determine the controversy itself. In the hope of contributing to this happy result, the ensuing inquiry will be conducted. No valuable progress can be made in it, unless it is pursued with a clear conception of the real point at issue. Our first endeavour, therefore, shall be to ascertain precisely what that point is.

1. The question is not whether the will might have made a choice the contrary of that actually made, had its motives, either internal or external, or both united, been different; i. e. had the state of the agent's mind within, or the outward inducements presented to it, been different. No one disputes that on this supposition there might have been a choice different from, or contrary to, that actually made. No one disputes that should such a change subsequently occur, it might produce a corresponding change of choice.

2. The question is not whether there is a mere natural power of contrary choice, as the phrase "natural power" has

been understood by the best theologians. By this is meant that such a contrary choice would not be extrinsic or contradictory to its nature as will. Such a choice, supposing the requisite influence for its production, would be a proper act of will, germane to its nature, and involving no inherent absurdity or self-contradiction. It would involve no increase of its faculties or powers, no change in its organic structure, or appropriate nature as will. Had it chosen the contrary, this would not have proved or implied it to be a larger, stronger, or constitutionally different faculty. When men turn to the love of God, they do it with the same faculties which were employed in hating him, both as to extent and nature. The state and action of these faculties towards moral objects alone are changed. The question is not whether, in this sense, the human will is endowed with the power of contrary choice.

3. The question is not whether the will, in one and the same act of choice, may or may not choose two contrary objects. This is too palpably absurd to be maintained, and none avowedly or intentionally contend for it. Whether some theories do not involve this position in such a degree that they stand or fall with it, is a fair question for discussion.

4. The question is not whether men may choose whichever of two objects they please. Those who do not examine carefully, are often made to believe that this is the grand question at issue. No one doubts the affirmative of this question.

5. Neither is the question whether the will has liberty of choice, i. e. in every act of choice, acts freely, according to the pleasure of the agent, and not by constraint or compulsion. This is agreed on all hands.

6. But the question is whether the will is so constituted, that, at the moment of any given choice, under precisely the same motives of inward inclination and external inducement, it may turn itself either way; either in the way it actually does choose, or the opposite; either in accordance with its highest pleasure or inclination, or in direct and utter hostility to them. And whether such a property in the human will be essential to liberty, moral agency, praise and blame, rewards and punishments; a question which lies at the very root, as will be perceived, of some of the chief questions in divinity and ethics.

That we may not be obnoxious to the charge of raising a false issue, and fighting a fiction of our own fancy, we shall

quote from the abettors of the notion in question, a few sentences showing clearly what are the views of this subject widely entertained and propagated at the present day.

Their cardinal doctrine on this subject is thus expressed by a leading advocate of it: "Choice in its very nature implies the possibility of a different or contrary election to that which is made."\* This "possibility," as this writer explains himself, refers not to its having different objects but at its election, so that it may choose whichever it pleases; but it refers to the possibility of making the mind's choices themselves different or contrary to what actually occur, at the same instant, under precisely the same internal and external motives, and the same objects offered to their election. For he says, "the question of free will is not whether men choose. This is notorious, none deny it."† Again—"Free-agency is known and defined by the Confession itself and admitted to be the capacity of choice, with power of contrary choice."‡ And in various forms he abundantly asserts, that "choice" and "voluntariness" are not a sufficient ground of accountability unless the mind not only chooses, but exerts a "control" over its own choices.

Another writer speaks of "a will which has not its nature correlated to any objects but a will indifferent, for if its nature were correlated to objects, its particular selection and determination would be influenced by this, and consequently its action would be necessary."§

Again. "The only escape from necessity, therefore, is the conception of will as above defined—a conscious self-moving power, which may obey reason in opposition to passion, or passion in opposition to reason, or obey both in their harmonious union; and lastly which may act in the indifferency of all, that is act without reference either to reason or passion."|| Again. "The reason and the sensitivity do not determine the acts of the will. The will has efficiency, or creative and modifying power in itself—self-moved, self-directed."¶

A few sentences from a publication recently discontinued, in further explication of the properties of this power of contrary choice, claimed to be essential to true liberty, will suffice under this head. "We know that a moral system necessarily implies the existence of free agents with the power

\* Beecher's Views in Theology, pp. 31, 32.

§ Tappan, Review of Edwards, p. 221.

† Id. p. 32.

|| Id. p. 227.

‡ Id. p. 91

¶ Id. p. 244.

to act in despite of all opposing power. This fact sets human reason at defiance, in every attempt to prove that some of these agents will not use that power and actually sin.\* “This possibility that moral agents will sin, remains, (suppose what else you will,) so long as moral agency remains; and how can it be proved that a thing *will not* be, when for aught that appears, it *may* be. When in view of all the facts and evidence in the case, it remains true that it *may* be, what evidence or proof can exist, that it *will not* be?”† Again. “It will not be denied that free moral agents can do wrong under every possible influence to prevent it. The possibility of a contradiction in supposing them to be prevented from doing wrong is therefore demonstrably certain.” But we will not weary our readers with a more prolix detail of extracts, which might be multiplied to any extent. Most of them are familiar with these. It is notorious with what ingenuity, zeal and industry these sentiments have been defended and propagated in every variety of form, and what multitudes have been brought, either to espouse them with enthusiasm, or submit to them in silence.

While the first of the writers quoted teaches that it belongs to the very nature of choice, that there should be a capacity of producing contrary choice, and that without this “control” of the mind over its own choices, there is no true freedom, moral agency or accountability; the second clearly avows that indifferency of will towards the objects either of reason or desire, without which this faculty is rather a metaphysical figment, than a living reality, and maintains that no other constitution of the will can exempt us from the despotism of fatal necessity: while in the last series of extracts we reach the climacteric, to which the doctrine necessarily rises by the demands of logical consistency, viz. that it belongs to the very essence of moral agency, that the will is of such a nature or in such a state as to be able to sin “in despite of all opposing power.” And that this is no mere theory but an awful fact in their estimation is evident, because they advance it to account for the introduction of sin into the world—strongly arguing that God would have excluded it, if he could have done so without destroying moral agency. From all which it is most manifest that the will, according to their conception of it, cannot, without the loss of accountability, moral agency, and merit of praise or blame, be put

\* *Christian Spectator*, 1831, p. 417.

† *Id.* 1830, p. 563.

in such a state that it may not sin, in spite of all the motives and influences without and within the man, which the Almighty can employ to prevent it. Such is the power of contrary choice, extensively and confidently asserted in these days to be requisite to moral agency. This notion we propose to discuss so far as the space allotted to us will permit.

No evidence has yet been adduced of the existence of such a property in the human will. The only evidence of the existence of mental attributes, which sound philosophers have deemed admissible, is those mental operations which presuppose the faculty in question. Thus we judge men to possess reason and understanding, because we recognise in them exercises of reason and intelligence. We conclude that they are endowed with consciences because they take cognizance of right and wrong in moral actions. We attribute to them the faculty of will because they choose. And adhering to this Baconian method of philosophizing by induction of facts, (and on any other system, what can prevent any dreaming speculator from endowing the human soul with an endless number of fictitious attributes?) what legitimate evidence is furnished of the existence of such a faculty of contrary choice, as we are now canvassing? That men choose as they do choose, all admit, and of course maintain the existence of a faculty adequate thereto. But that they choose the contrary of what they choose none contend. How then can they contend for the existence of a faculty in all respects adequate to do what confessedly is never done?

Neither does consciousness testify to the existence of any such faculty: though most of all relied on and appealed to bear such testimony. But this is a vain refuge. For consciousness is the mind's cognizance of its own operations; it never beholds naked, abstract faculties separate from their workings. It discerns them in and by these workings, and so becomes conscious of their existence and nature. This and nothing else is the office of consciousness. How then can it be cognizant of operations which do not exist. It may be conscious indeed of having been able to choose differently, had it so pleased—because such has ever been the law of its choice. Will any one pretend that it is conscious of a power to choose contrariwise, its ruling inclination or pleasure being and continuing to choose as it has chosen, or that such a faculty would be any desirable addition to the moral endowments of men; or lend any new aid, finish or grace to moral agency?

Neither is any evidence of such a power contained in the intuitive convictions of men, as to what is requisite to moral agency and accountability. For however it may be requisite in order to men's being responsible, that they be able to do as they please or choose; yet who will claim that it is deemed necessary that they should have the property of choosing the exact contrary of what on the whole appears to them most eligible and desirable? So far from being essential to, would not such a property be declared by them destructive of all responsibility?

There is decisive evidence that such a property of the human will does not exist. For that which is contended for is not merely that the will may put forth a choice the contrary of what actually occurs, supposing such a change to occur in its circumstances as would induce it, (which all admit,) but that in precisely the case in which it exercises a given choice, it is fully adequate to a contrary election. Now this contrary choice is actually made or it is not: if it is made, then the will chooses the contrary of what it does choose, which is self-contradiction; if it is not made, then those conditions were wanting in it as a cause, which were indispensable to the effect, and in the absence of which it was inadequate to the effect. It is a trifling evasion to answer that the will could have chosen otherwise had it been so inclined: this is not the point in hand. The thing contended for is that it might have chosen otherwise at all events, whether inclined or not, and in spite of all opposing inclination, yea, in spite of all opposing power, even of Omnipotence: and that this is essential to moral agency. It might as well be said that scales could turn the opposite way, if induced by a preponderating weight. And does this illustration adequately exhibit all that is intended by that famous power of contrary choice, which has been so largely spoken of, as bringing in a new era in the philosophy of theology?

Neither is it any answer to say that this reasoning is inconclusive in regard to such a faculty as is now contended for: by which its advocates mean a cause unlike all others, and which they variously define as a 'self-active,' 'self-originating,' 'self-determining,' 'selecting' cause. For it did either thus of itself enact, originate, determine or select a choice the contrary of what it did, which is plain contradiction; or it did not: and therefore wanted some condition the presence of which was indispensable to that effect, and the

absence of which rendered the cause inadequate to the effect—as really though not as blamelessly, or in such a degree so, as is the hand to lift a mountain.

But again, all will doubtless admit, that although the natural faculty of will exerts the choice, the direction of that choice under given outward motives, is determined not by the bare natural faculty, but by its moral state. Thus the faculty of will equally in good and bad men exerts their volitions: but their moral goodness or badness determines the direction and quality of those choices. To deny this, is to deny, confound and utterly vacate the distinction in theology between natural and moral ability. If then the will is in a given moral state, how can it be a property of it to put forth choices of an opposite moral character? Is this a real requisite or desirable appendage to moral agency?

Such a property of the human will really amounts to the liberty of indifference: For if the will be in a condition, by which it is fitted or liable to turn either way, then it cannot be already inclined by a preponderating bias in one direction: for this is but saying that it chooses the contrary of its own preference. This difficulty is attempted to be evaded, but not answered, by alleging that although the will may not choose contrary to its own inclination, yet it may reverse that inclination. But let it be explained how this inclination can be reversed without choosing contrary to it. Suppose however it might. Then surely that property or function of will which thus reverses its own ruling bias, must at least itself be free from the power of that bias, or it would never incline against it, and work its destruction. It must therefore at least be in a state of equipoise or indifference as to the objects of choice.

As we have already seen, one leading advocate of this notion, clearly discerning this consequence, boldly marches up to it, and embraces it, and contends that such a freedom of will as involves its indifference either to the objects of reason or passion, in short a will void of all "correlation" to other objects, is essential to freedom from that necessity which destroys moral agency and accountability. But it deserves to be considered, whether the will does not by every act of choice pass out of this indifference, into a decided inclination toward some object: and by consequence whether after the first choice it can ever be endowed with that glorious indifference, which is essential to moral agency and accountability, or on this system can be responsible for

any of its acts. And we would inquire further, how it can make any first choice between objects, while in a state of perfect equipoise between them: why should it move towards either more than towards any thing else, or why should it not remain motionless, if there is no "correlation," no ground of affinity and attraction between them? Or could such motion be referred to any thing besides the purest contingency and hap-hazard, or possess any property of a rational and accountable act? On this scheme all moral agency and accountability would be exorcised from the universe.

Another class of advocates, hedged in by a view of this thicket of absurdities, have taken ground more cautiously. Wishing to navigate clear of the quicksands of indifference on the one hand, and on the other, to limit moral action to the workings of this favourite power of choice with power of contrary choice, they have struck upon the rock of self-love. They teach us, not that the will moves from indifference, but that "self-love is the primary cause or reason of all acts of choice that fix supremely on any object." And they maintain that this self-love has no moral character, but only the choices prompted by it. At first sight this has the appearance of accounting for the acts of the will, not by a good or evil bias within it, but without it, and void of moral quality. But let it be considered whether this solution, instead of disentangling the scheme, does not involve it in deeper perplexity. For how can "self-love be the primary cause or reason of all acts of choice or preference," unless the will is so constituted, as to follow its leadings? If it cannot, then if there be any truth in the doctrine, it is always a law of the will's choices, that it should choose that object, which appears to minister most to self-love. For suppose it to reject that which offers more, and to elect in preference that which offers less to self-love; it of course chooses in view of the perceived difference between the two: that difference in this case is so much denial to self-love. Therefore self-love could not have been the "cause or reason" of such an act of choice. Hence it is demonstrable that if "self-love be the primary cause of all acts of choice," these acts must be according to its promptings. They cannot therefore be the contrary of them. Where then shall we look for the capacity of contrary choice? And how does this scheme get rid of that bias in the will, or "correlation" to self-love, or uniform law of action, which are deemed so pregnant with fatalism, because fatal to free-agency? And if self-love has

no moral quality, in any state or degree of it, which determines the will, if all its choices are merely imperate acts of desires having no moral quality, then how can they have moral quality themselves? However biased in regard to objects void of moral quality, must it not remain eternally indifferent to moral objects? And are not all moral agency and accountability thus swept from the universe? And is this conferring on moral agency any new attribute of dignity, or element of perfection? The self-love scheme might easily be traced out to more absurd and ruinous consequences. But we confine ourselves to those which bear upon the power of contrary choice.

This scheme involves all the absurdities which attach to the notion of the self-determining power of the will as held by the old Arminians. For little value can be put upon a power of the mind to choose either way, unless it can determine which of the two choices in question it will put forth. Will they who assert a power in the mind to choose in given circumstances the opposite of what it does choose, tell us how this power could be made available without the mind's choosing to make it so: how its actual choice could be in a condition either to be exercised or avoided unless it were so that the mind chose to exercise it, and could choose not to exercise it, or how, on their principles, the mind could be responsible for it, without such a liberty as this implies? The question involves its own answer. They never can. This control of the mind over its own choices, which they claim, is surely a mere nullity, unless that mind chooses those choices. If then a free act of choice has not moral quality in its own nature, but can only acquire it from a previous act of choice, the same is true of that previous choice: also of its forerunner, and so on *ad infinitum* till we reach a choice before the first choice in order to find moral responsibility, and indeed chase it out of being. We go from link to link and never find a staple: we sound from depth to depth, and find no bottom, for bottom there is none, neither can there be in this sea of absurdities.

Some of these metaphysicians have been fully aware that the power of contrary choice contended for, was none other than the self-determining power, and have accordingly undertaken to vindicate this doctrine of self-determination from the insuperable objections which lie against it. They allege that it is not obnoxious to the absurdity of choosing choices: because, like all other causes, it is its nature in working an

effect to "select"\* its object. That the will selects its objects, and that such is its nature, all agree. But this is not the question. As one of these writers says, "that men choose is notorious, none deny it." The inquiry is not whether different objects are put at men's election, or whether they could choose differently if they pleased; but whether in a given state, all things remaining the same, their choice may be either way, even the contrary of what it is. We object, that in order to this, it must choose between its choices. The answer is, "by no means; for like all other causes it selects its objects." By this one of two things must be meant; either that it is its nature to "select" the objects it does choose; then where is the capacity of contrary choice or "selection:" or it "selects" which "selection" it will make between two opposite objects—in other words chooses its choices. So much for this evasion.

Such a property of the human will as we are now discussing makes mere and blind contingency the final determinant of its choices. For it teaches that it is inconsistent with moral agency, that the will should have any such ruling bias toward given objects, as effectually, and infallibly to prevent its choosing the opposite. Not even Omnipotence itself can thus prevent it, without infringing upon moral agency. If then it be requisite to free action, that the will should be void of all bias or relation to any objects, which will decisively direct its choices toward them: if, as has been shown already, according to this scheme, it must be in a state of equipoise or indifference; then most clearly the will is not determined either way by any thing without or within itself: being instated in sublime equipoise or indifference above them all. To what then but the blindest fortuity can they be referred? And where is the survey of those vast Providential dispensations which hang on the choices of moral agents, except, as one has said, in "all-powerful contingencies:"†

Such a property, so far from being requisite to, utterly subverts all moral agency and accountability. For, as has already been shown, it drives all moral responsibility out of the world, by pushing it to a choice back of the first choice. It makes choice proceed from indifference and blind contingency; and what moral qualities can be attached to that which by its very terms has no quality, is neither one thing

\* Tappan. Review of Edwards, p. 185.

† President Day.

nor the other, is blank nonentity or blind contingency? To state the case familiarly: If at any moment a choice may spring up within us, "despite all opposing power," all strength of inclination and force of persuasion which I may have of myself, or omnipotence can work, how can I be responsible for it, more than for an involuntary spasm of the nerves?

We go still further, and assert that a kind of necessity is requisite to the very freedom of actions, and cannot be divorced from them without destroying or impairing that freedom. For is not a free act one which possesses certain qualities? If then such an action as is possessed of such qualities, and no other, is free, it follows that if a given choice be free it must be such an action and no other. For example: Let any person choose freely what his inclination would prompt, as to property, location, opportunities of study or usefulness, and would not such a choice if free be some given thing to the exclusion and rejection of its opposite? and could a choice, if free and "unhindered by fatal coercion," elect, and prefer one thing or its opposite, e. g. affluence or poverty, at the same moment? On this point we may safely appeal to human consciousness. The question speaks its own answer. Thus in order to freedom in the manner and quality of an action, there must be a necessity as to its event: a necessity that it be as it is and not otherwise. Thus if you choose freely between two objects, there is one on which that choice will fall; nay cannot but fall without losing its freedom. This conclusion cannot be escaped without plunging into blind contingency as the determiner of the will. This pretended competency of the will, to one choice or its opposite, as effectually destroys all true freedom, as would a denial of freedom to choose whatever it pleases: nay it is one and the same thing. So true is that fundamental position of Calvinism, which, so far as we are informed, all Calvinistic writers have maintained: that in respect to the choices of moral agents, there is freedom as to the manner, and necessity or fixedness as to the event of them; and the one involves the other. Neander has beautifully expressed Augustine's doctrine thus: "On the highest point of moral elevation, freedom and necessity coincide."\* So our Protestant confessions teach that although "God unchangeably ordains whatsoever comes to pass," yet he does it so that "violence is not

\* Bib. Repository, 1833, p. 96.

offered to the *will* of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established." And again: "Although in relation to the foreknowledge and decrees of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably and infallibly; yet by the same providence he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of the second causes, either necessarily, freely or 'contingently.'" By "contingently," is meant, as another article teaches, not that any "thing to God is contingent or uncertain;" but, as these confessions assert, "according to the nature of second causes," by which is meant that to them the actions are contingent or avoidable if they choose to avoid them: not that their choices are liable to be of a given thing or its opposite: for they teach that the choices themselves are immutably foreknown and determined; yet not so as to impair, but to establish their liberty, for the manner of them also is immutably fixed.

This is precisely the view we have maintained: that freedom as to manner, and necessity as to event stand or fall together. And this is what Dr. Twisse, prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, not only means, but laboriously argues, in the context of that famous passage, in which he says "contingently means avoidably as every university scholar knows," which has been so abundantly quoted to prove that he and with him the Assembly of Divines, and their venerable confessions, held to the power of contrary choice, in the sense contended for in the late controversies among us. It is worthy of observation too, that in the very next page, Dr. Twisse confines this power of avoiding evil to particular purposes and acts of abstaining from given sins. While he expressly asserts that "fallen man has no power to abstain from them in a gracious and holy manner." Thus Judas, had he chosen, could have refrained from betraying Christ, but not in a holy manner, that is, from principles of faith and love. In other words, it was perfectly consistent with Judas's continuing a wicked man, that it should have pleased him to refrain from his act of treachery; and had it thus pleased him he could and would have abstained from it. But there is no conceivable act or state of the natural man, no desire of salvation, or resolutions to be holy, which do or can produce faith and love. There is a gulf between the two which nothing can fill, but the renewing work of the Holy Ghost. Now it is notorious that the power of contrary choice has been chiefly handled in reference to one point; viz. to establish the ability of the unrenewed man to turn himself to God, and make a new heart,

without Divine Grace, and that other points interwoven are merely collateral and subordinate to this. Whatever else Twisse meant by "avoidable," he directly denies this, almost in the same sentence. Is it altogether just to hold him forth as its champion? If many of our "University scholars," aye, and Teachers too, were more conversant with his treatises, and those of other kindred defenders of the faith, it would go far to prepare the way of the Lord, and restore the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The most perfect moral agents in being are destitute of this property in question, which is asserted to be requisite to moral agency. Such is God, all whose acts are immutably, (freely as to the manner yet necessarily as to the event) determined by perfect wisdom and goodness. It is impossible for God to lie. He cannot deny himself. Is not he supremely excellent, and deserving of praise? To deny this is to deny his perfections, and blaspheme his Name! The elect angels can never become the subjects of sinful choices. Regenerate men, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, cannot prevailingly sin, or utterly fall away. Are they not moral agents? Are they the less excellent and praiseworthy, for being so inflexible holy, that they cannot become the prey of sin and Satan? But you say they can lapse into sin if they please? Indeed! can they unless it be their pleasure so to do? Dare you question that it will always be their pleasure to abide holy? If not, where is the possibility of their apostasy? This is the very point at issue; whether it ever will or can be their pleasure to lapse? Will you presume to suggest that their powers of moral agency would be improved by such a liability? But you say there can be no merit or worthiness in their standing if they have not power to fall. That they have power to fall, if they choose or please, nonedispute. But they will not choose or be pleased to fall, is there no worthiness in such a character? Then is there none in the Universe. So this notion, like all other errors in theology, cannot be maintained without striking at the Deity himself. It puts his unchangeable holiness in jeopardy and doubt. The foregoing reasons satisfy us that such a power of contrary choice as that which has been canvassed is no indispensable property of moral agency. We will briefly advert to some of the methods adopted to give this notion currency and popularity.

Its advocates speak of the opposite view as if it implied that men were compelled to act, to sin, or to be holy,

against their wills. They abound in phraseology like this: If there is no possibility of a contrary choice; if men are compelled to act as they do by fatal necessity; if their inability is not wholly in their aversion of will, if it is something which no purity of desire or purpose can remove, and the like, then they are not accountable. Whereas our view is exposed to no such objection; for it implies that there is no supposable, prevailing will, desire or choice contrary to the actual choice. Otherwise the actual choice would be omitted, and the contrary put forth. Their system, if any, is in fact obnoxious to this charge. For it supposes that choices may spring up contrary to prevailing inclination, yea, "all opposing power." And yet the changes are ever ringing on this idea of compulsion contrary to their will, to bewilder careless theologians, and the more careless multitude.

They set it forth in glaring colours as stoicism, fatalism, heathenish destiny, and are abundant in such words as fatal necessity, adamantine bonds of fate, &c. They noise them abroad with great frequency, variety and emphasis, as if they were of vital importance to their cause.

Our present limits forbid any inquiry into the doctrines of the ancient Stoics and Fatalists. But we beg leave to say that these startling words neither answer nor constitute an argument. Neither do they prove the identity of our doctrine with any held by the Stoics and Fatalists: neither, if that were proved, does it of itself prove its untruth, unless every sentiment ever held by their schools is to be concluded false, to the suppression of all further inquiry; which few will be bold to assert. And if it be incumbent on some, is it not so on all, not to resort to "other means than truth and argument" in this controversy?

It is much insisted on and reiterated, that if their doctrine be denied, then there is no further use of endeavours to attain virtue in ourselves, or of employing means, endeavours, and persuasions to promote it in others. This is plausible, and strongly seizes the sympathies of men. But let us examine whether this difficulty does not press with more crushing weight on their own scheme. For if the will be without bias or "correlation" to any object, if it be liable to choose either way, in spite of all motive and inducement, and all internal inclination, which Omnipotence itself can work, of what avail is it to employ means and persuasions with such an agent? Were it not as hopeful and rational to expostulate with the idle wind, which bloweth where it listeth, and none

can tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth? But in the orthodox scheme, there are some characteristical susceptibilities in man to which appeals can be hopefully addressed. The impenitent even, if not peculiarly obdurate, can be persuaded to refrain from external impurity and vice; and by the efficacious grace of the Spirit can be "effectually softened, bowed and renewed, as to hear the word with gladness, obey, and live." Our only and our sufficient encouragement to preach the Gospel to every creature is, that God can make them willing to embrace it in the day of his power. Are there any who rely on any other encouragement? If so, let them avow it. If not, why tax our scheme with a perplexity which confessedly burdens their own?

Lastly and pre-eminently, the chief allurements by which this scheme has fascinated multitudes of young ministers, and others, is to be found in its vaunting airs of new light and discovery in religion, and being the only true philosophy. This after all is the occult enchantment, the magic wand by which it has spelled throngs of votaries. And it is precisely this which needs to be dissipated, before a respectful hearing can be gained in behalf of the true system, however masterly and irrefragable the style in which it may be defended. That it has reared up a generation of preachers who pride themselves on their philosophic insight, and extensively given birth to a style of preaching, in which the dry bones of lifeless metaphysical subtleties have had an undue proportion to the milk and meat of God's word, which feeds his church, is undeniable. But in view of the foregoing considerations, it is for our readers to decide, whether the holders of this scheme do indeed exhibit that extraordinary philosophical acumen, that rare genius for solving metaphysical problems, that unexampled insight into the true structure of the mind, which they would fain pretend. We submit whether any theory ever advanced by the wildest sciolist, or most transcendent transcendentalist, surpasses this for crude absurdities, and glaring self-contradiction; and when we hear the flourish of trumpets about new light and unparalleled discovery, we submit to any one tolerably versed in the past controversies of the Church, whether there be any thing in this doctrine, or its attendant sisterhood of errors, which has not from the time of Pelagius till now, alternately infested the Church, and been exorcised from it, as God has seen fit to try his people, or to deliver them with an outstretched arm. And we submit also to men's sober judgments, with-

out comment, the fulsome pretensions which have been so largely made to intellectual greatness and superiority, in the case of those competent to invent or defend such a scheme as this; as also the free imputations of dulness or insanity, or some other malformation in the case of those minds which cannot perceive its beauties, or lend it their sanction. Indeed any scheme which prides and vaunts itself much on its great display of metaphysical tact, and philosophic wonders, does so far forth evince its inconsistency with the glorious gospel of the blessed God. For this is no philosopheme of men, but a testimony of God, which brings to nought the wisdom of the wise and the understanding of the prudent. It teaches us that "vain philosophy" "spoils" men. True philosophy takes the yoke and learns of Christ, as a disciple of his master. Spurious philosophy is an usurper in the city of the great King, commanding what Christ may and may not teach, and thus lords it over our faith.

It will be perceived that in the several heads of this disquisition we have barely struck and opened veins of thought, without exhausting them, each of which would yield a rich reward to the most patient and thoroughgoing inquiry. We have a deep and deliberate conviction, a conviction strengthened by every day's experience, that this point is the hinge on which the chief theological differences that agitate our Zion turn; and that there will be no relief, no sufficient check to those errors which have harassed the Church, until the truth on this subject is clearly settled.

It seems too plain, indeed, to be questioned, that if it be essential to moral agency, that it be a property of the will to choose either way in spite of all opposing power; that it be endowed with such independence, that no "evidence or proof" can exist that it will act in a given way, not even in any thing which Omnipotence can do to direct it: then there can be no proof or evidence, that any thing which God does or forbears to do through all eternity, is the reason or cause, positive or privative, why moral agents act as they do act. Of course the doctrine of decrees is subverted. There can be no evidence of God's providential government, as concerns the actions of free agents or things depending upon them. There can be no evidence that any work of his Spirit upon the souls of men is the reason or cause of their turning to God. Indeed, no work of any sort can be the cause of such a change in them who have power to sin despite all opposing power: for it cannot produce the change until they permit

it by the very terms of the statement. Thus an end is made of efficacious grace. With this doctrine, as all know, Divine sovereignty and the orthodox view of election stand or fall. If it is indispensable to moral agency that the infallible prevention of moral agents from sinning "may involve a contradiction;" that they should not be in a state which would be incompatible with their ever sliding into apostasy: "what evidence or proof can exist" that the saints will persevere unto salvation, or that the glorified saints and angels, and even God himself, may not lapse from heavenly purity? "For," as these writers say, "how can it be proved that a thing *will* not be, when, for ought that appears, it *may* be?" A fearful prospect this for all holy intelligences! And if nothing beside the actings of this power possesses moral quality, or can be sinful or holy; then surely there can be no native and hereditary sinfulness in men, if indeed there can be any of any sort.

Is it not then clear beyond dispute, that those cardinal points of the evangelical systems, which have been so much in controversy of late, are thus shaken by this notion of contrary choice which saps and mines the foundation on which they rest? To us this is past all doubt. Having often had occasion to reason with the advocates of the new scheme, we have found them uniformly taking refuge in this notion as their impregnable citadel. They have uniformly confessed that the whole controversy hinges upon it. Is it not then of vital importance to labour to establish the true philosophy on this point; and not merely prune away the branches of this poison-tree, but lay the axe at its root?

While we build not our faith on the wisdom of men, but on the sure testimonies of God, is it not lawful, nay, obligatory, to ward off the boastful assaults of a pretended philosophy, by showing that it is "philosophy falsely so called," evincing its folly, and humbling its pride? Has not this been the method of the most successful defenders of the faith? On this subject let the illustrious Edwards, though dead, yet speak, whose own immortal treatise on this very subject is a most noble example and confirmation of what he says.\* "There is therefore no need that the strict philosophic truth should be at all concealed; nor is there any danger in *contemplation* and *profound discovery* in these things. Indeed these things never can be well established, and the opposite

\* Works, Vol. II. p. 300. New York Edition.

errors, so subversive of the whole gospel, which at this day so greatly and generally prevail, be well confuted, or the arguments by which they are maintained answered, till these points are settled. While this is not done, it is to me beyond doubt, that the friends of those great gospel truths will but poorly maintain their controversy with the adversaries of those truths: they will be obliged often to shuffle, hide, and turn their backs: and the latter will have a strong fort whence they can never be driven, and weapons to use, from which those who oppose them will find no shield to screen themselves; and they will always puzzle, confound, and keep under the friends of sound doctrine, and glory and vaunt themselves in their advantage over them; and carry their affairs with a high hand, as they have done already for a long time past.”

Was this written near a century ago by so accurate a draftsman as Jonathan Edwards? If it truly delineates what then was, could it better describe what now is? Who more valiant for the truth, or mighty in counsel and act for its defence than he? Shall we not heed his counsels as well as revere his name? There is no new thing under the sun. If his history was prophecy as to the danger, shall not his counsel be so as to the remedy?

Let his testimony admonish us all to burnish and gird on our armour for a victorious conflict with false doctrine, not only in its outworks, but also in this its strong citadel. While there may be a presumptuous and perilous delving into the labyrinths of

“Fixed fate, free will, fore-knowledge absolute  
To find no end in wandering mazes lost,”

there is also a safe and prudent study of them, which is necessary and profitable.

Particularly ought we to master and confound all reasonings and doctrines, which go, or tend, to a denial of the possibility of “that which is the true system of administration in the city of God;” that it is possible, at least, that the Maker of all things should have his creatures at his own disposal; that he may work in them, to will and to do of his own good pleasure; that he doeth his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever!