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ART. I.—*A Practical View of Regeneration.*

*Archibald Alexander*

THAT human nature has lost that moral purity and perfection with which it was originally endued, is a truth which lies at the foundation of the Christian religion. Indeed, we see not how it can be denied by the deist, without casting a gross reflection on the character of God. It is only from the Scriptures, however, that we learn the origin of evil. Here we read, that God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions. Man being in honour continued not. When God created man he formed him in his own image and after his own likeness; and what that image consisted in, the apostle Paul informs us, when he speaks of the new creation. "And that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind. And that ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The phrase "after God," means after the image of God. This is expressed in the parallel passage, "Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge *after the image* of him that created him." By the fall this moral image was effaced. The mind which had been illumined by divine truth became spiritually blind; the heart whose exercises had been holy

men once connected with Dr. Pressly's own communion, but now remarkable for nothing so much as for their reckless rejection of all creeds and venerated ecclesiastical landmarks. May no future metamorphosis exemplify the same principle !

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ART. III.—*Letters on the Difficulties of Religion.* By Catharine E. Beecher. 12mo. Hartford: 1836.

*Archibald Alexander*

FEMALE writers have been so few in this country, that we have never before had occasion to review a work from the pen of one of the softer sex. Miss Beecher, however, is not a stranger to the American public. She has produced already some works on education which have met with no small approbation. And whether her strong good sense, the versatility of her talents, or the ease and energy of her style be considered, it must be admitted, that as a writer she has no need of any peculiar indulgence from reviewers. Indeed there is nothing feminine in the productions of this lady: if the work had been anonymous we should never have suspected that it proceeded from the hand of a lady. As this praise may possibly be misapprehended, we distinctly avow, that there is nothing masculine in this performance, but its strength. The spirit of these Letters is throughout amiable. A love of truth and a heart of kindness and good will to men, are manifestly the characteristics of the writer. If there should be detected by the severe critic some appearance of self-complacency, and an unshrinking confidence in her knowledge and abilities in grappling with the most abstruse subjects of philosophy and theology, the discussion is generally so well sustained, and so much perspicacity and ingenuity are displayed, that some indications of literary vanity, —as the temptation to it was great,—may well be pardoned in so clever a writer. We doubt whether any of the celebrated female authors of the present age, excel Miss Beecher in intellectual strength; and we are pleased to observe the general sobriety and correctness of her opinions. We had been led to expect some degree of eccentricity or extravagance. We were led to believe that she entertained many opinions in theology, which, if not new, are in our day peculiar. We were therefore agreeably disappointed, in finding her, generally, the able advocate of doctrines which we con-

sider sound. In some cases, it is true, she slides over difficulties instead of removing them; and seems to think that she has placed a point in a satisfactory light, when in fact she has not appreciated the difficulty, or has dexterously kept it out of view.

The first letter in this series contains a just view of the New England character, and a fair vindication of the mass of the inhabitants of that enlightened region from the aspersions which have been cast on them through prejudice; or rather from observing the moral defects of certain itinerant traders who annually come forth from this hive of our population, and spread themselves through the southern country. Miss Beecher shows how unreasonable it is to characterize a whole people from a few, who while they partake of the intelligence so general among their countrymen, are destitute of the virtues by which they are distinguished. We are persuaded that this vindication of the people of New England is just; for before we visited that region, we acknowledge that we partook of the prejudices mentioned above; but a free intercourse with the people in the whole extent of the country, convinced us, that for simplicity and moral honesty and integrity, there are no people superior to those of this land of the pilgrims. That they do not exhibit so conspicuously, as some of the southern people, the virtues of generosity and hospitality, arises out of their peculiar situation. Profusion, or even the want of frugality in domestic economy, would be ruinous to a country so little productive in some of those things most useful for the subsistence of man. Most of the people are under the necessity not only of hard labour; but of exercising a sharp wit in contriving means to enable them to bring up and educate their children.

As a specimen of Miss Beecher's power to wield a severe and sarcastic pen, we extract her description of Fanny Wright.

"And now, as to the moral tendencies of your system. I suppose it so involves disorganization in its very nature, that no parallel experiment can ever be made, for no community, founded on Atheist principles, can hold together long enough for such an experiment. All you can do is to select a few individuals, whose fine natural endowments have not been ruined by such blasting influences. As to Fanny Wright, you said you believed her to be honest in her opinions, amiable in her disposition, philanthropic in her efforts, and endowed with rare intellect. Allowing that you are as near right as partizans usually are, in estimating leaders, still I must compliment you by saying, that I believe you have secret feelings that would present a very different picture of this strange exercise of female character,

"Every man of sense and refinement, admires a woman as a woman; and

when she steps out of this character, a thousand things that in their appropriate sphere would be admired, become disgusting and offensive.

“The appropriate character of a woman demands delicacy of appearance and manners, refinement of sentiment, gentleness of speech, modesty in feeling and action, a shrinking from notoriety and public gaze, a love of dependence, and protection, aversion to all that is coarse and rude, and an instinctive abhorrence of all that tends to indelicacy and impurity, either in principles or actions. These are what are admired and sought for in a woman, and your sex demand and appreciate these qualities, as much as my own. With this standard of feeling and of taste, who can look without disgust and abhorrence upon such an one as Fanny Wright, with her great masculine person, her loud voice, her untasteful attire, going about unprotected, and feeling no need of protection, mingling with men in stormy debate, and standing up with bare-faced impudence, to lecture to a public assembly. And what are the topics of her discourse, that in some cases may be a palliation for such indecorum? Nothing better than broad attacks on all those principles that protect the purity, the dignity, and the safety of her sex. There she stands, with brazen front and brawny arms, attacking the safeguards of all that is venerable and sacred in religion, all that is safe and wise in law, all that is pure and lovely in domestic virtue. Her talents only make her the more conspicuous and offensive, her amiable disposition and sincerity, only make her folly and want of common sense the more pitiable, her freedom from private vices, if she is free, only indicates, that without delicacy, and without principles, she has so thrown off all feminine attractions, that freedom from temptation is her only, and shameful palladium. I cannot conceive any thing in the shape of a woman, more intolerably offensive and disgusting; and I believe that in eulogizing her, you did violence to your judgment and your taste, from a natural desire to make a prominent member in your party appear respectable.”

In the second letter Miss Beecher attacks the doctrine of the fatalist and atheist, who maintain that man is a necessary being and not accountable for his actions. This she does, not by entering into the labyrinth of metaphysical reasoning about cause and effect, motives and volitions, but by an appeal to common sense, and to the conduct of these very persons in what relates to their bodily welfare. In the next letter the same subject is continued, with a particular application of the principles laid down to the theory of Robert Owen and Fanny Wright, which they have endeavoured to propagate in this country with a zeal and industry which would have been laudable in a good cause. Respecting Robert Owen's enterprize at New Harmony, Miss B. expresses herself with energy. “I have never seen or heard of any thing,” says she, “attempted by persons who have claims to rationality and to an enlightened education, that to me seemed more like the wild vagaries of lunacy than the establishment of Robert Owen at New Harmony. To collect together a company of persons of all varieties of age, taste, habits, and preconceived opinions, and teach them that there is no God, no future state, no retributions after death, no revealed stan-

dard of right and wrong, and no free agency: that the laws that secure private property are a nuisance, that religion is a curse, that marriage is a vexatious restraint, and the family state needless and unwise; and then to expect such a community to dwell together in harmony, and practise upon the rules of benevolence, what can be conceived more childish or improbable by any person who has seen the world, or known any thing of human nature? And yet such is the plan and expectation of the leaders of practical atheism. Their experiment, will probably prove one of the best antidotes to their wild theories."

This letter is concluded with some just remarks in favour of religion, as compared with the unnatural and comfortless system of atheism.

The fourth and fifth letters are addressed to a deist, and contain sound principles of evidence and just rules of investigation; and in the latter the perspicacious writer makes some excellent remarks on the grounds of objection to revelation, assumed by skeptical writers, and shows that judicious men are not governed by principles of this kind in their common affairs. Miss B. is wise in attempting to bring every class of opposers of religion to the principles of common sense; that is, to those maxims and rules by which sensible men are regulated in the management of their worldly concerns.

In the two following letters, though addressed to another person, the same subject is continued; and with much clearness and force of reasoning. In the sixth letter, the objections, derived from the numerous discordant opinions of Christians, are attempted to be answered. Miss B. undertakes to show that these discrepancies commonly relate to things not essential to salvation. And to confirm this view of the subject, she states a single proposition which includes every thing absolutely necessary to secure eternal happiness, in which all Protestants would readily unite. The proposition is, that "*Any man who sincerely and habitually loves his Maker, so as to make it the chief object of interest and effort, to discover his will and obey it, will secure eternal happiness.*" Now we do not believe, that all Protestants will be contented to have all fundamental articles of religion reduced to this one. It is true, indeed, that the man who sincerely and habitually loves God must be in a safe state; but if he has been a sinner, his love to God will not expiate his former sins, and cannot secure for him exemption from



deserved punishment; nor can his imperfect love, however sincere, procure for him a title to that heavenly inheritance which by sin has been forfeited. This article is much more suited to the deistical than the Christian system. The deist with whom Miss B. is reasoning, might turn upon her and say, what you have stated as the only thing essential, is believed by sober deists as firmly as it can be by any sect of Christians. We hold that there is a God of infinite perfection, whom it is our duty "to love sincerely and habitually, so as to make it the chief object of interest and effort to discover his will and obey it." He might justly say that there is nothing peculiar to Christianity in this creed: it is the very doctrine which deists holding natural religion have always inculcated. And if this is all that Protestants agree in, there is evidently no need of a revelation. It was a fundamental article in the creed of the Theophilanthropists of France, that there was one God, and that it was the duty of all rational creatures to love him supremely and do what was pleasing to him. Lord Herbert, the father of the English deists, maintained the same. We must say, therefore, that this method of answering the objection of deists, is not only unsatisfactory but dangerous.

Another objection very commonly urged by deists is, that the Bible teaches what is contrary to reason. With this our authoress grapples with no despicable skill; and upon the whole her answer appears to be solid. There are, however, some sentiments here advanced, which do not appear to us correct. On the 87th page we find the following: "I deny that you have any right to claim that there is a God, almighty in power, and infinite in wisdom, when you deny the authority of revelation, and I challenge you to bring me a single proof, by the aid of reason and nature, to show that the wisdom and power of the Creator are not limited." Now against this method of defending revelation, by denying the first principles of natural religion, we protest. It is the preposterous method of exhibiting the strength of a building, by tearing away the foundation on which it rests. If it cannot be proved by reason that God is infinite in knowledge, how can we depend upon any revelations which he may make? What sort of evidence of omnipotence and of infinite wisdom can be demanded, which does not exist in the creation? Can a limited power bring something out of nothing, existence out of non-existence? Can any stronger evidence of almighty power be conceived, than the creation of a world?

The conviction would not be stronger if we could believe that the creation was infinite. And in this argument there is no right to assume, without proof, that the creation is finite. Many philosophers have believed the contrary. If the evidence of infinite wisdom from the works of God is not complete, it is incumbent on those who deny it to show how greater wisdom could have been manifested. But we will argue the question on another principle. To deny that there exists proof of infinite wisdom and almighty power in creation, supposes that we have some conception of that which is infinite. If we have, whence was it derived? It must be answered, either from a survey of the works of God, which exceed all our powers of conception, or from the constitution of our own minds, by which we are able to transcend the limits of creation and conceive of a perfection not observed in the works of God. Take it either way and the conclusion follows, that all perfection of which we can conceive must be in the Great First Cause. For a greater perfection cannot be in the effect than in the cause, and whatever perfection we see in the creation, must exist *eminently* in the Creator. And again, as he is the author of our minds, whatever perfection we can conceive, must have its archetype somewhere, and if it be not in the works of God it must be in himself; for to suppose the conception of a perfection which has no existence any where is an absurdity; it is to conceive a nonentity, and call it perfection.

Our honest belief is, that when we have arrived at the knowledge of a first cause, whether by reason or tradition, we intuitively believe that all possible perfection belongs to him. This is evident, because all men, whether Christians or deists, agree in arguing on this principle as certain. Any theological proposition is considered as disproved, or reduced to an absurdity, if from it may be derived a conclusion inconsistent with the absolute and infinite perfection of God. If this foundation were taken away, we believe it would be found very difficult to re-establish it by revelation, however clearly it might be there inculcated; for a revelation from an imperfect being, limited in power and knowledge, and of course in every other attribute, could never be satisfactorily established.

Miss B. is not one of your timid and cautious writers, who go round difficult questions and shun the *cross*. She comes up boldly, we had almost said *manfully*, and looks them in the face. Whether in this she is always as wise as she is

bold, it is unnecessary to determine. In her seventh letter, she enters on the difficult subject of *the existence of natural and moral evil*. And we confess that in her way of reasoning she has come to a conclusion, which seems to vindicate the benevolence of God; but it is at the expense of his wisdom and power. It is, that God saves from all the evil and does all the good within his power. Whether this “gordian knot of theology,” as she terms it, is solved or only cut, by this explanation, we leave the discriminating reader to judge. But we are pained to read such expressions as that “God does the best he possibly can do—He has not the power of doing any thing better than he has done. All agree in saying that there is one thing that God has not the power to do, that is, the power to do more wisely or benevolently than he has done.”—“And saves from evil to the full extent of his wisdom and power.” This really appears to us to be darkening counsel by words without knowledge. We would ask Miss B., whence she derives the principles on which these conclusions are founded—from reason or revelation? It is taken for granted all along, that God can have nothing else in view than the promotion of the greatest possible degree of happiness. This principle is denied by many, and should have been demonstrated. Is not the whole of our reasoning here, on a subject entirely beyond our depth? And upon this principle, how can it be reconciled with infinite benevolence, that such systems as the one now existing were not brought into being from eternity; and that the work of creation is not continued every moment? We wish not to enter into this abyss which cannot be fathomed by human intellect. God has not authorized feeble mortals to lay down principles for the regulation of his conduct. It is best to put our hand upon our mouth, and to cry with Paul: “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?” May not the reason of the permission of evil be far beyond the reach of our feeble intellect? May there not be reasons and principles of the divine conduct, of which in the present state, we are totally incapable of conceiving? God has not required it of any mortal to explain this difficulty, and most of those who have dared to explore this *terra incognita*, have rather given evidence of their presumption than of their humility.

Miss B. brings into view the two theories on this subject



which now divide New England theologians. The first is the *beltistian* or *optimian* scheme of Leibnitz, adopted by President Edwards and his followers, which is the key-stone of the Hopkinsian system, namely, that evil, natural and moral, is the means of the greatest possible good. According to this, there never has been, nor ever will be, one pain or one sin which could be spared. The deduction of the least quantity of natural or moral evil would render the system of the universe less perfect. "The only difficulty" says our author, "is to conceive of any amount of good that would be sufficient to repay the evils of everlasting suffering; but though we cannot do it, the infinite mind of Jehovah may perceive that the amount of evil in the universe will be as a drop to the ocean, compared with the good; and that in the nature of things there was as much contradiction in making all the good without any evil, as there is in making a hill without a valley, or machinery without friction." The difference between the two theories is, that the one supposes that God could not accomplish the greatest possible good without employing natural and moral evil as a means; the other supposes that moral evil never can be the means of good; but that in accomplishing the greatest good it could not be avoided. The one represents God as choosing and bringing about evil as a means of good; the other as hating the evil and endeavouring by every means to avoid it, but as unable to bring into being the good which he desired, without the accompaniment of evil. Miss B. seems to be inclined to the latter theory and we do not blame her for leaning to the theory which seems most favourable to just views of the evil of sin. But when this theory is extended so far as to represent God as exerting his utmost power to prevent sin, without effect, we are obliged strongly to dissent from all such views of the divine character and government. That God could have prevented the sin of angels and men, we have no more doubt than that he exists. The permission of their sins was necessary not as a means, but as an occasion of accomplishing that good which he will accomplish. This is the good old doctrine of the Christian church, which is marred and not improved by either of the new-divinity theories. As to there being any thing in the nature of *free agency* which would render evil necessary, as Miss B. intimates, it is to our view an unreasonable supposition; except on the principle of a self-determining power in the human will, which is an absurdity. If it were so, it would be

impossible for God to govern the world, or even to foresee what would be the ultimate event of things.

Upon the whole we regret that Miss B. ventured on this difficult subject. It argues rather too much confidence in her own strength; and in our opinion the result has not been favourable. The objections of no infidel will be removed or diminished, by this discussion.

The following nine letters, beginning with the eighth, are addressed to a person, who is represented to be a believer in Christianity, and a supporter of the institutions of the gospel; but who is so far from being a practical Christian, that he seriously doubts whether the Bible furnishes any authority for those views and principles which are considered evangelical, and pleads for liberality and charity as the prime Christian virtues. Though a professed believer in Christianity, this correspondent seems disposed to shelter himself under the great uncertainty which attends all religious opinions, and especially pleads as an apology for a neglect of the requirements of religion, the exceeding great variety of sects, and diversity of religious faith; so that amid the conflicting tenets it is next to impossible to ascertain what the Bible does teach. Miss Beecher assails the inconsistency of her friend with much smartness and good sense, and shows that his position is even more unfavourable than that of the infidel. She argues from the very nature of a *revelation*, that something must be *made known*; and insists that every thing necessary to salvation is so clear that every person who desires to discover the right way, may find "the method by which we are to secure future happiness after death." To demonstrate this, Miss B. goes to work very methodically and scientifically. She goes back to first principles, and lays down the position, that all systems of religion which ever existed, require either "*character, or external performances* irrespective of character." The former she asserts is not required by Pagans, Mohammedans, or the Romish church; but only certain external rites, while most Protestants require *character*, as that which decides the condition of men after death. The next step is to ascertain what is meant by *character*, or to use her own words, "what constitutes human character." The subject is first considered negatively; or some things are specified which are not taken into the account when we estimate moral character; among which are mentioned, "mere external actions without regard to motives," and "the *relative proportion* of good and bad actions."

But the following are the particulars which are always objects of regard in judging of human character. "First, *Natural disposition and constitutional peculiarities.*" Now, as the writer was so exact in defining what kind of character she meant, and was careful to exclude from the account "all intellectual and physical considerations," we were more than a little astonished to find the very first trait in moral character to be *natural disposition and constitutional peculiarities.* But these, she assures us, always come into consideration in estimating human character. Here, indeed, we have what is so abhorrent to some minds, physical and constitutional morality.

The next test of character is, "*a man's moral principles in resisting temptation, as learned by experience and testimony.*" To inform us what constitutes moral character is one thing, but to tell us what is the *test* of moral character is another. The first was what Miss B. set out to perform; but she seems to have forgotten her own purpose before she had proceeded through a single page. Moral character might exist in perfection, as it does in heaven, where there is no temptation.

The third thing laid down is "the nature of *a man's principles, or his intellectual views of what is right and wrong.*"

This again is very astonishing. Miss B., not two pages before, informed us that "intellectual and physical characteristics" are left out of view, and here we have as a principal characteristic of the moral kind, "a man's principles," which are explained to mean *his "intellectual views" of what is right and wrong.* And even if Miss B. had not thus palpably contradicted herself, we are sure she would not deliberately inculcate the opinion, that mere "intellectual views" constitute moral character in the view of mankind. Some of the wickedest men that ever lived had clear intellectual views of the difference between right and wrong. But perhaps we do not apprehend her meaning. Upon a perusal of her explanation and amplification of this principle, we suspect that what she intended to express was, not that mere intellectual views *constitute* moral character, (which, according to her own plan, ought to have been her purpose,) but that mankind, in judging of human character take into consideration the opinions which a person has adopted concerning right and wrong. As if one believes that no peculiar sacredness attaches to the sabbath, such an one should

not be censured for its violation, as we would one who believed in its sacred obligation. There may be some truth in this representation; but there are many other things entirely omitted in this enumeration of particulars, which are far more essential in the constitution of moral character than this difference of opinion. To judge how far erroneous belief justifies or excuses, it would be necessary to ascertain its origin and cause. In general, practical errors are the result of evil passions or habits, and do not exculpate the person who acts wrong under their influence.

The last thing which Miss B. mentions, as entering into the estimate of human character, is "*the predominant interest or ruling passion.*" The further we advance in this survey of the constituent parts of human character, the more are we bewildered. If we did not know that Miss Beecher's knowledge of the meaning of terms in the English language was precise, we should have supposed that she did not understand what she was writing. Or, if she had not so formally stated that she was about to lay down the principles which go to *constitute moral character*, we might have supposed, that she was merely mentioning some circumstances which had a tendency to modify human character. But in the close of this letter she says: "These four particulars, I believe, include all that is ever regarded as constituting moral character, viz.: constitutional peculiarities; strength and extent of principles as learned by experience; the nature of a man's principles, or his intellectual views of what is right and wrong; and the leading interest or governing purpose of the mind." Now we maintain, that of all these particulars, which are laid down as the only things that *constitute moral character*, there is not one which possesses any moral quality, except the second, and perhaps the fourth. A more obscure and defective analysis of moral character, we venture to say, cannot be found in print. But it seems from the opening paragraph, that her correspondent fully acquiesced in all her views and statements respecting the constituents of moral character; and admitted that those specified include all that ever are regarded in forming an estimate of character among mankind, and all that can be made a subject of divine legislation. It is evident, therefore, that Miss B. did not lay down these particulars without deliberation, but considered herself as laying the foundation of a system, to be constructed in her future reasonings. We would, therefore, pause a moment, to inquire what moral character is. We



suppose that to be moral character which is conformable to some moral law; taking the word *moral* in its broadest sense, as referring to qualities both good and bad, moral character is the character as measured by a moral rule. The next question is, what is the moral standard by which character must be judged? We know of no perfect moral rule, but the law of God. What are the requisitions of this law? Those things in human beings which are conformable to the law constitute a good moral character; those disconformed to this standard constitute a bad moral character. Now, supreme love to God, including all right affections towards him as our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, and sincere and intense love to our fellow men, is what the law requires. Under these two heads all moral virtues are comprehended. But what does this lady tell us? That all moral character consists in constitutional peculiarities; in power of resisting temptation; in intellectual views of right and wrong; and in the ruling passion. How she could hope with such elements, to pour light into the mind of a *liberal Christian*, we know not. Her correspondent, however, as we have seen, is represented as coming fully into these preliminary views. But we suspect, that the acquiescence is fictitious, and that no human being ever expressed a consent to these radical principles of her system of moral philosophy. Upon a careful perusal of the ninth letter, it may be thought that we have, through ignorance of the real design of the author, done her some injustice in our criticisms; for here we observe that the whole of these preliminaries about the constitution of moral character are intended to pave the way for establishing the principle, that the only thing required of men, in order to secure eternal happiness, is that the ruling passion be right; and the result is, that unless our ruling passion be a desire to please God, it cannot be right. Accordingly, all the other particulars laid down as constituting moral character are here examined, and found to be of no account in the character which is certainly connected with future happiness; and after digging so deep for a foundation, and so scientifically ascertaining the elements of moral character, it turns out, that only one of these, namely, the ruling passion, has any necessary connexion with eternal life. Thus we have caught our author in the act of refuting her own errors; for after having mentioned constitutional peculiarities as the first constituent of a moral character, and of course a proper subject for the requisitions of a moral law; she now speaks

of these constitutional traits in a way which shows that she considers them as having no moral quality whatever; which is a correct view of the subject. Hear her own words: "To which of these four particulars does divine legislation refer, in teaching us how to gain eternal life? Will you take the Bible and examine for yourself? In the first place, does it teach that any particular trait or combination of traits, in the original mental constitution, is made the term of salvation? Is it any where taught that a man must have a naturally amiable disposition, or a calm temperament, or a pliant disposition, or any thing which depends solely on the original formation of the mind, and *for which we are no more responsible* (except for its proper regulation) than we are for the colour of the eyes or of the hair, &c." Here the inconsistency—and it is a glaring one—is, that one of the four grand elements of a moral character is a thing, for which we are no more responsible than for the colour of our eyes or hair!

If there be four constituent parts or elements of moral character, how does it happen that only one of them is necessary to future happiness? We might reason thus—either all these ingredients are necessary to the formation of a good moral character, or they are not. If the former, then as a good moral character is requisite to entitle us to eternal life, all these must be found in the character to which eternal life is promised in the Bible; if they are not necessary to a good moral character, why are they brought forward as the only things taken into consideration in estimating moral character? This whole discussion exhibits one of the strangest moral *disquisitions* we have ever met with. But that which we consider as by far the most censurable in these letters is, that in undertaking to point out what the Bible teaches as necessary to the acquisition of eternal life, there does not appear a solitary ray of evangelical light. There is no more notice taken of the mediation of Jesus Christ, than if he had never appeared in the world. If these letters, which professedly undertake to point out the way to future happiness, had been put into our hands without any information of their author, we should have judged that they must have proceeded from the pen of a deist or Unitarian, except that the words Christ and Bible are occasionally introduced, as if by accident.

Miss Beecher's system of religion may be reduced to a single point. The Bible requires many duties, a conformity to which is not necessary to obtain salvation; an internal cha- ✓

acter of piety, which may consist with many imperfections, is all that is essential to that religion which is connected with future happiness; and this character of piety consists in the governing purpose or passion of the mind. When this is a desire to please God, the person may be said to possess true religion. Thus eternal life is made to depend entirely on a man's own goodness. To be justified by faith, is to be justified by a good principle or disposition within us. No intimation is any where given in these letters, that our acceptance with God is through the merits of another. According to her theory it is our own inherent righteousness or moral goodness by which we are rendered acceptable to God, and not by the merit or righteousness of Christ, which is never once mentioned or referred to. That this is her notion of the plan of salvation, is evident from the whole tenor of these letters; but as we do not wish to impose upon our readers the task of perusing the greater part of the volume, we will extract a few passages, by which the sentiments of the writer will be sufficiently evinced.

"A son has become disobedient and rebellious, refuses to submit to the rules of the family, dislikes his father for the restraint imposed, distrusts his judgment, questions his rectitude, and the wisdom and propriety of his family regulations; he finally forsakes his home becomes reckless, and abandoned, is indolent, ill-tempered, licentious, profane, and the follower of every evil way; an object of universal contempt, pity and reprehension.

"At last he comes under good influences, sees, and properly feels the folly of his course, makes up his mind to return to his home and submit himself to the laws and authority of his father, sees the folly and wickedness of his past course, laments his ingratitude, and the injury done to his father, feels the propriety, wisdom and goodness of his regulations, comes home, is forgiven and commences a course of virtuous industry, and obedience to all family regulations. Some of his bad habits yet cling to him, but he strives against them, and is constantly gaining in the power of self-control.

"Now in speaking of such a son, and of his change, all these expressions would be used to indicate the same thing. 'He is become a new man;' 'he is a new creature;' 'he has repented and returned;' 'he has submitted to his father;' 'he has become an obedient son;' he has 'turned from the evil of his ways;' or, to use the Scripture term, meaning the same thing, he is '*converted*.' He now has confidence, (or *faith*,) in his father; he now '*believes* in what his father said;' his *actions* are proof of his repentance;' 'by his *works* he shows what he feels and believes;' 'he is forgiven and treated like a good man,' (that is, he is *justified* by faith evinced by his works, or he is treated like a just man,) he is '*justified* by faith, and justified by works, which are the fruits of faith;' 'he is saved from ruin;' 'he has escaped condemnation,' and similar expressions.

"Now the question might here arise, what is it for which he is forgiven and justified? Is it for his good works? Is it for his good feelings? Is it for his good intentions? I say it is for all; but the commencement of the result was that *change in his mind*, which was the efficient cause of all the rest. It was the *determination* made by himself, and carried out into action, to become an

obedient and dutiful son, and this and its effects are expressed by all these various methods."

Miss Beecher evidently entertains the opinion, that the works which are excluded from being the ground of our justification before God, are mere external works without piety, and that the reason why faith justifies the sinner is, because it is an exercise of a pious heart; as will appear by the following extract:—

"This view is also opposed by all those passages that make a certain *state of the mind* the indispensable pre-requisite to salvation; for example, 'without *faith* it is impossible to please God,' 'he that *believeth not* shall be damned,' and many others of similar import. Now these terms do not express a certain amount of good works, but they *do* express a certain state of mind or character.

"Lastly, if you will examine the first part of Romans, and the Epistle to the Galatians, you will find this view of the subject fully and directly controverted. Though you will probably find many things hard to be understood, in some parts of these writings, you will not fail to discover that the current of instruction has this as its chief object, to prevent men from trusting to their good works, or the conformity of their actions to law, and to make them understand that we are to be justified *by faith*, or by that character or state of mind which consists in *so* believing in Jesus Christ, as to love him, and make it the business of our lives to please him.

"You will find, that this view which you have presented, has been equally the resting place of the pagan, the Mohammedan, the infidel, the catholic, and that class of *moral* men among protestants, who deny the necessity of regeneration. They all trust to their *conformity to the rules of rectitude in external actions*, without reference to the state of the heart; or in the language of Scripture, they seek 'justification by the works of the law'—instead of 'justification by faith;'—or in the language of common life, they hope to be saved by their good moral life, instead of becoming truly pious."

Now if this pious character alone is requisite for our salvation, the mission and sacrifice of Christ were totally unnecessary. This is surely "another gospel," and completely subversive of the gospel of Christ. We do not find fault with the *character* which the writer makes to be requisite; but we do seriously object to this method of explaining the gospel plan of salvation. There has risen up, within a few years, a scheme of religion, which, whilst it professedly rejects no doctrine of Scripture, leaves entirely out of view some of the cardinal doctrines of the Bible. Nothing is spoken of as requisite but right dispositions of heart. Now as God is as able to produce such dispositions, without the mediation and atonement of Christ as with them, the practical inference will be, that such a plan of redemption was not needed, or else some new and unscriptural view must be given of these doctrines.



In the sketch of the way of salvation, rendered so simple by Miss Beecher, we are not only deprived of the mediation of Jesus Christ, but we hear nothing of the agency of the Holy Spirit, which is so prominent a doctrine in the old-fashioned divinity. As a certain *character* is all that is required, in order to the possession of eternal life, the question very naturally occurs, have we ability to attain such a character? Miss B., who is not afraid to grapple with any difficulty, whether theological or metaphysical, does not shun the inquiry, but meets it boldly; and if we may judge from appearances, feels as if she had indeed the ability to untie this gordian knot. Before entering on this vexed question of human ability, she lays down most confidently a position, which, if true must entirely supersede the agency of the Holy Spirit in preparing the soul for future happiness. Her words are, (p. 170.) "*I am sure* God does not require any thing of us but what we have *full ability* to perform." She appears however to know that there are difficulties involved in the subject, but with her wonted self-complacency, she says, "I think I see a way of obviating the difficulties you urge." As she thinks that she can solve this difficulty which has hitherto baffled the efforts of our strongest men, it will at least be amusing to follow her through the mazes of a metaphysical train of reasoning. The great difficulty which she attempts to remove, is, that our affections which are required by God's law are not subject to the control of our volitions; how then can we be said to possess the ability to comply with such requisitions? Take her answer in her own words.

"It is true, we have not the *direct* control of our affections, so that by a mere act of volition, we can love and hate, just as we can, by an act of our will, either shut or open our eyes. If we love a friend, we cannot, by a mere act of choice, cease to feel this affection. If we are indifferent, or dislike a person, we can no more by any act of volition, change these feelings into love. And I do not suppose that the divine law demands any such attempts. But though we have not the control of our emotions, by direct acts of volition, we have an indirect control of them, which is quite as powerful, for which we are held accountable, and to which the requisitions of the Bible are directed.

"I think I can illustrate my views of the subject by a familiar example. A husband is united to a virtuous and amiable wife, whom he has tenderly loved. But a course of extravagance and vice has estranged him from her; he knows that she has ceased to respect and love him; he is reproved by her superior virtues, and irritated by his conscience in her presence. He treats her so unworthily, that all affection ceases on both sides. He learns to think only of her faults, and depreciates or forgets her excellencies, and has lost all desire for her society, and all feeling of affection. Now suppose he were admonished of his wicked course, and expressed a wish to alter; he would be directed, in the first place, to 'love his wife;' suppose he should plead that he had not the control of

his emotions, that he did not love his wife, and choosing to do so would not produce love; and then he comes to you to relieve him from this difficulty. You would direct him to use the appropriate means of awakening affection. You would tell him to make up his mind to forsake his dissolute companions; to reform his life; to return to his wife, and make suitable acknowledgments; to commence all the practical duties of a kind and attentive husband; to take all those methods that would be most likely to regain the respect and affection of his wife and to awaken his own regard for her; and you would assure him that if he did take this course, inasmuch as his wife was excellent and lovely, it would inevitably result in the return of her affection to him, and the renewal of his own affection for her. And every man of common sense would approve your advice, and be certain of its successful results, if it were followed. Here, then, you perceive the manner in which a man has the control of his affections toward a fellow being.

“Now I suppose we have the control of our affection, as it respects our Maker, to an equal extent, and that we are to exercise it by similar methods. The husband is not to awaken his affection to his wife by sitting down and thinking of her, and trying by an act of volition to make love spring up in his heart. He makes up his mind in the first place to use all appropriate means, and while he follows this course, affection springs up in his bosom. So the alien from the heavenly Parent, when ‘he comes to himself,’ says, ‘I will arise [and go to my father.]’ He puts himself in the way of duty; he turns his mind to think upon the folly of his ways; he repents, and resolves to do no more so wickedly; he studies the works and the word of his Maker; he daily seeks to commune with him; he consecrates his time, property, and influence, to his service, and in this course of obedience, emotions of affection soon glow in his bosom, and cheer and invigorate all his efforts.

“Now *love*, in the language of the Bible, means the same as it does every where else. It includes not merely the simple emotions of affection, but all the thousand words and actions that are proofs of love. The man then begins to love, who makes up his mind to obey, and commences the course of obedience; for obedience forms a part of love, as much as the emotions. When we see a son anxiously striving to meet all the wishes and wants of a parent, seeking his society, defending his good name, promoting his interests, and devoted to his will, we say such a son loves his father most devotedly, though we have no other evidence of his feelings. Another son disobeys and disregards his father’s requirements, crosses his plans, neglects his interests, avoids his society, and disregards his requests. Suppose we could look into his heart, and perceive that it was sometimes visited with emotions of complacency and affection; still we should say he did not love his father, and bring his conduct as the proof.

“Another case might be supposed, of a son who, from the cold dictates of duty, and with the fear of a slave, performed all the external duties of affection, while in his heart he feared and disliked the parent who controlled him. These actions might deceive us; but if the father could read the heart of his child, his services would not be received as proofs of love. In all these cases, there is a deficiency, so that love would not be said to exist till it was supplied. Love, then, includes both emotions and corresponding actions.

“But as the existence of strong feelings of affection, always does produce actions to correspond, it often occurs that the emotions are spoken of as the principle, and the actions as the fruits. At other times, the actions that are prompted by affection, are called by the name of love; as for example, ‘This is the love of God, that ye keep my commandments.’ As if a father should say to his son, ‘your love is shown by your obedience to my wishes;’ or, ‘obedience is love.’

“It seems to me, therefore, that the control of our emotions is within our power, and though we cannot control them by direct volition, as men control

the movement of their limbs, we have an indirect control that is as efficient, and as properly a subject of divine legislation, as external actions."

As Miss B. despatches the whole subject of human ability in the preceding paragraph, we must try to make our remarks as brief as we can. In the first place, we would ask her on what ground she is so confident that God never requires any thing from man, but what he has *full ability* to perform? Does she appeal to it as a self-evident principle, obvious to the intuition of every man of common sense, or is she able to establish it by convincing arguments? If on either ground it can be rendered certain, it decides the controversy. But that it cannot be admitted as an intuitive, self-evident truth, is manifest from the fact that there always have been multitudes who utterly deny the truth of the position. There are now hundreds, and thousands of intelligent men who do not receive this as an axiom, but who believe, that although in the state in which man was created, God could require nothing from him but what he had full ability to perform; yet that now when he has voluntarily corrupted himself, the same axiom will not apply. If man has by a wilful rebellion destroyed his susceptibility of loving God, does the obligation of God's law forever cease, and is man under no obligation to obey his Creator any more? Can a creature thus free himself from the obligation of the divine law, by the act of sinning? Then Miss B. ought not to have assumed this principle, for in this argument it is a mere *petitio principii*; it takes for granted the main point in controversy. And this is continually done by all who are asserters of man's *full ability* to do the will of God. They seem to consider all who deny their favourite position as belying the connections of their own minds. We do not remember to have seen the shadow of an argument to demonstrate the position, and we are fully persuaded that the maintainers of depraved man's *full ability* to do the will of God, have confounded together two things which are entirely distinct; and have got into the habit of applying to one case, a maxim which is only true in relation to another case. It is true, and admitted by all men in their senses, that when the will to perform an act is good, and yet the ability is wanting, the person stands acquitted of blame in the judgment of all rational beings. And we admit that this plea, if truly made at the tribunal of God, will exculpate the person from all blame and punishment. As if a man sincerely wishes to relieve the indigent or to rescue one perishing, but cannot accomplish his wish, no blame can attach

to him for failing to do what he desired to do but could not. This maxim is universally true, and when fairly explained, is denied by no man who has common sense. This is the maxim current among men, which is admitted and acted on in courts of justice and in all the transactions of social life. It is a maxim recognized in every family on earth, pagan or Christian, and understood by every child five years old. Concerning ability thus explained, there is therefore no dispute, and can be none. But when this maxim, which is only true of actions consequent on volition, is applied to will itself, or to those moral dispositions in which character principally consists, it is utterly irrelevant. In regard to affections of the mind, the only inquiry among men is as to their existence and nature. In order to censure or condemn them they never go into any inquiry, whether the subject of them had power to feel otherwise. Whatever of moral disposition a man possesses is his own, and our judgment of him must be according to its nature, whether he could divest himself of it or not. The more inveterate a man's malignant temper, the more difficult to be reformed; of course the less ability has he to become a good and benevolent person; but surely he is not excusable in proportion to the strength of his malignancy. Some have endeavoured to make the distinction between the two cases by distinguishing ability into natural and moral; and while this distinction, though unphilosophical, was observed, no practical evil arose. But of late, many of the advocates of plenary ability have seen that their favourite maxim could not be consistently maintained, while any kind of inability was acknowledged. They have therefore dropped the distinction, and now hold that, in order to be accountable for disobedience, we must have full power to obey; or as Miss B. expresses it, "full ability to perform" what God requires. The *natural ability* which some maintain is precisely that ability which is requisite to render us culpable when we might have performed an act, mental or corporeal, if we had willed it; or when we have willed or desired to perform an act, and were unable for want, not of will, but of power, this inability exculpates us from all blame. This is the very case to which the maxim of common sense applies, and concerning which all men are agreed. But when they attempt to explain their *moral ability*, they find themselves inextricably puzzled. Ability is always relative to something to be performed. Moral ability, as distinguished from natural, can be nothing else than the disposition and will to perform such ex-



ternal acts of obedience as the law requires. But these very dispositions and volitions are themselves the very essence of moral obedience to the law of God, because his law requires the supreme love of the heart. If then love is the essence of what God requires, where shall we look for the ability to enable us to love? It has been by some asserted to be in the will, but this is to reverse the order of nature, according to the laws of which the will is governed by the affections, but not the affections by the will. Thus upon analysis, what has been called *moral ability* turns out to be the essence of obedience itself, instead of an ability to perform obedience; and *moral inability*, when analyzed in like manner, is nothing but sin in its essence, the want of a right disposition and a right will, the main things which the law of God requires. It is admitted, that when the inquiry is merely about external acts, this distinction may serve well enough. But when we carry our inquiries into the motives, affections, and volitions, it utterly fails of guiding us to satisfactory conclusions. Nevertheless, as it admits substantially, though not with philosophical accuracy, what we maintain to be the truth, we are not disposed to dispute the propriety of the distinction; for as its abettors hold that the sinner labours under an invincible moral inability, which, so far from excusing him, is the very ground of his culpability; they fully admit that the maxim, of which so much use has been made, does not apply to the affections and dispositions of the heart.

In the foregoing extract, Miss B. admits that the affections do not follow the volitions—that our willingness to love one to whom we are indifferent, will not produce love. So by willing to love God, we are not led in fact to love him. Thus far she is candid in stating the difficulty. But her very first attempt to untie the knot, involves her in a manifest absurdity. She says, “I do not suppose that the divine law requires any such attempts.” That is, the divine law does not require us to love God, or to will to love him. What does it require then? She tells us next, that “though we have not the control of our emotions by direct acts of volition, we have an indirect control of them, which is quite as powerful, and for which we are held accountable, and to which the requisitions of the Bible are directed.” Surely the good lady did not consider the import of her own words when she penned this sentence. If it had been uttered by some cold-blooded, old-school preacher, we should not soon hear the last of it. It would be trumpeted from the east to the west by many, as a doctrine hostile to all practical religion. The

errors of these few lines are enormous. It is asserted, contrary to the plainest dictates of common sense and experience, that an indirect control of our emotions is quite as powerful as that by direct volition. Take her own illustration in the next paragraph, from the case of a man whose affection is, by a vicious course on his part, alienated from a virtuous and amiable wife. How is he to recover his lost affection? "You would direct him," says she, "*to use the appropriate means of awakening affection.*" And then she prescribes a round of duties requiring much time and patient perseverance. Now supposing the good effect of these means were certain, (which we shall in due time show not to be the fact) it must be evident to every mind, that this indirect and round about method of controlling our affections is by no means as powerful as that by direct volition. But it is again asserted, that for this indirect control alone are we held accountable. This is a most extraordinary assertion. What, is not every man under immediate and constant obligations to love God with all his heart? If he is not, he is chargeable with no sin for not loving him until he has gone the whole round of duties necessary to be observed, to awaken his lost affection for his Maker. What is true of the instant duty of loving God is also true of repentance. God *now* commandeth all men every where to repent, and no man is excusable for his impenitence for a single hour; but according to the doctrine here taught, he is only accountable for using indirect means to bring himself to a right disposition of mind. This is precisely the error, which men of the new-school have been in the habit of charging on *dead* orthodoxy; and some of them have represented their great success which they modestly claim for their ministry above that of old-school preachers, to have been owing in part to their preaching *immediate* repentance. But Miss B. now teaches that we are only accountable for the use of the indirect means of producing right affections. Therefore, as a man cannot sin in circumstances where he is not accountable, the impenitent man commits no sin by neglecting to repent immediately. He is only accountable for the use of the indirect methods of producing repentance and the love of God.

And we are further informed in conformity with what was before said, "that to these indirect efforts to obtain right affections, the requisitions of the Bible are directed." We regret that Miss B. has not given us at least a specimen of these Bible requisitions, by a reference to chapter and verse

where they may be found; for as far as we are acquainted with the commandments of God contained in the Bible, they require the immediate and perfect performance of all duty. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy strength," &c.

But although the ingenious writer maintains, that by this indirect method of influencing the affections, we have quite as much control over them as we could have by direct volition, we are of opinion that this rests on her bare assertion, and has not a particle of evidence to support it. In most cases of alienated affection, we venture to say that her *recipe* would utterly fail. A man whose heart had been vitiated by a long course of base and criminal conduct, would not be at all likely to find a pure and virtuous affection enkindled towards a long ill-treated and hated companion. Such worthless and depraved men are not susceptible of pure and elevated affections of friendship. Besides, the most important part of the direction goes upon the supposition that the husband, instead of being deeply depraved has the disposition to do all that could be expected from the most virtuous man. He must be reformed before he can commence these means of reformation. In order to regain his affection, lost by his vicious conduct, he must "forsake his dissolute companions; reform his life; return to his wife and make suitable acknowledgments; commence all the duties of a kind and attentive husband," &c. "And we are authorized to assure him, that if he did take this course, inasmuch as his wife was excellent and lovely, it would inevitably result in the return of her affection to him, and the renewal of his own affection for her."—"Now I suppose," says she, "that we have the control of our affection, as it respects our Maker, to an equal extent, and that we are to exercise it by similar methods." All this is theory, and nothing more. We have been acquainted with hundreds of abandoned husbands, who had ceased to feel any affection for virtuous and amiable wives, but never knew one to reclaim himself and recover his affection by this process, which is so confidently recommended as infallible. Miss B. would reply, that the reason was, that the *appropriate means* were not used; and this brings us up to the very point of the difficulty; the supposition of the use of such means by such persons involves an absurdity. To produce a right state of mind, a right state of mind is required. It is our sincere belief, that virtuous emotions were never generated in the heart of an abandoned profligate, by any such pro-

cess, since the world began. Let us, however, consider the case of a sinner at enmity with his Maker, and deeply sunk into habits of vicious indulgence, in which he delights. What would Miss B. direct such an one to do? She could not tell him at once to love God or repent of his sins, because he cannot control his emotions by a direct act of volition; he is not accountable for not producing in himself these pious emotions, and the Bible does not require it of him. Well; what must he do? Why break off from his dissolute companions, and perform all the duties of a good man, &c. But he hates God and loves sin. How can he be induced to engage in the use of such means? Or if he does, with such a temper of mind, can Miss B. assure him that his lost affection to his Maker will return? Will external acts of duty proceeding from an evil heart enkindle love to God?

We know not what to call Miss Beecher's system of religion. It is far below any of the *isms* which divide the Christian world. Here is laid down a method of acceptance with God, having no reference to a Mediator; and a change of heart without the least aid from the Holy Spirit. In this whole concern the need of such grace is never hinted. "He puts himself in the way of duty; turns his mind to think on the folly of his ways; repents and resolves to do no more wickedly; studies the works and the word of his Maker; daily seeks to commune with Him; consecrate his time, property, and influence to his service, and in the course of obedience, emotions of affection soon glow in his bosom, and cheer and invigorate all his efforts." Here you have Miss Beecher's *recipe* for the conversion of a sinner; for changing enmity into love. One defect we cannot but notice. The sinner must be a well-disposed good man before he is converted, or he will never be disposed to do what she requires of him; unless he plays the hypocrite. Perhaps, too, the wicked heart, instead of breaking and yielding, and glowing with affection, might remain hard, and the person be conscious of unsubdued pride and enmity. We have witnessed many such cases, in which all external means had been used; and Miss B. does not prescribe for such a case. She might say, indeed, if the appropriate means were used in a proper manner, the effect would certainly follow. That is, if the sinner will believingly and piously read, pray, &c. he will be sure to be converted; love to God will soon glow in his heart. This much resembles the promises and prescriptions of empirical venders of catholicons and nostrums. There is just as much quackery in religion as in medicine.



In our review of Miss Beecher's Letters, our plan is to go straight on, and to remark on what we find, without looking forward to see if she may not have said something in a subsequent part to supply the defects or correct the errors which may be apparent. The consequence is, that in our progress, we find it necessary to give her credit sometimes for sounder opinions, than from her previous matter, we thought she entertained. Thus in her fourteenth letter, she avows her belief in the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit in producing a change of heart; of which, however, we heard not a word in the preceding letter, where she gave explicit directions for effecting this change. Her correspondent seems to have remarked the same deficiency in this respect, and to have brought to view the doctrine of our entire dependence on divine agency, as inconsistent with the account which she had given of conversion. She here attempts to reconcile this doctrine with the views which she had already exhibited. The method of reconciliation, as far as we apprehend her meaning, is, that in many cases men have *ability* to perform a certain thing, but the motives to it are not strong enough to excite them to vigorous action, when if by some foreign influence the strength of these motives is increased, we perform what we before had power to do, but which we never would have done had not this increase of the power of the motives taken place. And this is the office of the Holy Spirit, to give this increased energy to the motives which should influence the mind. This part of the subject, however, is treated very concisely, and we are left much in the dark, as to the precise nature of the efficiency ascribed to this supernatural agency. And upon a review of the sentiments of the former letter, on which we have remarked, we cannot see any necessity for such supernatural influence, any more in the case of producing in our own hearts love to God, than in the case of the reformed husband. No doubt, the great defect is the want of a prevailing motive to turn from sin unto God,—but what is the requisite motive? It is no other than love to God, and this is the very thing which she says any man may produce in himself by the use of appropriate means. We readily admit that, in a carnal mind which is enmity against God, this motive is not strong enough, because it has no existence. From what has been said, the reader will perceive how much light has been shed by this female theologian on the subject of human ability, concerning which there has been so much unprofitable controversy in our day.

The fifteenth letter is intended to show the reasonableness of our being required to love God supremely, by showing that his character is lovely. In order to make this clear, Miss B., who delights to go up to ultimate principles, undertakes to inform us what those particulars are which can be the causes of affection; and the reader will be surprized to learn that they are, *personal beauty, physical strength, intellectual superiority, the power of sympathy, the power of giving and appreciating benevolence and affection.* Each of these she dwells upon at some length, but we are beginning to grow weary of this species of philosophizing, and cannot consent to follow her through the details; especially, as we find nothing which it would be profitable to make the subject of remark.

The seventeenth and eighteenth letters, in this volume, are addressed to a Unitarian; and in them the writer displays no small intellectual acumen. She takes up and answers the objections commonly made by Unitarians to the doctrine of Trinitarians, with admirable adroitness. No one can impartially read the first of these letters without being convinced that Miss B. possesses a penetrating and discriminating mind. We have observed only one thing objectionable in these letters. We regret to find in this volume the old exploded heresy of the Apollinarists, stated as one of the opinions now entertained by some Trinitarians. We hope there are very few in the present day who are inclined to this untenable, and we must think, very absurd opinion. We believe that Miss Beecher herself has a leaning towards this long exploded heresy, and we cannot but feel astonished that a mind so perspicacious and penetrating, should become entangled in an error fraught with consequences so manifestly unreasonable. The very statement of the doctrine involves what is as impossible as that God should cease to exist. It implies that the Son of God, while incarnate, was limited in the exercise of his divine attributes, and that the divine nature was subject to all the infirmities of human appetite and passion, and suffered all the pains which were endured by the man Christ Jesus. This subject was so fully canvassed when the heresy was condemned in the ancient church, that we need only refer our readers to the writers of that age. If any one can embrace the opinion that the eternal God can suffer so as to be overwhelmed with distress, so as to pour out strong cries and tears, and to complain of being forsaken, we should deem it a useless labour to attempt to reason with such a per-

son. If the great God can be the subject of such sufferings, instead of being blessed for evermore, he is probably the most miserable of beings. But all such opinions border on the blasphemous; we have no patience to consider them.

What Miss B. says in the twentieth and twenty-first letters, respecting the refusal of the orthodox to recognize Unitarians as fellow Christians, is good: the Jews and Mohammedans have just as much claim to be admitted to the communion of the Christian church. Among the Unitarians in England, it became a question whether some members who had adopted deistical sentiments should be excluded from fellowship. It was a hard question: and determine it as they might, it ought to stop their mouths from complaining of the want of charity in the orthodox. Miss B. properly denies, that Unitarians have manifested more meekness and charity than the orthodox church. She also has some sensible remarks in answer to those who are for ever declaiming against "creeds."

We shall now bring this review, already sufficiently protracted, to a close, by a few remarks on the last letter in the book, which relates to "the points of difficulty and disagreement in the Presbyterian church." We are sorry that Miss B. thought it incumbent on her to meddle with this delicate subject. In the first place, her personal relations are not favourable to an impartial view of this controversy. In the next place, Miss B. has not had the opportunity of being sufficiently acquainted with the old-school party in the Presbyterian church, or she never would have attributed to them opinions which we are sure are not held by one in a thousand of this class, if by any. Indeed, the whole letter, though written in her usual style of self-confidence, and as though she understood every thing, is full of inaccuracy and error. For example, she says, "The evangelical Christians are not divided into sects on matters of doctrinal belief, but merely on matters of organization, church government, and external rites," which is far from being correct. Some of those sects which she enumerated as evangelical, are strictly Calvinistic in their doctrines, and will not admit into their communion those who deny this system. The Presbyterians and Cumberland Presbyterians (now a large body) differ in nothing but doctrine. The Methodists are professed Arminians, and on this account chiefly, are separated from Calvinistic sects; and the Reformed Methodists differ from Presbyterians in nothing of importance but in doctrine.

Her account of the Presbyterian church courts, as it relates to the constitution of Synods, shows her ignorance of the system. She says they are formed by a delegation from Presbyteries!

The opinions which she ascribes to Antinomians, according to which "good works and a blameless life are not demanded as evidence of piety," we have never met with; and as to the extreme of *Arminianism*, according to which "any supernatural aid of the Holy Spirit is not needed for the formation of Christian character," we have known none who approached nearer to it than Miss B. herself, and others of the ultra new-school party.

The account which she gives of the point on which parties differ in the Presbyterian church, is very unfair; and we might justly retort upon her much of what she has charged upon the Unitarians. She ought to have given the opinions of the parties in their own words, or at least in language such as they use. One party is represented as holding, "that the mind of man is so constituted by nature, that it loves to do wrong rather than to do right." This is not the opinion of any class or party. None hold that the tendency to evil is owing to the *constitution* of the mind. Again, she charges them with holding, "that there is a natural aversion to the character of God when truly seen." This may be a just view of the sentiments of a certain class in New England; but the great body of old-school theologians in the Presbyterian church, hold that depravity blinds the understanding, as well as hardens the heart. They hold that an unregenerate sinner is incapable, until enlightened by the Spirit of God, of seeing the true character of God. When she charges them with holding, "that many of the natural desires and affections of the human mind, that arise involuntarily, are wrong;" we do not know what she means. Does she mean to represent it as a peculiarity of old-school theologians, that they hold the natural desires of avarice, envy, ill-will, and lust, to be evil, even if the consent of the will to their gratification is not given? This they do hold, and we should be loth to admit that any in our country entertain a different opinion. "And that man by his own choice or efforts has no power to change this natural constitution." This they all hold with unwavering firmness, and believe that the contrary is not only repugnant to Scripture, but a doctrine replete with absurdity, hold it who may. "They suppose that until this constitution of mind is changed, it is impossi-



ble for a man to love God." To this we have nothing to except but the word *constitution*, which as we understand it, properly expresses the faculties which belong to the mind. If it be here used to express moral depravity existing in the mind, we admit it to be a correct view. And with the same exception we admit what follows in the account of the opinions of the orthodox as being not only their belief, but the plain declarations of God's word.

Our strongest objection, however, is to the description given of the opinions of the other class in the church. She tells us that those hold, "that men are made with the natural desire of happiness and fear of suffering, and that all their acts of choice have reference to gaining the one, or avoiding the other." Now we never heard of any one maintaining that man was not made with a natural desire of happiness. Surely this is not one of the discoveries of the new divinity. Some people, at least had an inkling of this before the new divinity was hatched. As to what is here linked in with this natural desire of happiness, that all acts of choice have reference to this natural desire, we willingly give it up to the new-school, not as a discovery of any of their acute theologians—for it is as old as man—but we utterly disclaim the doctrine as pure *selfishness*. When she says that these men hold, "that they do not like a thing because it is wrong, or dislike it because it is holy," the implication is that the other class of theologians hold the contrary—if not, why is this brought forward? None, that we know of, think that men choose sin merely because it is sin. There is no peculiarity here. And in what follows, there is so much vagueness, that we know not what the writer means, unless it is to assert what has been called the self-determining power of the will. Whether this is not a part of the system of the more modern new-school men, is doubtful. Certainly their scheme requires such an appendage. And as soon as they avow it, we will willingly give it up to them, with all its absurdities. "That the mind," says she, "is made so as to be able to understand, admire, and love the character of God, and to perceive the excellency and happiness of living to do good to others, instead of being supremely devoted to gaining good for self alone." Does she mean that the mind, in its depraved and fallen state, has the power ascribed to it? Then surely there is no need of regeneration. It is essentially right already. But how are we to reconcile what is here said about "living to do good to others," &c., with what

was before said about acts of choice having reference to the desire of happiness? But let this pass. Next we have what may be called the cardinal doctrine of new-schoolism, man's full ability to convert himself. She lays it down as a part of this creed,

"That God requires men to give him their affections and the service of their lives, and that they have *full power* to comply with this requisition."

In contrast with this perfect power attributed to man by this school, she represents their opponents as holding that man labours under a *physical inability*. Now we venture to say that in all the sermons or essays written by old-school men, she cannot find a single passage which uses this language. Nay; though they do hold that man is utterly unable to regenerate his own heart, they unanimously deny, that the inability under which he lies is properly called a *physical inability*. Why cannot Miss B. apply her own rules of equity to the dispute between the old and new-school parties, as well as to the Unitarian controversy? But she is not contented with representing the opinions from which she dissents in language foreign to their usage, but she with all imaginable coolness says, "I suppose one of these theories, when clearly exhibited, to be no other than the theory of *fatalism*, and the other is its counterpart, or the system of *free agency*." We regret, that Miss B. has not given us her definition of fatalism and free agency. Perhaps we should have agreed to admit, that old Calvinists hold what she calls fatalism; as several eminent systematic writers speak of what they call "Christian fate," by which they mean the same as predestination. But we deny that there is any propriety in applying this word to the opinions which she ascribes to a certain class of theologians. Fatalism is a blind necessity, unconnected with the plan or will of an intelligent being. If the mere certainty of events makes fatalism, then it will follow from every scheme which admits the foreknowledge of God; or if the reason why Miss B. thinks that the abettors of the old theology are fatalists, is because they maintain that our volitions have a cause which produces them with certainty, we are persuaded that she will not be able to escape fatalism but by taking refuge in absurdity. It is easy to bring such charges, but quite another thing to substantiate them. Until some evidence, therefore, is adduced to establish the fatalism of these men, we shall consider all such charges of the nature of a calumny, intended to render certain opinions odious, by giving them a bad name.

We are more and more persuaded that Miss B. is an advocate for the self-determining power of the will. "The mind," says she, "has the same power to choose what is not chosen, as to choose as it does." Now in one sense this is true; there was no physical obstacle to another choice. If the mind had been *so disposed* it could have chosen otherwise; that is if other motives had operated, or existing motives with greater force, another choice might have been made. And who ever denied this? But she must mean, that all circumstances and motives remaining unchanged, the mind might have made another choice. This is precisely the doctrine of the self-determining power of the will. Without entering into this intricate controversy we would ask Miss B. why the person who acts without reason or motive, is more a free agent than one who uniformly acts under the influence of motives? We think that it can be shown that such actions, if they can exist, are more fitly referred to fate, than such as are the effect of rational choice.

Miss B. seems to have little studied the controversies which agitate the Presbyterian church, or she would not confine the difficulty to a difference of opinion, merely on the subject of human ability. There are many other points of difference of even more importance than this. In stating the difference too, she falls into the same vagueness and inaccuracy as before. "Those who fully teach," says she, "what I call the system of free agency, hold that depravity consists in *the want of the principle of piety.*" Now we ask, do these old-school men deny this? Do they not with one accord assert it as being the very fountain from which the streams of depravity flow? We are surprised to hear Miss B. saying that depravity consists in *the want of piety.* The maxim of her party is, that all sin consists in *acts*, voluntary acts; and that there is no iniquity in defect. It is a purely old Calvinistic opinion, that the *formal* nature of sin is *defect.* But we cease to expect accurate statements from Miss B. We suspect that she is inclined to meddle with too many things, and with things out of her reach. We are glad that Paul has said so emphatically, "I suffer not a woman to speak in the church;" and although he has not prohibited them from teaching by writing for the public, yet we cannot but think, if he were now on earth, he would discourage the female sex, however gifted or learned, from mixing themselves in theological and ecclesiastical controversies. We would, therefore respectfully recommend it to Miss Beecher, to choose some

other field for the exercise of her talents, and cease her efforts to untie the gordian knots of theology and metaphysics. As she has studied the art of education and is said to excel in that department, let her be content to shine as an eminent instructor of the youth of her own sex. Or if that would be too great a restraint upon her prolific mind, we sincerely advise her to follow the example of Hannah More, and expatiate as widely as she will in the extensive field of Christian Ethics, Practical Piety, and Christian Manners.

We trust that we have in no instance departed from Christian courtesy in this review. As reviewers, we have been placed in a new attitude, and if we have in any respect violated the laws of politeness, we are very sorry; for although we differ widely from Miss B. on many points, we entertain a high respect for her talents and her amiable temper. But we hope she will consent to leave theological, and ecclesiastical contention to male polemics, who delight in such warfare; or, who feel that it is a work which they are bound in duty to perform; and if our advice should have any influence in inducing her to adopt a course so well suited to her sex and her profession, our end will be attained; for as to converting her to our opinions, we are not so presumptuous as to cherish such a hope.

ART. IV.—*Martin Luther at the Diet of Worms.\**

*Archibald Alexander*

As soon as it was determined that Luther should appear at Worms, his enemies endeavoured to bring it about that he should go thither without the imperial safe-conduct, but with that of the elector alone. In this way, they thought that Luther would either be deterred, or that he might more easily be seized. But the elector did not countenance this proposal of the emperor, and upon this was issued on the 26th of March, 1521, the imperial citation to appear at Worms within twenty-one days, with a safe-conduct, together with the Bull and the discourse of Aleander. The former had this remarkable superscription: "To the Reverend, Pious, and beloved Doctor Martin Luther, of the Augustinian order;" and neither of the instruments contained any

\* From the German of Marheineke. 1831.