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ART. I. — REVISION MOVEMENT.

IN entering upon a brief discussion of the revision movement, it is due to ourselves and to those who entertain the same opinions, to say that we hail with pleasure all efforts to disseminate the Holy Scriptures, and all commentaries, translations, paraphrases, notes, and auxiliaries of whatever kind, conducive to a proper understanding of the Scriptures. To spread a knowledge of the truth abroad, is the great duty of all Christians—of all good men. And regarding the Bible as the great chart of all human rights, its moral code as the only perfect summary of all duties, as a guide to all wise legislation, and the principles taught and illustrated in its sacred pages, as the only hope of the peace, perpetuity and prosperity of our nation; we regard it the sacred duty of every patriot to aid in propagating it through the length and breadth of our land. It is worth more than all human constitutions, all political mass meetings, philosophic theories of government, or learned and eloquent political discussions. The fact that every good man loves the Bible and every bad man hates it, speaks volumes. The noble origin and the high destiny it claims for man, is the source of his highest aspirations and of his holiest inspirations. Here is the great secret of his wonderful progress in civilization, in literature, art and science. Substitute for the light of the Bible the dark dreams of Atheism, Pantheism or Infidelity, and man in his own estimation placed on a level with the brute will soon assimilate to the brute. History and philosophy alike verify this fact.

As Christians and patriots, then, we stand forth the humble but uncompromising advocates of the Bible. We regard all efforts of

ART. IV.—EDWARDS AND THE THEOLOGY OF NEW ENGLAND.

THE fundamental principle of the philosophy of Edwards, that which seems to have governed the rest, and determined his whole scheme, was on the subject of causation. He denies that the creatures are endowed with any properly causative force; and attributes all effects to God, as the immediate and only cause. We design, in this article, to examine this principle, and trace its relation to his theology, and to subsequent theological developments in New England.

Edwards' theory is very fully stated, in the argument on identity, which occurs in his treatise on Original Sin. An English writer in the controversy with Taylor, of Norwich, spoke of human depravity as "a natural consequence and effect of Adam's first sin." Upon this Taylor says, "Here 'R. R.' supposes the course of nature to be a proper cause, which will work, and go on by itself, without God, if he lets or permits it; whereas the course of nature, separate from the agency of God, is no cause, or nothing. If he shall say, 'But God first sets it to work, and it goes on of itself,' I answer;—that the course of nature should continue itself, or go on to operate by itself, any more than at first produce itself, is absolutely impossible. But suppose it goes on by itself, can it stop itself? Can it work any otherwise than it doth? Can the course of nature cease to generate? Or can it produce a holy instead of a sinful nature, if it pleases? No advocate for original sin will affirm this. Therefore if it is a cause, it is a passive cause, which cannot stop, or avoid producing its effects. And if God sets it to work, and it cannot cease working, nor avoid producing its effects till God stops it, then all its effects in a moral account however must be assigned to him who first set it to work. And so our sinfulness will be chargeable upon God."*

The position thus assumed by Taylor—that God is the only cause, is by Edwards admitted, and vindicated with zeal, as will be abundantly seen in what follows. He undertakes to show that there is no real identity possible, in things which exist in different time and place—that the moon for example which exists at the present moment, has no identity with that which existed

*Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin. Newcastle, (Eng.) 1845. p. 189.

one moment since, or shall exist the next instant. It is not the same; but each is a new and distinct creation; and identical in no sense, except that God has determined them to be accounted one. The cause of the continued existence of every created substance "must be one of these two; either the *antecedent existence* of the same substance, or else the *power* of the *Creator*.* But it can't be the *antecedent existence* of the same substance. For instance, the existence of the body of the *moon* at this present moment, can't be the *effect* of its existence at the last foregoing moment. For not only was what existed the last moment, no active cause, but wholly a passive thing; but this also is to be considered, that no cause can produce effects in a *time* and *place* in which itself is *not*. 'Tis plain, nothing can exert itself or operate, *when* and *where* it is not existing. But the moon's past existence, was neither *where* nor *when* its present existence is.

Therefore the existence of created substances, in each successive moment must be the effect of the *immediate* agency, will and power of *God*." He then supposes the objection, that "the established course of nature is sufficient to continue existence, where existence is once given;" to which he replies, that the course of nature is nothing, separate from God, and that, "as Dr. Taylor says, 'God the original of all being, is the only cause of all natural effects.' "A father, according to the course of nature begets a child; an oak according to the course of nature produces an acorn or a bud; so according to the course of nature, the former existence of the trunk of the tree is followed by its new or present existence. In the one case and the other, the new effect is consequent on the former, only by the *established laws and settled course of nature*; which is allowed to be nothing but the continued immediate efficiency of *God*, according to a constitution that he has been pleased to establish. Therefore as our author greatly urges, that the child and the acorn, which come into existence according to the *course of nature*, in consequence of the prior existence and state of the parent and the oak, are truly immediately created or made by God; so must the existence of each created person and thing at each moment of it be from the immediate *continued* creation of God. It will certainly follow from these things that God's preserving created things in being, is perfectly equivalent to a *continued creation*, or to his creating those things out of nothing, at *each moment* of their existence." Hence he concludes "that God's upholding created substance, or causing its existence in each successive moment, is altogether equivalent to an immediate production out of nothing, at each moment. * * * Consequently God produces the effect as much from *nothing*, as if there had been

*The Italics throughout are Edwards' own.

nothing *before*. So that this effect differs not at all from the first creation, but only *circumstantially*; as in *first* creation there had been no such act and effect of God's power *before*; whereas his giving existence afterwards, *follows* preceding acts and effects of the same kind, in an established order."

"Now, in the next place, let us see how the *consequence* of these things is to my present purpose. If the existence of created *substance*, in each successive moment, be wholly the effect of God's immediate power in that moment, without any dependence on prior existence, as much as the first creation out of *nothing*, then what exists at this moment by this power, is a *new effect*; and simply and absolutely considered, not the same with any past existence, though it be like it, and follows it according to a certain established method. And there is no identity or oneness in the case, but what depends on the *arbitrary* constitution of the Creator, who by his wise sovereign establishment so unites these successive new effects, that he *treats them as one*, by communicating to them like properties, relations and circumstances; and so leads us to regard and treat them as *one*. When I call this an *arbitrary constitution*, I mean, that it is a constitution which depends on nothing but the *divine will*; which divine will depends on nothing but the *divine wisdom*. In this sense, the whole *course of nature*, with all that belongs to it, all its laws, and methods, and constancy, and regularity, continuance, and proceeding, is an *arbitrary constitution*. For it don't at all *necessarily* follow, that because there was sound, or light, or color, or resistance, or gravity, or thought, or consciousness, or any other dependent thing, the last moment, that therefore there shall be the like at the next. All dependent existence whatsoever is in a constant flux, ever passing and returning; renewed every moment, as the colors of bodies are every moment renewed by the light that shines upon them; and all is constantly proceeding from God, as light from the sun. 'In him we live, and move, and have our being.'

"Thus it appears, if we consider matters strictly, there is no such thing as any identity or oneness in created objects, existing at different times, but what depends on God's *sovereign constitution*. And so it appears, that objection we are upon, made against a supposed divine constitution, whereby *Adam* and his posterity are viewed and treated as *one*, in the manner and for the purposes supposed, as if it were *not consistent with truth*, because no constitution can make those to be *one* which are not one; I say it appears, that this objection is built on a false hypothesis; for it appears that a *divine constitution* is the thing which makes truth, in affairs of this nature."

To render his meaning if possible still more clear and explicit, he illustrates it in a marginal note. The rays of the sun falling on the moon, and reflected from it, are none of them the same for

two consecutive instants of time. "Therefore the brightness or lurid whiteness of this body is no more numerically the same thing with that which existed in the preceding moment, than the sound of the wind that blows now, is individually the same with the sound of the wind that blew just before. * * * And if it be thus with the brightness or color of the moon, so it must be with its solidity, and every thing else belonging to its substance, if all be, each moment, as much the immediate effect of a new existence or application of power. The matter may perhaps be in some respects still more clearly illustrated by this: The images of things in a glass. * * * The image constantly renewed by new successive rays, is no more numerically the same, than if it were by some artist put on anew with a pencil, and the colors constantly vanishing as fast as put on. * * * * * And truly so the matter must be with the bodies themselves, as well as their images. They also cannot be the same, with an absolute identity, but must be totally renewed every moment, if the case be as has been proved, that their present existence is not, strictly speaking, at all the effect of their past existence; but is wholly every instant, the effect of a new agency or exertion of the power of the cause of their existence. If so the existence caused is every instant a new effect; whether the cause be light, or immediate divine power, or whatever it be."*

Certain words and phrases are used by Edwards in a peculiar sense in this connection. One of these is 'nature.' This word is frequently employed by writers in a loose and inaccurate way, as expressing the mere energies of the characteristics of substances. But does it mean nothing more? We believe that both in the usage of accurate writers, and in the common apprehension, it includes also the idea of power. It expresses the attributes or powers, in their relation to the substances, viewed as potential causes, whence they derive their several energy and direction. Such is the sense in which it is invariably employed in the Scriptures. Thus, Rom. 2: 14, "When the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves. Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." In this place, the apostle by 'nature' indicates a *power* within, which he otherwise calls "the law written in their hearts," the minister of which is "conscience," testifying against the corruptions which they love, and in behalf of God's sovereignty and holiness, which they reject. So in 1 Cor. 11: 14, "Doth not even nature itself teach you, that if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him;" to nature is here attributed the potentiality of a teacher. Again, Eph. 2: 3, "Ye were by nature children of wrath." Here nature

*Edwards on Original Sin. Part 4, ch. 3.

is the designation of a power, which Paul elsewhere (Rom. 7:25) calls "a law of sin;" and which generates death. In the same sense the word is used by Augustine, and by Calvin, and other Reformed writers. This definition however is in direct antagonism to the whole view here taken by Edwards; and he consequently adopts a different one, and employs the word accordingly. "Nature is nothing, separate from the agency of God;" and "the settled course of nature" is "nothing but the continued immediate efficiency of God." Of the propagation of corruption, he says, "'Tis as much agreeable to an established course and order of nature, that since Adam, the head of the race of mankind, the root of the great tree with many branches springing from it, was deprived of original righteousness, the branches should come forth without it. Or, if any dislike the word *nature*, as used in this last case, and instead of it, choose to call it a *constitution*, or *established order* of successive events—the alteration of the name won't in the least alter the state of the present argument. Where the name, *nature*, is allowed without dispute, no more is meant than that established method and order of events, settled and limited by divine wisdom."*

'Constitution' is another word employed by our author in a peculiar sense. By it he does not mean, a system of fundamental principles, adopted at the beginning, by the Creator, in harmony with which he, in creating the universe, made and endowed the creatures; but an act of mere executive sovereignty, in order of nature subsequent to creation, by which he is supposed by decree to constitute or make the creatures to be something else than essentially and creatively they were. Thus, the color of the moon, its solidity, and every thing else belonging to its substance, he affirms to be at each moment a new and immediate effect of creative power, which "differs not at all from the first creation, but only *circumstantially*; as in *first* creation there had been no such act and effect of God's power *before*; whereas his giving existence afterwards *follows* preceding acts and effects of the same kind in an established order." Thus "what exists at this moment, by this power, is a *new effect*, and simply and absolutely considered, not the same with any past existence; though it be like it, and follows it according to a certain established method." But by a sovereign act of God, these things, thus created different and distinct, are decreed to be one. This decree is what Edwards calls, a constitution, and is, he says, "the thing which makes truth in affairs of this sort." In reference to the Pelagian objection to the propagation of sin, he says that it "supposes there is a oneness in created beings, whence qualities and relations are derived down from past existence, distinct from, and prior to any oneness that can be sup-

*Edwards on Original Sin. Part 4, ch. 2.

posed to be founded on divine constitution. Which is demonstrably false," since each moment, what seems the same with some preceding existence, is in fact a new creation, and "simply and absolutely considered, not the same with any past existence;" but is made so by a constitution of God, who "so unites these successive new effects that he treats them as one." As created, then, they are not one; so that this "constitution" is superimposed after creation, and is not the law of creation itself.

In the places which we have quoted, Edwards denies in various forms, the doctrine of creature causation—the possibility of any power in a created thing, apart from the immediate energy of God. He asserts that "the course of nature is no proper active cause, which will work and go on by itself without God, if he lets and permits it;" that "separate from the agency of God, it is nothing;" that "God, the original of all being, is the *only cause* of all material effects;" that the course of nature "is nothing but the continued immediate efficiency of God." To the same effect is what, in another place, he says, respecting the propagation of corruption from Adam: "'Tis true, that God by his own almighty power, creates the soul of the infant; and 'tis also true, as Dr. Taylor often insists, that God, by his immediate power, forms and fashions the body of the infant in the womb; yet he does both according to that *course of nature* which he has been pleased to establish. The course of nature is demonstrated by late improvements in philosophy, to be indeed what our author says it is, viz: nothing but the established order and operation of the Author of nature. And though there be the immediate agency of God in bringing the soul into existence in generation, yet it is done, according to the method and order established by the Author of nature, as much as his producing the bud or the acorn of the oak. * * * 'Tis agreeable to the established course and order of nature, that since Adam the head of the race of mankind, the root of that great tree with many branches springing from it, was deprived of original righteousness, the branches should come forth without it. * * * Where the name *nature* is allowed without dispute no more is meant than that established method and order of events, settled and limited by divine wisdom. If here it should be said that God is not the author of sin, in giving men up to sin, who have already made themselves sinful; because when men have once made themselves sinful, their continuing so, and sin's prevailing in them, and becoming more and more habitual, will follow *in a course of nature*: I answer, let that be remembered, which this writer so greatly urges, in opposition to them that suppose original corruption comes in a course of nature, viz: 'that the course of nature is nothing without God.' He utterly rejects the *course of nature's* being a proper active cause, which will work and go on of itself, *without God*, if he lets or permits it; but

affirms that the course of nature separate from the agency of God, is *no cause*, or *nothing*; and, that the course of nature should continue itself, or go on to operate by itself, any more than at first produce itself, is *absolutely impossible*.* These positions would seem to be unequivocal. Taylor's design in the places quoted by Edwards, was to deny such a causative relation between parent and child as might convey corruption to the latter. To this intent it is that he says that "nature is nothing," that "God is the only cause," and that the child in its entire being is an immediate creation of God, and as such free from taint. The premises thus assumed by Taylor, Edwards accepts without reservation; and only avoids his conclusions, by taking the ground, that God can by a constitution make things to be true, which in themselves are not true.

The same view of creative causation is involved in Edwards' doctrine of identity. If it be so, that the creature that now is, instantly vanishes, to give place to another equally evanescent, it is evident that there is no room for the exertion of any power by the substance thus so transient. It, and all cotemporaneous substances are annihilated at the same instant, and give place to others, which as they are immediate productions of creative power, must receive all their primary impressions, and realize their first impulses from the creative energy; and these alone they ever feel. For with the first instant of existence, they are gone, and others fill their place. In fact, the position is formally stated, as unquestionable and fundamental, "that no cause can produce effects in a time and place in which itself is not;" "nothing can exert itself or operate when and where it is not existing;" an axiom of the Aristotelian philosophy, which, in whatever sense true, is certainly false in that intended; since it is here expressly designed to separate all present created existences and their phenomena from any efficient relation whatever, either to their antecedents or successors. In fact, the axiom as thus employed, is contradictory to any conceivable exercise of power by a creature; for the very idea of power in exercise, is that of an energy put forth of the substance in which it dwells; and perpetuated after the cessation of the impulse in which it originated.

The conclusion to which the argument of Edwards is directed, renders his meaning, if possible, yet more unquestionable. He is combating the objection that the imputation of Adam's sin goes upon the false assumption that he and we are one. He urges that "the objection supposes there is a oneness in created beings, whence qualities and relations are derived down from past existence, distinct from and prior to any oneness that can be supposed to be founded on divine constitution. Which

*Edwards on Original Sin. Part 4, ch. 2.

is demonstrably false ; and therefore the objection wholly falls to the ground." That is, since a given existence—a man or a tree—"simply and absolutely considered, is not the same with any past existence, though it be like it, and follows it according to a certain established method," and its identity, in successive periods of time, is constituted by the mere sovereign establishment of God ; and this divine constitution "is the thing which makes truth in affairs of this nature ;" it follows, that the same authority can decree us to be one with Adam ; and such decree shall make this to be truth in the case—shall make us to be really one with him.

We are well aware that it is impossible to reconcile these opinions, with doctrines which are maintained by Edwards, in other parts of his works. Inconsistency is the common characteristic of error. And we are not interested in these, as the sentiments of Edwards ; so much, as that they are the principles which, put forth with the authority of his great name, have revolutionized the theology of New England.

The scheme has an air of piety, by which Edwards was betrayed. It seems to honor God, by making things dependent on him, in the most absolute and intimate manner. It in reality dishonors him ; denying his power, his truth and his holiness. It limits his power, by assuming that he cannot create a substance endowed with true perpetuated power. Thus, in fact, the doctrine is irreconcilable with the real existence of creation at all. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What is meant by this statement ? It asserts the production of substances, of given form, and other specific attributes. These attributes are powers, which we intuitively attribute to the substances. Such is the constitution of our minds—such the impress stamped upon them, by the Creator, that we universally, necessarily, and immediately, identify the effects which we find attaching to a substance, with powers which we attribute to it as of its essence, constituting it an efficient cause of these effects. But when we attempt to describe the heavens and the earth, and in so doing enumerate these powers or properties, we are told in respect to each one—"It is nothing but a continued immediate efficiency of God, according to a constitution that he has been pleased to establish." By the time the description, and the application of this principle is completed, the creation has vanished ; there remains nothing but the power of God, putting into operation, ("we speak as a man") a series of phantasmagoria, for the deception of the observer ! Nay, here again the principle follows us. If its testimony is adequate to set aside all our intuitive apprehensions, so as even to overthrow the testimony of consciousness to our real and continuous existence and identity, through the successive periods of our life, there is no reason that can be assigned, why we should rely on the testimony of that same consciousness, to the reality of our present existence. If

all effects are to be referred to God as the sole and immediate cause, so must the self-consciousness which we realize; and before we are aware, our conscious spirit is robbed of existence—the universe is blotted out—and nothing remains, after the juggle has wrought, but God, and the phenomena of his existence! His word testifies that he has formed a creation. It declares that he has given to his creatures powers to be exercised by them—to his intelligent creatures, powers, for the right use of which they must account to him. We are assured, that having finished the creation, God rests from all his works. (Gen. 2: 2, 3. Heb. 4: 4.) The indelible conviction of the potentiality of our own nature, and that of all the creatures, is enstamped by the hand of God on the soul of man. Upon the right or wrong use of these powers by us, and all moral agents, are suspended the destinies of eternity. The alternative is, the rejection of all this testimony, or, of the theory in question.

In fact, here we have that form of pantheism, which makes God the only real existence; of which the universe of mind and matter is the phenomenon. We know nothing of substances, except their properties or powers; and if these be referred to God as the immediate cause, there is nothing left, of which to predicate existence.

This doctrine, again, is utterly irreconcilable with the holiness of God. If it be so that God is “the only cause of natural effects,” there is, and can be, no other author of sin. He has said, that it is that abominable thing which he hates. He has declared that he is angry with the wicked every day; and that although he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn unto him and live—although he afflicts not willingly, yet he will visit the workers of iniquity with a fearful destruction; snares, fire, and brimstone, an horrible tempest—this shall be the portion of their cup. He has shown his abhorrence of sin, by the fearful tide of indignation, which was poured on the head of his own beloved Son, when our iniquities were laid upon him. Yet in contradiction to all this, the doctrine in question involves, immediately and unavoidably, the conclusion that so far from being hateful to God, he is the efficient and only cause of every sin of every creature.

We have incidentally stated that Edwards avoids this conclusion, by the distinction between a privative and a positive cause. He takes the ground that “in order to account for a sinful corruption of nature, yea, a total native depravity of the heart of man, there is not the least need of supposing any evil quality *infused*, *implanted*, or *wrought* into the nature of man, by any *positive* cause or influence whatever, either from God or the creature; or of supposing that man is conceived and born with a *fountain of evil* in his heart, such as is any thing properly positive.” He distinguishes in man two sets of principles—those which are “in-

separably connected with mere human nature," and certain "superior principles that were spiritual, holy and divine, wherein consisted the spiritual image of God, and man's righteousness and true holiness." "When man sinned, and broke God's covenant, and fell under his curse, these superior principles left his heart." "So light ceases in a room, when the candle is withdrawn; and thus man was left in a state of darkness, woful corruption, and ruin." "It were easy to show how every lost and depraved disposition of man's heart would naturally arise from this *privative* original; if here were room for it."

This is an entirely inadequate view of the nature of corruption and sin. Every creature of God, so far forth as it is his creature, is perfectly good. All its attributes and functions, and all their moral exercises are good. And if any creature be stripped of one half of these, still will it be good. Take the case of Adam. He was not endowed with one set of attributes by which he was constituted a man; and another, by which he was a holy being. Take from him those faculties, in the right exercise of which he displayed the image of his spotless Maker, and in so doing you rob him, not so much of holiness, as, of humanity. His holiness consisted in a right tendency and exercise of the moral powers with which he was endowed; and his apostasy and corruption was the reverse. So, too, in regard to the daily actions of men; the character is determined not by the nature or quantity, but the object of the exercises and affections. Hatred itself, however intense, is not sin; unless directed to a wrong object. God and all holy beings hate sin, with perfect hatred. Love, even, has in itself no virtue, except as it is bestowed aright. The wicked are lovers; but "lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," and therefore hateful to God. Corruption and sin, then, do not proceed from a privative cause; but from the movement of the moral powers in wrong direction. Here it is unavoidable that we recognize a positive cause, which has turned the moral powers of man into devious paths; making him to love sin, and hate holiness, and the Holy One. And shall we admit that the blessed God is in any form the author of this apostasy? Shall we for one moment tolerate the suggestion that—privative or positive—he is its only cause? "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed." James 1: 13, 14.

It will be said that Edwards asserts expressly—and truly, if the words be taken in a certain sense—that "only God's *withdrawing*, as it was highly proper and necessary that he should, from rebel man, being, as it were, driven away by his abominable wickedness, and men's natural principles being *left to themselves*, this is sufficient to account for his becoming entirely corrupt, and bent on

sinning against God." "Now for God so far to have the disposal of this affair, as to *withhold* those influences without which *nature* will be *corrupt* is not to be the *author of sin*." True; but of what value are such statements; when the author hastens to protest, that by nature he means the power of God; and the course of nature, "the established method and order of events, settled and limited by divine wisdom," "the continued immediate efficiency of God"? As we have already seen, he expressly repudiates any defence, which supposes any power in the sinner apart from the immediate agency of God—any cause but God.

In fact, should we allow the validity of Edwards' distinction between a privative and a positive cause, yet upon his theory of causation, the objection of Whitby applies with crushing force: "In the nature of the thing, and in the opinion of philosophers, *causa deficiens, in rebus necessariis, ad causam efficiens reducenda est*. In things necessary, the deficient cause must be reduced to the efficient." If there be no cause in the creature, except the power of God—if nature be nothing but the established order of his agency, it matters not what the form in which the cause of sin is stated, whether privative or positive; it at least is referred to God as its only cause. He is supposed to have withheld from the creature, powers essential to give his actions a character of holiness; and at the same time communicated to him impulses which necessarily developed the opposite result. Thus is God made the author of sin.

Edwards' doctrine of identity stands or falls with this theory of causation. He supposes us shut up to the alternative that the cause of the continued existence of a substance is either "the antecedent existence of the same substance," or else "the immediate agency, will and power of God." But the fact is that the very idea of an effect is, something distinct from the cause, and abiding after it. It is something effected—something done, and so remaining. And the idea of creative causation is that of the production of substance—of something that exists and has powers; and not of mere transient shadows. Such is the scripture idea of creation. "He spoke and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." Psalm 33: 9. The reason of the present existence of any creature, is not then its antecedent existence; nor is it the immediate agency of God. But it now is, because God at the first made it; gave it substance, and so determined its continuance; and having thus created it, now sustains it by that providential care in which "he upholdeth all things by the word of his power," thus continuing to the creatures the same being which he bestowed at first. Nor does identity consist in an arbitrary relation, determined by a decretive act of God's sovereignty, at variance with the creative plan, and contrary to the essential reality; but in the continuous

evolution of unchanging forces, implanted by creative power, in conformity with sovereign wisdom.

Edwards' theory of identity, elaborated as it was, to meet objections to the doctrine of original sin, determined the form in which he held that doctrine. His view is that we were not natively one with Adam, in any such sense as would involve the derivation of qualities and relations from him; since not only at each instant are we new and distinct creations, emanating from the immediate power of God—but in particular, the phenomena of generation are nothing but the established order in which by his own immediate agency, and not by any creative causation, he brings into existence both body and soul. Yet by the assertion of his arbitrary sovereignty, God has put forth a constitution by which the state of the case "simply and absolutely considered" is set aside, and we are constituted one with him. We do not now enter into the question of the soundness of this view. The relation however which it sustains to his doctrine of identity, is such that it stands or falls with that theory.

Not only was the theory of Edwards a departure from the received doctrine of the Reformed churches on this point, but in another respect he deviated, on a question in itself of much more importance. Whilst he retained the name, he in reality denied the doctrine of imputation. He teaches our responsibility for Adam's sin to be, in the order of nature, subsequent to, and based upon our own corrupt assent to that sin. Thus he says: "The first being of an evil disposition in the heart of a child of *Adam*, whereby he is disposed to *approve* of the sin of his first father, as fully as he himself approved of it, when he committed it, or so far as to imply a full and perfect *consent* of heart to it, I think is not to be looked upon as a consequence of the imputation of that first sin, any more than the full consent of *Adam's* own heart in the act of sinning; which was not consequent on the imputation of his sin to himself, but prior to it in the order of nature. Indeed the derivation of the evil disposition to the hearts of *Adam's* posterity, or rather the co-existence of the evil disposition, implied in *Adam's* first rebellion, in the *root* and *branches*, is a consequence of the *union* that the wise author of the world has established between Adam and his posterity; but not properly a *consequence* of the imputation of his sin; nay, rather *antecedent* to it, as it was in Adam himself. The first depravity of heart, and the imputation of that sin, are both the consequences of that established union; but yet in such order, that the evil disposition is *first*, and the charge of guilt *consequent*; as it was in the case of Adam himself."* Again, in reply to the objection, that "sorrow and shame are only for personal sin," he says: "Nor is it a thing strange and

*Edwards on Original Sin. Part 4, ch. 3.

unheard of, that men should be ashamed of things done by others, whom they are nearly concerned in. I am sure it is not *unscriptural*; especially when they are justly looked upon in the sight of God, who sees the disposition of their hearts, as fully *consenting* and *concurring*." Speaking of the supposed absurdity of the race being held to partake of the sin of the apostasy, he says that there is nothing absurd in such a union "truly and properly availing to such a consequence, * * * and by virtue of the full consent of the hearts of *Adam's* posterity to that first apostasy. And therefore the sin of the apostasy is not theirs, merely because God *imputes* it to them; but it is truly and properly theirs, and on that *ground* God imputes it to them." Again—"The affair of *derivation* of the natural corruption of mankind in general, and of their consent to and participation of the primitive and common apostasy, is not in the least intermeddled with, or touched, by any thing meant or aimed at, in the true scope and design of this place of Ezekiel;" (Ezek. 18: 1-20). So, he speaks of the teachings of the word of God "concerning the derivation of a depravity and guilt from *Adam* to his posterity."* In these latter places the order of enumeration implies what the others assert—an imputation of the guilt of the first sin, because of the actual corruption, which is found in every heart. It is not our business to reconcile this position with others which Edwards maintains. That this was his doctrine on the subject of the imputation of Adam's sin, seems however unquestionable. Not only does he assert it again and again, in unambiguous terms, but quotes with approval the statements of Stapfer on the subject; which confessedly were at variance with the received doctrine of the Reformed.

This doctrine of mediate imputation—although, practically, it or something similar is inevitable, upon the adoption of Edwards' theory of identity—is irreconcilable on logical principles with that theory. If there be no real identity among things, except by the process which Edwards designates by the phrase, "divine constitution," and if by such a constitution we and Adam are one, it follows, that in the same sense precisely in which the sin of eating the forbidden fruit was chargeable to him, subsequently, it was chargeable to us. But although Edwards was led astray, by the subtlety of his own philosophy, his soul instinctively recoiled from his conclusions, and uttered an unconscious but powerful protest against the sufficiency of his plea—against the adequacy of a scheme, which based the whole tremendous consequences involved in original sin, upon a ground so unreal as a divine constitution, transforming the facts, and making things to be absolutely identical, which were creatively and essentially distinct. He therefore has recourse to the notion of mediate imputation, to protect himself .

*Ibid. Part. 4, ch. 4.

from the difficulties which his theory had created. He thus relieves his consciousness respecting the rectitude of the scheme which he had contrived, at the expense of his own consistency, and of the doctrine which he had set himself to defend. Such was the consequence in the case of Edwards; and such, or like it, will be the result, whenever the attempt is made to vindicate the doctrine of original sin, by recourse to any system of arbitrary constructions, or legal intendments, upon anything short of a real and native inbeing of Adam's posterity in him, as the head and cause of the race.

The first advocate of the doctrine respecting imputation which was thus espoused by Edwards, was Joshua de la Place, (Placaens) a professor in the French Reformed Seminary at Saumur. He taught that original sin consists solely in the depravity of nature, which we inherit from Adam. And when the French National Synod, which met in Charenton in 1644, condemned this, as a heresy demanding discipline, Placaens endeavored to evade the force of the judgment, by distinguishing between mediate and immediate imputation; the former consisting in an imputation of Adam's sin, based upon our corruption of nature, by which we consent to and approve that sin, thus becoming accomplices after the fact. This kind of imputation he professed to admit; whilst he rejected the idea of an immediate imputation, based upon the relation in which Adam stood to us.* The view thus taken by Placaens, met with no countenance at the time; and in it he had but few followers, until the rise of Edwards and Hopkins. Of the school of the latter, Edwards was the real founder—the Socrates. "As he had rejected all of imputation but the name, it is no matter of surprise that his followers soon discarded the term itself, and contented themselves with expressing the substance of his doctrine in much fewer words, viz: that God, agreeably to a general constitution, determined that Adam's posterity should be like himself; born in his moral image, whether that was good or bad."†

Two other doctrines, occupied a conspicuous and controlling place in the Edwardian theology. The first is that all holiness or virtue consists in disinterested benevolence; or, as expressed by Edwards, in "love to being, as such;" and all sin in selfishness. The second springs from this, and is the optimistic theory. If holiness consists in disinterested benevolence, then God, as a holy being, in creating the universe, is bound to devise and bring into existence the best possible system—that which will secure the greatest happiness to the greatest number.

Nor may we here overlook the doctrine of Edwards on the moral character of actions: "One main foundation of the reasons

*Turretin. Locus 9, Qu. 9: 4-6:

†Dr. A. Alexander, Princeton Review, vol. 2: p. 455.

which are brought to establish the forementioned notions of liberty, virtue, vice, &c., is a supposition, that the virtuousness of the dispositions or acts of the will, consists not in the nature of these dispositions or acts, but wholly in the origin or cause of them; so that if the disposition of the mind, or act of the will, be ever so good, yet if the cause of the disposition or act be not our virtue, there is nothing virtuous or praiseworthy in it; and on the contrary, if the will in its inclination or acts be ever so bad, yet unless it arises from something that is our vice or fault, there is nothing vicious or blameworthy in it." "Now if this matter be well considered, it will appear to be altogether a mistake, yea, a gross absurdity."* This assertion he vindicates by insisting that if the moral character of an action is to be sought in its cause, so must it be with that of the cause, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The relation of this position to the doctrine of causation already considered is obvious. If the creature be no cause, the alternative is, that all acts, as caused by the Holy One, are holy; or else that the character of our action is to be sought somewhere else than in its cause. But the argument is an utter fallacy, involving the latent assumption, that acts have a subsistence of their own, apart from that of the agent. Strictly speaking, acts are without any moral character—they are not moral agents, subjects of law, or responsible to justice. An act is nothing but the agent acting; when in common language we speak of praise or blame attaching to an action, we in fact mean to predicate these of the actor. The reason therefore why the moral character of an act is to be sought, not in it, but in the cause, is, not that it is an effect, but that it has no substance in itself; it is a nonentity, of which moral responsibility is not predicable. The actor is morally responsible, and from his nature, as the cause, do his actions acquire their character; or rather, of his moral nature are his actions the indices and types. It is that to which the morality attaches, and to which the sanctions of the law address themselves.

In this doctrine of Edwards we have the germ of the "exercise scheme" of Hopkins—that all holiness and sin consists in exercises or actions. In it, too, Edwards found the argument with which to vindicate the position that God is the efficient cause of sin. The morality of actions is not determined by their cause. God therefore may be the author of men's sins although he is the Most Holy. The holiness of the cause does not prevent the sinfulness of the action; since the moral character of the latter is to be sought in its formal aspect, and not in its source.

Such were the principles which—engrafted by Edwards into the theology of the pilgrims—at once developed the system, that

*Edwards on the Will. Part 4, Sec. 1. See also Sec. 9, *passim*.

in its various phases, was propagated by Hopkins, Smalley, the younger Edwards, Emmons, and their associates. The logical process was brief, and simple, and the conclusions inevitable. If the creatures be no cause—if God is the immediate and only cause, he is the sole cause of sin, both in Adam and us. If there be no powers in man's nature—if the phenomena of his existence and life be the immediate effects of the power of God, there can be no native dispositions or tendencies, of which to predicate holiness or sin; these can consist in nothing but acts. If Adam's nature was not the cause of his posterity, he was not the cause of their depravity; God, the only cause, produces it in them. If there is no real identity possible in things which exist at different times, and in different places; if we are one with Adam only by "constitution" and legal intendment, then his sin is not truly ours, and its punishment may not be exacted of us. God may in sovereignty act toward us as he would toward sinners; but the inflictions which are visited upon us, on account of Adam's sin, are without privitive character. Again, for the same reason, Christ could not so become one with us, as to be held really accountable for our sins, or be truly responsible for their penalty. Nor, on the other hand, can we be so united to him, as to acquire a strictly proprietary right in his righteousness. The consequence is, that Christ's atonement is viewed as made in general for sin, and not distinctively for the sins of his people; and that his work was not determinate of the redemption of any one; but only opened the way for the salvation of those to whom God should give faith. Such were the positions maintained by the earlier disciples of Edwards. They at once rejected his untenable appeal—untenable upon his principles—to the distinction between a positive and a puritive cause, to account for God's agency in the production of sin; and did not hesitate to attribute all sinful actions to the efficient agency of God. But falling back upon the optimistic principle, they held that since God was bound to produce the best possible system, we are shut up to the conclusion that the present is the best; and sin being found in this system, it is inferred that sin is an incident of the best system, and necessary to it. Sin, therefore, thus viewed, upon the whole, is not an evil; and hence it is consistent with God's holiness and goodness, to produce it. It is only evil, in that the sinner is not actuated by any such apprehensions, but the reverse. Retaining the old forms of speech, these writers rejected utterly the old doctrines of original sin, and justification.

So stood the "orthodox" theology of New England at the rise of the school of New Haven. And it is a significant fact that the first public announcement of the organization of a new school of theology, by the professors in that institution, contained a challenge to the optimists of the prevailing school to justify themselves

in assuming that God could prevent sin in a moral system. Thus did the revolting fatalism, which was involved in Edwards' theory of causation, induce a recoil to the opposite extreme, in the assertion of Pelagian free will. The divines of New Haven found in the very heart of Edwards' system some of the fundamental and most frightful features of the doctrine of Pelagius—that Adam was not the cause of his posterity—that of consequence they were not really in him in the covenant—that his sin is not theirs, nor its punishment visited on them—that depravity is not derived from Adam by his posterity—and that all sin consists in exercise or action. Accepting these as unquestionable propositions, and recoiling with just abhorrence from the idea that God is the author of men's sins, they adopted the other alternative deducible from the principle, and concluded that men are created without moral character; and that their depravity is the result of example and circumstances. Boldly repudiating the system of constituted relations and fictitious intendments, by which the Hopkinsians had kept up a semblance of orthodoxy, they utterly denied any federal union between us and Adam, or any vicarious relation between us and Christ. Every man comes into the world in the same moral and legal attitude as did Adam. Each one sins and falls by his own free will. Christ died—not as a legal substitute for us—a vicarious satisfaction for our sins—but as an exhibition of the love of God to sinners; and a display of the evil of sin; so that God may, consistently with the welfare of the universe, forgive sin. The sinner is pardoned, not justified—sin is forgiven, not taken away—and justice is waived, not satisfied. Again, supposing man's free will competent to sin in spite of God, it followed that the same power could cease to sin, independent of the spirit of God. Regeneration is therefore to be wrought by means of moral suasion, and the exercise of the unaided powers of man's own will.

Such is the New Haven system—in some of its features broadly distinguished from old Hopkinsianism; but essentially a proper outgrowth from the stock of Edwards. The radical peculiarities of the Edwardian system were all incorporated into the divinity of New Haven. The rejected features had their origin in the impossible effort to reconcile these peculiarities with the principles of the orthodox faith. Consisting in the preposterous doctrine respecting identity—the theory of “constitutions” established by God, contrary to the essential reality—and the revolting doctrine concerning God's efficiency in producing sin—their effect was to create an odium against the Reformed system, of which they were supposed to be essential elements. Thus the way was prepared, for the rapid and universal prevalence of the unadulterated Pelagianism of New Haven.

We have not paused to trace the process of defection to Socinianism, which the earlier part of the present century witnessed

in the east. Strange and incongruous as may seem the association with the name of the venerated Edwards, the relation of that apostasy to his principles, is unquestionable. The intelligent reader need but study the systems above delineated, and notice the progress of passing events in the same region, "to understand the process. It is a fact of no little significance, that after the younger Edwards had been employed more than twenty-five years, indoctrinating the people of New Haven, in the new theology, he was constrained to resign his pastoral charge, by reason of the prevalence among his people, of the "liberal Christianity" of Priestley. The system of New Haven recognizes indeed the doctrine of the Trinity. But the Son and the Spirit are thrust into a corner; the one to exhibit a dramatic display, and set an example of perfect humanity, to which the demigod of Arius were abundantly adequate—the other to testify for the truth, with a demonstration which is already perfect, in the word. As there is no room for an omnipotent Renewer and Sanctifier, so there is no need of an infinite vicarious sacrifice, to justify. If the leaders in the Socinian defection were foremost in opposition to the orthodoxy of Edwards, it was in a manner perfectly in accordance with the similar course of the New Haven school. Entrenched in the false principles of Edwards' philosophy, they assailed with fatal effect that system of grace, which nourished the faith, and stimulated the labors of that man of God.

A due regard to the facts here presented, is necessary to a just apprehension of the present state of the question, as between the friends of the Reformed theology, and a large class of the advocates of error. They constitute a most instructive admonition, of the exceeding caution with which the deductions of philosophy are to be admitted to authority, in the sphere of theology; even though researches of profoundest acumen be tempered and sanctified by the most eminent grace. We cherish the utmost respect for the teachings of a sound philosophy, in its proper place. But in all sacred science, the infallible touchstone, to which every thing must be brought, is "the more sure word of prophecy." "To the law, and to the testimony!"

It is not an uncommon mistake, to suppose that a given opinion, because opposed by the enemies of sound doctrine, must therefore be true. We have known writers, claiming to be "orthodox," who, finding the idea of a constructive and technical headship rejected and denounced by Pelagians, have been induced to embrace it, under the apparent impression that it is the alternative to the unscriptural system of New Haven. Such is not the alternative. With perfect consistency we repudiate alike the Pelagianism of that school, and the "constitutional" orthodoxy of the Edwardians. Whilst the one denies altogether any moral relation between us and Adam, and the other contrives a relation which is unreal and

constructive, we, in opposition to both, assert a headship which is real, and not constituted ; native, and not superimposed ; a responsibility on account of the sin of our great father, which is criminal and not technical merely ; and the derivation from him of a corruption which flows to us, immediately and by necessity of nature, from him the corrupted source of our being.