

THE  
PRINCETON REVIEW.

JANUARY, 1854.

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No. I.

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*Geo. Henry Jones.*  
ART. I.—*Recent Commentaries on the Song of Solomon.*

*Das Hohelied untersucht und ausgelegt*, von Franz Delitzsch, Dr. u. ord. Prof. d. Theologie zu Erlangen u. s. w. 1851. 8vo. pp. 237.

*Das Hohelied von Salomo, uebersetzt und erklärt*, von Heinrich August Hahn, Dr. Phil. Lie. Theologie und ausserordentlichem Professor der letzteren an der Königl. Universität zu Greifswalden, u. s. w. 1852. 16mo. pp. 98.

*Das Hohelied Salomonis ausgelegt*, von E. W. Hengstenberg, Dr. und Prof. d. Theologie zu Berlin. 1853. 8vo. pp. 264.

*The Song of Solomon, Compared with other parts of Scripture.* Second Edition. London, 1852. 16mo. pp. 230.

*A Commentary on the Song of Solomon*, by the Rev. Geo. Burrowes, Prof. in Lafayette College, Easton, Pa. 1853. 12mo. pp. 527.

It is remarkable that such a number of Commentaries upon this brief and difficult book should have appeared within so short a period, and in places so remote from each other. This circumstance, if it be not purely casual, resulting from the accidental direction of the studies of the individuals whose productions we have before us, would seem to indicate an extensive leaning in the church at present towards the study of the Can-

selves; to establish schools and seminaries, with "gratuitous instruction;" to monopolize seats of learning; and to glide with noiseless steps, into offices of influence and importance. While we do not fear them, we should be ever on our guard against such men; men who are hostile to all who condemn their religious errors, or oppose their political pretensions; men who always work in the dark, and scruple not to make use of any means to accomplish their ends; who, as Pascal says, "cannot move a step, without stratagem and intrigue." We should feel what another of his Church, De Pradt, has said—"Human society is fearfully menaced by the atrocious revival of the order of the Jesuits, and by the introduction of their principles, which engender and promote every private and public collision, disorder, and crime. *Away with the Jesuits!*"

*Charles Hodge.*

ART. IV.—*The Conflict of Ages; or, The Great Debate on the Moral Relations of God and Man.* By Edward Beecher, D. D. Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Co. 1853. pp. 552.

THE opinion expressed in our last number concerning this work, founded on a very slight inspection, has been abundantly confirmed by a careful perusal. It is characterized by great ability, by an earnest spirit, by frankness, candour, and courtesy. It is the result of long continued thought and research. It presents with clearness the various conflicting theories by which men have tried to explain the great problem of sin. And although, from the plan of the work, the author is obliged to travel more than once over the same ground, his book is, in the main, condensed and logically ordered. With all these recommendations, it cannot fail to command and to repay attention.

It has a special interest for us. We hail it as an ally. The author shuts his readers up to the choice between orthodoxy and the doctrine of pre-existence. He admits that Scripture, Christian experience, and facts, are all on our side. He acknowledges that the Church has the Bible and its own con-

sciousness in support of the doctrine that all sin does not consist in voluntary action; that it is in one form inherent, innate, lying back of consciousness and the will, and of course beyond the reach of the will. He admits that men are born in a state of condemnation, that they do not stand and fall each for himself after birth. He acknowledges that they come into the world with a nature depraved, *i. e.* sinful. He reviews and rejects the doctrine that men are born with a nature uninjured—the doctrine that their nature though degraded is not sinful; the doctrine that the corruption of the soul is due to its union with the body, or to the law of development, or to its unfavourable circumstances, or to the divine efficiency. In short, he concedes that the Old-school doctrine as to the nature of sin, and the natural state of man, is the doctrine of the Church, of the Bible, and of Christian experience. This is much. These admissions, coming from such a source, cannot fail to produce a strong impression. These are the doctrines which have been the special objects of execration and contempt. It is on account of these doctrines that Old-school men have been held up, by the friends and associates of our author, to hatred or to ridicule. Professor Park must be tempted to exclaim, *Et tu, Brute!* We do not regard the truth as needing any man's patronage, or as honoured by any man's concessions. But the prejudices of men, and especially of young men, are such, that statements which would be rejected without a hearing from one source, are respectfully considered when coming from another. There are many minds, we hope, over which Dr. Beecher's influence may be sufficient, to counteract the effect produced by the plausible and confident declamation which has so long been directed against the doctrines above referred to. This is the reason why we anticipate good from the publication of the work before us. We do not dread its strong protest and fervid argument against the doctrine of the fall of man in Adam, or in favour of the doctrine of pre-existence. These will pass by unheeded, while the arguments for the truth will have an abiding force. This is the difference between truth and error. The former can stand all forms of opposition, but the latter soon perishes, when those long regarded as its friends turn against it. We have no doubt that our author's

arguments against all the forms of New-school doctrine, will be tenfold more effective than any other portion of his work.

The great conflict which Dr. Beecher undertakes to portray and to reconcile, is the conflict between the undeniable truth of the innate and entire depravity of our nature on the one hand, and those principles of "honour and right," as he calls them, which forbid the introduction of creatures into existence in such a state of sin. On the one hand, the Bible, consciousness, and experience, teach concerning the ruined condition of man, "1. His innate depravity as an individual. 2. His subjection to the power of depraved social organization, called, taken collectively, the world. 3. His subjection to the power of unseen malignant spirits, who are centralized and controlled by Satan, their leader and head." p. 62.

On the first of these points, our author quotes Calvin's definition of original sin, as "a hereditary depravity and corruption of our nature, diffused through all parts of the soul, which, in the first place, exposes us to the wrath of God, and then produces in us those works which the Scriptures call works of the flesh." Of infants, he adds, Calvin says: "They bring their condemnation with them from their mother's womb, being liable to punishment, not for the sin of another, but for their own. For, although they have not as yet produced the fruits of their iniquity, yet they have the seeds enclosed in themselves; nay, their whole nature is, as it were, a seed of sin; therefore it cannot but be odious and abominable to God. Whence it follows that it is properly considered sin before God, because there could not be liability to punishment without sin."

These explicit statements of Calvin are sustained by quotations from the symbols of the leading Protestant churches. For example, he quotes the language of the Synod of Dort: "All men are conceived in sin, and born children of wrath, disqualified for all saving good, propense to evil, dead in sins, and the slaves of sin; and, without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit, they neither are willing nor able to return to God, to correct their depraved nature, or to dispose themselves to the correction of it." In the later Helvetic Confession, this language is used: "We take sin to be that natural corrup-

tion of man derived or spread from those our parents unto us all; through which we, being drowned in evil concupiscences, and clean turned away from God, but prone to all evil, full of all wickedness, distrust, contempt, and hatred of God, can do no good of ourselves—no, not so much as think of any." Passages to the same effect are quoted from the Bohemian Confession, the Gallican Confession, the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England, the Augsburg Confession, from that of the Moravians, and of the Westminster divines. The language of these confessions, says our author, does not "convey an idea at all too strong of the fearful power of the actual developments of human depravity in the history of the world, even as stated by Unitarians, or of the great truth, that there must be in man some adequate cause, before action, of a course of action, so universal, so powerful, so contrary to right, to the natural laws of all created minds, and to his own highest interests." p. 71. On a subsequent page, he admits the correctness of the statement, that "there is not a creed of any Christian church in which the doctrine that inherent corruption, as existing prior to voluntary action, is of the nature of sin, is not distinctly asserted." p. 96. "The great doctrine that men enter this world under a forfeiture, and with innate depravity, which is the real element of strength in the system of Augustine, and which has given it all its power, is," he says, "neither impossible nor absurd." p. 305.

As the gospel purports to be a means of deliverance from sin, it is indispensable to its appreciation and acceptance, that there should be a due sense of the evil from which it proposes to redeem us. All history teaches that the strength and power of the religious life in all its manifestations, is in proportion to the depth of the sense of sin. If the views taken of sin are superficial, everything else connected with the divine life must partake of the same character. This our author fully admits. "No one," he says, "can fail to see that the religious depth that has ever been found in the Western Church, and among the Reformers and Puritans, and their followers, as compared with the superficiality of the Eastern Church, under the auspices of John of Damascus, and the Greek fathers, is owing to the more profound views of human depravity which

were introduced by Augustine, and which gave a deep and vital character to its theology, but which never penetrated and vitalized the Eastern Church. No one, we think, in view of facts on the great scale, can deny that this system has exerted a deeper and more powerful influence on the world than any other." p. 97.

This, then, is one of the great moving powers, to use Dr. Beecher's language, of Christianity. The denial of this radical corruption of human nature, is the rejection of one of those elements to which the gospel owes its efficiency. On the other hand, however, there are certain principles of "honour and right," indelibly impressed on the human mind, which are in apparent, and, according to the commonly received theory, in real conflict with the Augustinian doctrine concerning the natural state of man. These principles our author regards as a divine revelation, and of primary authority, as lying at the foundation of all knowledge and of all faith. They are the intuitive judgments of the mind, which constrain assent by the constitution of our nature. To this class of intuitive truths, he refers the following principles.

1. "God has made us intuitively to perceive and feel, and therefore, he also perceives and feels, that increase of powers to any degree of magnitude produces, not a decrease, but an increase of obligation to feel and act benevolently towards inferiors—that is, with an honourable regard to their true and highest interests."

2. "No man, unless compelled by some supposed necessity, would ever think of denying that the principles of honour and right call upon God not to hold his creatures responsible or punishable for any thing in them of which they are not the authors, but of which he is, either directly or indirectly, the Creator, and which exists in them anterior to, and independent of any knowledge, desire, choice, or action of their own."

3. "The principles of honour and right demand of God, inasmuch as he demands of his creatures that they do what is right, and inasmuch as this demand is founded in the nature of things, that he should not himself confound the distinction between right and wrong, by dealing with the righteous as with the wicked."

4. "The principles of honour and right demand of God not so to charge the wrong conduct of one being to others, as to punish one person for the conduct of another, in which he did not consent, and in which he had no part."

5. "Since the creatures of God do not exist of their own will, and since they exist for eternity, and since nothing more vitally affects their prospects for eternity than the constitutional powers and propensities with which they begin their existence, the dictates of honour and right demand that God shall confer on them such original constitutions as shall, in their natural and proper tendencies, favourably affect their prospects for eternity, and place a reasonable power of right conduct and of securing eternal life in the possession of all."

6. "Not only do the demands of honour and right forbid the Creator thus to injure his creature in his original constitution, but they equally forbid him to place him in circumstances needlessly unfavourable to right conduct, and a proper development of his powers."

Here, then, is a real conflict. The Bible, consciousness, and experience, teach what, according to the above principles, cannot be true, or, at least, cannot be reconciled with the character of God. This conflict is not composed by the rejection of the Bible, for the Scriptures teach nothing more than experience does. The conflict is between undeniable facts and undeniable principles. We are shut up to the choice between the doctrine of pre-existence and atheism. This is the only alternative. The whole drift of the book is to bring the matter to this issue. All other methods of solving the difficulty are tried and rejected.

First, we have the church doctrine which teaches that human depravity is innate and universal, and attempts to reconcile that doctrine with the character of God by teaching that men "have forfeited their rights as new created beings, and have fallen under the just displeasure of God; and that the existence in them of a depraved nature, and of inability to do right, is a punishment inflicted on them by God, in accordance with their just deserts. It is conceded by the Reformers," says Dr. Beecher, "that God cannot be defended on any ground but this. . . . With deep interest then we ask, When did all

men make their alleged forfeiture, and incur this inability? The reply is, Never in their own persons. Indeed, it was done before they existed, by the act of another, even Adam." p. 100. But this, which is conceded to be the church theory on this subject, is rejected as obviously inconsistent with the principles of "honour and right" already laid down. "Nor," says our author, "is any relief gained by regarding such sinful nature and inability to do good as coming on men, not as a penalty, but as a consequence of Adam's sin, according to an ordinance of God as an absolute sovereign. Indeed, this is conceded and insisted on, as we shall see more fully hereafter, by all the leading divines of the Reformation, and by those who in modern days profess to walk most exactly in their steps. The sovereignty of God, as they have most clearly seen and declared, implies no superiority to the laws of equity and honour. If their rights as new created beings have not been forfeited, God has no right to disregard them." p. 101.\*

The fact of innate depravity and inability cannot, therefore, be accounted for by assuming that the race had a fair probation in Adam, and forfeited their rights as new created beings by his apostasy.

Secondly, the author gives the Unitarian or Pelagian solution of this great problem. He gives the advocates of that system the credit of being influenced by a sincere regard for the principles of "honour and right." As they could not reconcile the assumption that man is born in a state of sin, with the character of God, they were led to deny the fact of innate depravity. "Man," says Dr. Ware, "is by nature—by which is to be understood as he is born into this world, as he comes from the hands of the Creator—innocent and pure; he is no more inclined to vice than to virtue, and is equally capable, in the ordinary use of his faculties, and of the common assistance afforded him, of either." But this is objected to, as denying incontestable facts; as doing away with the necessity of redemption, and consequently ignoring the doctrines of regeneration, atonement, and the Trinity; as degrading free agency, since, with equal facilities for good or evil,

\* Book II., Chapters 3, 4, 5.



evil universally prevails; and as diminishing the guilt and evil of sin, and even approximating to the Hegelian doctrine, that sin, though an evil, is yet a necessary and useful means of moral development.\*

A third experience is that which results from "holding unmodified, and with full faith, and deep sensibility, both the radical facts concerning human depravity, and the principles of honour and right. Upon a certain portion of such minds the power of the principles of honour and right is so great, that, although they cannot cease to believe the facts as to human depravity, yet they shrink from carrying out the system of Christianity to its full and scriptural results, and take refuge in the doctrine of universal salvation." This is illustrated at length from the writings of the eminent John Foster.†

The fourth attempt to solve the great problem, and to reconcile the doctrines of the Bible with the principles of "honour and right," is found in the philosophy of the New-school theology. It began, as our author thinks, in the inculcation of the principle that the inability which the Bible ascribes to the sinner is "not an absolute inability, caused by the want of natural powers, but solely a voluntary and inflexible aversion to duty."‡ The principle was "first developed by Edwards, and carried out and approved by Hopkins and others of kindred views. . . . Edwards inconsistently still held to a sinful nature, but Hopkins consistently developed these principles, and from the treatise of Edwards on the nature of true virtue, the doctrine that all sin and holiness consist in voluntary action, and that the essence of holiness is disinterested benevolence, and of sin is selfishness." Thus the foundation of New-school theology was laid. The fundamental peculiarities of the theologians of this school, our author says, are the follow-

\* Book II., Chapters 6, 7, 8.

† Book II., Chapters 9, 10.

‡ There are many instances in the work before us of inaccurate theological statements, to which it is not our purpose to refer. The sentence quoted above is one of them. The old doctrine, *i. e.* the doctrine of the Lutheran and Reformed churches, is not that the inability of the sinner arises out of "the want of natural powers;" nor is moral inability "solely a voluntary and inflexible aversion to duty." The point of dispute between the Old and New-school on this subject, is not whether the sinner's inability is moral. The question is simply, whether it is subject to the control of the will.

ing: "They deny the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity—that is, they deny that God regards as their act that which was not their act, and that on this ground he inflicts on them the inconceivably severe penalty alleged by the Old-school divines. They also deny the existence in man of a nature in the strict sense sinful, and deserving of punishment, anterior to knowledge and voluntary action, and teach that all sin and holiness consist in voluntary action. As a natural result, they also deny the doctrine of the absolute and entire inability of the sinner to do the duties required of him by God. The inability asserted in the Scriptures they hold to be, according to the just laws of interpretation, merely a fixed unwillingness to comply with the will of God, which is not inconsistent with a real and proper ability to obey, but derives its character of inexcusable guilt from the existence of such ability." On this theory Dr. Beecher remarks, that "after rejecting the theory of imputation, and of a sinful nature, in the proper sense of the term, nothing seems to remain but an innocent nature so affected by the fall of Adam as always to lead to sin, or else a stated exercise of divine efficiency to procure sinful volitions in every human being from the beginning of his existence." The latter hypothesis the author dismisses, "on the ground that it would be unjust to reward or punish volitions so created; that it tends to destroy a sense of accountability, and that it is inconsistent with all just ideas of free agency and liberty of the will."

To the former he represents the Old-school divines as objecting, first, that it "denies what are the actual facts in all men, as stated in Scripture, and revealed by experience—that is, real depravity, and strong sinful propensities, anterior to action, and that hence it gives a defective and superficial view of the real nature and power of original sin, and total depravity." "History and observation," he adds, "seem to confirm these views." It was the conviction of the tendency of this system "to sweep away the true and deep doctrine of depravity and Satanic influence, and to leave only a nominal and superficial depravity, which will not finally differ much from the position of sober Unitarians," he tells us, which has aroused the Old-school divines to oppose the progress of this

system with so much earnestness and perseverance." He quotes largely from Dr. Nettleton and Dr. Woods, to show how strong was the conviction that the New-school doctrine of depravity undermined the whole plan of redemption, and endangered all evangelical religion. "Piety," says Dr. Nettleton, "never did and never will descend far in the line of such sentiments."

Secondly. The New-school doctrine of depravity, is not only, according to its opponents, thus contradicted by Scripture and Christian experience, but it aggravates the difficulty which it proposes to relieve. The fact of the ruin of the human race by the sin of one man, remains. The sin of Adam, according to the new doctrine, either so deteriorated the nature of man, or so altered his circumstances, or so influenced the purposes of God, that all men inevitably sin as soon as they become moral agents. Mankind never had a probation. They neither stood and fell in Adam as their representative, nor are they placed on trial each for himself, under circumstances admitting the moral possibility of a favourable issue. God, out of mere sovereignty, brings them into existence under circumstances which inevitably secure their perdition.

Thirdly. Our author himself objects to the New-school doctrine that, in some at least of its forms, it degrades our conceptions of free agency, by representing that "the moral constitutions of men are as good as the nature of free agency will allow." "This," he says, "is virtually a denial that there has been any fall of the race." The views of Dr. Bushnell, particularly, on this subject, have, according to Dr. Beecher, "an unpleasant similarity" to the Hegelian doctrine of the necessity of moral evil as a means of education.

On the whole, all the forms of New-school doctrine are declared by our author to be unsatisfactory. They leave the problem unsolved. "The deep depravity of man, even before action, seems," he says, "to find a response in facts of human consciousness, and in the word of God. In particular, a deep Christian experience will ever give power to the deepest views of depravity."\*

\* Book II., Chapters 11, 12.

The fifth experience is that which the author calls "the eclipse of the glory of God." It is that "in which the principles of honour and right, and also the facts concerning the depravity and ruin of man, are both retained, and yet without the perception of any satisfactory mode of modification and adjustment. In this case the mind comes, for a time, under the oppressive and overwhelming consciousness of existing, apparently, under a universal system which is incapable of defence, and under a God whom the principles of honour and of right forbid us to worship." This lamentable state of mind the author describes in a deeply affecting manner. It was once his own. "For a time," he says, "the system of this world rose before my mind in the same manner, as far as I can judge, as it did before the minds of Channing and Foster. . . . But I was entirely unable to find relief as they did. The depravity of man neither Christian experience, the Bible, nor history, would allow me to deny. Nor did reason or Scripture afford me any satisfactory grounds whatever for anticipating the restoration of the lost to holiness in a future state. Hence, for a time, all was dark as night. If any one would know the full worth of the privilege of living under, worshipping, loving, and adoring a God of honour, righteousness, and love, let him after years of joyful Christian experience, and soul-satisfying communion with God, at last come to a point where his lovely character, for a time, vanishes from his eyes, and nothing can be rationally seen but a God, selfish, dishonourable, and unfeeling. No person can ever believe that God is such; but he may be so situated as to be unable rationally to see him in any other light. . . . Who can describe the gloom of him who looks on such a prospect! How dark to him appears the history of man! He looks with pity on the children that pass him in the street. The more violent manifestations of their depravity seem to be the unfoldings of a corrupt nature, given to them by God before any knowledge or consent of their own. Mercy now seems to be no more mercy, and he who delighted to speak of the love of Christ, is obliged to close his lips in silence, for the original wrong of giving man such a nature seems so great, that no subsequent acts can atone for the deed. In such a state of mind, he who once delighted to pray, kneels and rises

again, because he cannot sincerely worship the only God he sees."

This is indeed a sad experience. It is strange, however, that our author did not see that the holy men whose experience is recorded in the Bible endured similar trials. They, however, found relief, not through reason, but through faith; not by having the ways of God made patent to their understanding, but by the Holy Ghost producing in them the assurance, that though clouds and darkness are round about him, justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A God so intelligible as Dr. Beecher demands, in order to be able to worship him, is a finite God; and a religion without mysteries is mere rationalism.

Having thus shown that the great problem of human depravity cannot be solved by the assumption of a probation of the race in Adam, or of an innocent and uninjured nature, as Pelagius taught, or of a deteriorated constitution, or of a divine efficiency in the production of sin, our author comes, in his Third Book, to present his own solution of the difficulty. The grand source of the conflict between the facts of Scripture and experience, on the one hand, and the principles of honour and right on the other, is, he says, the simple and plausible assumption THAT MEN AS THEY COME INTO THIS WORLD ARE NEW-CREATED BEINGS. p. 211. If so, the character of God requires they should be holy, and placed under circumstances decidedly favourable to their salvation. "To make them either neutral or with constitutions tending to sin, would be utterly inconsistent with the honour and justice of God, and would involve him in the guilt and dishonour of sin." p. 214. But, "if in a previous state of existence, God created all men with such constitutions, and placed them in such circumstances as the laws of honour and right demanded—if then they revolted and corrupted themselves, and forfeited their rights, and were introduced into this world under a dispensation of sovereignty, disclosing both justice and mercy—then all conflict of the moving powers of Christianity can be at once and entirely removed." p. 221. Thus "we retain all the facts of the system, because we exhibit in full power the great and fundamental doctrine which leads to them—that all men are in

a fallen state, and have forfeited their original rights, and are under the just displeasure of God, and exposed to his righteous judgments. This, as all must concede, has ever been regarded by the orthodox as the fundamental basis of the Christian system, and out of it grows the whole economy of redemption. The whole Christian doctrine concerning God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, atonement, regeneration, the church, and eternal retributions, naturally grows out of it in undiminished, yea, rather in augmented fulness and glory." p. 228.

More particularly stated, the advantages of the theory of pre-existence, are, 1. "We thereby escape the constant and powerful tendency which exists under the old theory to give a superficial view of the great facts of man's depravity and ruin. . . . The old orthodox writers, in order to convey their ideas of a sinful state in man, preceding and causing actual transgression, often familiarly call it a sinful *habit*, just as they call a foundation for holy acts a holy habit of soul. But if men enter the world as new-created beings, there cannot, in reality, be in them anything to correspond to the words, 'sinful habit.' For they have not acted at all,\* and a good God cannot create sinful habits. But, under the system as readjusted, these words describe the very thing which precedes wrong action, and causes a propensity to it. Men are born with deeply-rooted sinful habits and propensities." p. 229. 2. We escape the constant and powerful tendency "to degrade free agency itself, by supposing that such facts as occur in this world are the natural and necessary results of the best minds which God could make, in their normal state." This is our author's mode of saying his theory frees us from the necessity of being Pelagians. 3. "We do not ascribe to God any facts at all at war with the highest principles of honour." 4. "We arrive at a sphere of existence in which we can carry up to the highest point our conceptions of the rectitude of the original constitutions of all new-created beings, and of God's sincere good will towards them,

\* Our author forgets that the Latin word *habitus* and the English word *habit*, do not, in theological usage, mean simply the subjective result of repeated action, but any abiding, inherent state of mind. Habit is synonymous, in theological language, with *disposition*.

and sympathetic and benevolent treatment of them." 5. "It presents the scriptural doctrine concerning a kingdom of fallen spirits in a light much more rational, intelligible, and impressive."

The Fourth Book presents an historical outline and estimate of the conflict, in which the author reviews the theological speculations before Augustine; Augustine's theory, and its various modifications, in Old and New-school systems; and the semi-Pelagian, Arminian and other methods of relief. The Fifth Book contains the formal argument in support of the doctrine of the pre-existence of men. The great defect of this work, so far as arrangement is concerned, as it seems to us, is that the Second and Fourth Books are identical. They contain the same matter under different forms, and the latter makes no progress beyond the former. So also the Third and Fifth Books are substantially the same—at least there is nothing in the Third, which is not more advantageously presented in the Fifth. There is also a great deal of unnecessary preliminary discussion attached to the several books, about "the method of procedure," "the point of vision," "the laws of thought," &c., &c., which wearies without rewarding the reader. As the work is likely to live, we would respectfully suggest, whether it would not be improved by a simplification of its method, and by discarding all unessential discussions.

The course of argument pursued in support of the doctrine of pre-existence is substantially as follows. It is conceded that it is nowhere asserted in express terms in the Scriptures. It is to be proved from the intuitive principles of our own minds, and from the facts of the system. This mode of reasoning is said to be analogous to that by which we prove the being of God, the authority of the Scriptures, or the truth of the Newtonian system. Texts of Scripture have no authority until we have first proved the existence of God and the inspiration of the Bible. A mode of proof, he says, sufficiently valid to be the original basis of all religion, must be valid enough to sustain the doctrine of pre-existence. It is not necessary, therefore, to have scriptural authority for the doctrine; it is enough that the Bible does not contradict it. If

this can be shown, then the way is clear to show that our "divinely implanted and moral intuitions" demand the doctrine, and that it affords the only adequate solution of the theory of the universe. Thus to clear the way, the author proceeds to the examination of Romans v. 12—21, which he considers the only passage generally relied upon to prove the fall of the race in Adam. This therefore is the key of his position. He admits that if he cannot prove that the true interpretation of that passage is consistent with the doctrine of pre-existence, his cause is lost. And as his theory is the only one on which the doctrines of the Bible, the facts of experience, and even the existence of a holy God, can be reconciled with our intuitive and authoritative judgments, it necessarily follows that the truth of Christianity, of the doctrine of Providence, and even of the being of God, depends on the correctness of that interpretation. Now as that interpretation is confessedly and professedly new, never having before occurred to any human mind, and is directly opposed to the judgment of the Church universal, every one must see "on what a slender thread hang everlasting things." No wonder, therefore, that our author lays out his strength on the passage in question, devoting to it nearly one hundred pages of the Fifth Book.

Dr. Beecher repudiates the Pelagian and New-school interpretations of this important passage. He admits that the apostle teaches that it was for, or on account of the sin of Adam, death passed upon all men; that his one offence was the ground of the condemnation of all men—just as the righteousness of Christ is the ground of the justification of all believers. As for the offence of one, many were condemned; so for the righteousness of one many are justified. So far Dr. Beecher agrees with the common orthodox interpretation. The two points of difference are, first, that the death here spoken of, is simply natural death; and second, that the causation which is said to exist between the sin of Adam and the death of his race, is apparent or typical, and not real.\* As Adam's sin

\* The former of these points is entirely unessential to the argument. For if the relation of the sin of Adam to the death of his race was that of apparent causation only, the nature of that death is matter of indifference. The illustra-



appeared to be the cause why men die, so Christ's righteousness is really the cause of life. The offence of Adam was the apparent cause of condemnation; Christ's righteousness is the real cause of justification. Thus the brazen serpent, the apparent cause of the healing of the Israelites, was a type of Christ as the real cause of the salvation of his people. In both cases the same language is used; the Israelite was said to be healed by looking to the serpent, and the sinner is said to be saved by looking to Christ. Apparent and real causation are expressed by the same words. Common sense and the laws of typical language forbid our understanding what is said of the serpent healing the people, of real causation. The intuitive principles "of honour and right" no less forbid our interpreting what is said of Adam's sin being the cause of the death of his race, as expressing any thing more than apparent causation. He admits that the language used is that of "actual causation." But, he says, "It is equally in accordance with the laws of language and the usages of Scripture to suppose that the sequence is merely one of apparent causation: so that the sin of Adam, in fact, exerted no influence whatever upon his race, but it and its sequences were merely ordered so as to stand in relation to each other, as to make, at the very introduction of the human race into this world, a striking type of the coming Messiah by whom the race was to be redeemed." "The truth of this view," he adds, "is the fundamental question of the whole discussion. It is also a

tion of the work of redemption would be the same in either case. As Adam was the apparent cause of death, (whether natural or spiritual,) so Christ is the real cause of life. That however, the death spoken of is not merely the dissolution of the body is plain. 1. Because such was not the meaning of the word in the original threatening. 2. Because it never has that meaning when spoken of as the penalty or wages of sin. 3. Because the whole argument of the apostle rests on the contrary assumption. His argument is valid only on the supposition that the death of which he speaks includes the loss of the divine favour and Spirit. Temporal death could be accounted for from our original constitution or innate depravity, without making it the direct effect of Adam's sin. 4. If the death derived from Adam is merely natural death, then the life derived is nothing more than natural life. Consistent interpreters, therefore, who make death here to mean the dissolution of the body, explain the life spoken of to mean the restoration of the body. It is only therefore, by doing violence to the constant usage of Scripture, to the context, and to the plainest rules of interpretation, that Dr Beecher's view as to this point can be sustained.

question, the importance of which cannot be overrated. It is also a question, so far as known, never thus raised or discussed before. . . . No one seems to have thought that any law of language, or any usage of Scripture, gave us our choice between real and apparent causation." p. 377. In illustration of his idea, he refers to passages in which the rod of Moses is said to have divided the sea, the mantle of Elijah the Jordan; salt to have healed the waters of Jericho—the apostles to have wrought miracles, sacrifices to make atonement for sin. In all these and many other cases, the language of real causation is used to express nothing more than apparent causation. It is, therefore, not from the language used, but from other sources, we are to determine which of the two is really intended. This is the principle, which in its application to Rom. v. 12—21, solves the great conflict of ages. Nothing can exceed the confidence of the author in the correctness of his interpretation. He says it is impossible to overthrow his position, p. 416, and winds up by saying, "I cannot but feel that I have adduced sufficient reasons to induce all Christian men, who love the honour of God and the good of man more than any or all other interests, to reject the common interpretations of this passage, and to adopt that which I have proposed." p. 444.

Now we hold it to be morally impossible that Dr. Beecher should, in this matter, be right. That a simple didactic assertion, a few plain words, should for all ages and by all parts of the Church, have been entirely misapprehended, and their true meaning be now for the first time brought to light, is little short of an absolute impossibility. It is altogether without a parallel in history. The case of the words of Christ, in the institution of the Lord's Supper, "this is my body," is no parallel. For the true meaning of those words has been seen and acknowledged by a large majority of the readers of the Scriptures. Nothing but absolute despair could lead a man to catch at such a straw; or drive him to place himself in conscious and avowed opposition to the whole people of God. To stand alone, as Luther did, against the Romish hierarchy, is one thing; to stand alone against God's elect, is infinitely another. The one is heroism, the other, infatuation. The dread-

ful language which Dr. Beecher allows himself to use, as to what God is and must be, unless the doctrine of pre-existence be true, shows that he is not free to judge rationally of the meaning of Scripture. He must make it accord with his theory, or be an atheist. When a man is reduced to such an extremity, he can persuade himself that light is darkness. His posture of mind, therefore, deprives his interpretation of even the ordinary authority due to the judgment of an able man.

Besides this, the principle itself is a nonentity. It is a mere phrase. There is no such thing as "apparent causation," in the sense in which he uses the expression. There are different kinds of causation; efficient, occasional, instrumental, and logical or rational. If a man stumbles while carrying coals of fire in the midst of gunpowder, and an explosion follows, we may say his carelessness was the cause of the explosion, or his stumbling was the cause, or the contact of the fire and powder was the cause, or the chemical properties of the powder, or the divine will establishing the laws of nature, was the cause. In every one of these cases the causation is real, though of a very different nature. In all we have an antecedent standing in the relation of a *sine qua non* to the effect. Thus, too, we may say that the Galatians were converted by Paul, that they were converted by the truth, and that they were converted by the Spirit of God. These are examples of efficient and instrumental, not of real and apparent causation. They are alike real. In like manner the brazen serpent was the cause of the healing of the people. It was the real, not the apparent cause; the instrumental, though not the efficient cause of the effect. The healing would not have taken place without it. The Mosaic sacrifices were also the cause of the pardon of sin, *i. e.*, of the remission of the penalties which they were intended to remove. They were even the cause of the remission of sin in the sight of God, the instrumental, not the meritorious cause.

What is the nature of the relation, in any given case, between a cause and its effect, is to be determined by the nature of the thing spoken of it, the context in which the statement occurs, or the authority of Scripture. But in every case of causation, there is a real connection between the antecedent

and consequent, the former being the *sine qua non* of the latter. Dr. Beecher admits the apostle asserts that the sin of Adam stands in a causal relation to the condemnation of his race. Now, it is one thing to inquire into the nature of this causal relation, and another thing to deny it. The former is to explain Scripture, the latter is to contradict it. To say that the causation is merely apparent, that the sin of Adam "exerted no influence whatever on his race," as Dr. Beecher does, is no exposition, but a flat contradiction of the apostle's assertion. To say that it was merely the occasional cause, as the Pelagians teach; or merely the instrumental cause, (by the forbidden fruit acting as a poison, and thus giving the animal principles of our nature an undue ascendancy, or by deteriorating his physical constitution, as phrenologists say, or by the transmission of an impaired moral constitution, according to the Semi-Pelagian doctrine,) are instances of erroneous exposition, and admit of debate. But simply to deny what Paul affirms, does not rise to the dignity of interpretation, in whatever ingenuity of phrase that denial may be couched. That Adam's sin does stand in causal relation to the condemnation of his race, is distinctly asserted: whether it was the occasional, the instrumental, or meritorious cause, is, as we have said, a fair subject of discussion. What Paul means by the assertion is to be determined by the context, and by the analogy of Scripture. The assertion that the sin of Adam was the cause of death passing upon all men, is contained in the 12th verse of the passage in question. The explanation of the nature of this causal connection is given in the following verses. It is said to be that which exists between an offence and a sentence of condemnation. When a man is said to be condemned for an offence, it is not meant that the offence was the occasion of his condemnation, nor that it was its instrumental cause, but that it is the ground, or reason, *i. e.*, the meritorious or judicial cause of his being condemned. Accordingly the Church, that is, ninety-nine hundredths of the people of God, have understood the apostle as teaching that the sin of Adam was the judicial or meritorious cause of the death of his race. In like manner, the Scriptures distinctly assert that the righteousness of Christ is the cause of life. To say that it is

only the apparent cause, would be to deny what the Bible asserts. To make it merely the occasional cause, as is done by Socinians; or simply the instrumental cause, in that in some way we derive spiritual life from him, as is done by other errorists, is to misinterpret the Bible. It is, as the Church has ever taught, the meritorious cause of our justification before God. In asserting that there is a causal relation between the sin of Adam and the condemnation of his race, the apostle asserts that if the one event had not happened, neither would the other. This is precisely what the theory of apparent causation is intended to deny. This is not exposition, but contradiction. But to admit the causation while we differ as to its nature, is not to contradict, but to differ in exposition.

With all our respect, therefore, for Dr. Beecher's talents and sincerity, we cannot regard his interpretation of Rom. v. 12—21, as anything more than an ingenious act of desperation. There was for him an absolute necessity of getting that passage out of his way. He must deny what it affirms. He admits the affirmation, but denies that it was intended. He is greatly mistaken, however, in supposing that the doctrine of the fall of the race in Adam rests solely on that passage. It rests on the record of the creation of man, of the trial in Eden, of the apostasy, of the subsequent history of the world, on the whole scheme of redemption, on what the Scriptures teach of original righteousness, and original sin, of the restoration of the image of God. It is, in short, inwoven with the whole texture of Scripture, as well as with the faith of the Church. Man, according to the Bible, was created upright. Adam was pronounced good; good as a man, good physically, intellectually, and morally. He was made in the image of God, and that image, according to Scripture, includes knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. He was without sin, and enjoyed communion with his Maker, until he ate the forbidden fruit. That act was his first sin, and for that sin he incurred the threatened penalty of death. From that time all men have been sinners, and under the curse of the law. Christ is called the second Adam, because he came to restore the ruin caused by the first. As in Adam, *i. e.*, in virtue of their union with Adam, all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive. These are

among the first principles of the religion of the Bible; and we should as little expect to hear them called in question by a Christian, as that Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, was dead and buried, and rose again on the third day. The age of our globe, and the Copernican theory of the universe, to which our author refers, as illustrating the long continued and generally prevailing misconception of the Bible, are altogether of a different character. The Scriptures were not designed to teach natural science, and are not responsible for the fact that men interpreted them according to the received principles of that science. The Scriptures are consistent with either theory of the material universe, for it didactically affirms neither. To find a parallel case, the author should produce some instance of a moral or religious truth as to which the Church has from the beginning, and universally, mistaken the plain meaning of the Bible. None such can be produced; its existence is an impossibility. We hold, therefore, that it is just as certain as anything of the kind can be, that the Bible does teach the fall of our race in Adam, and consequently that the doctrine of the pre-existence of men is not only without scriptural warrant, but in open conflict with the word of God.

The further course of our author's argument is this. He first endeavours to show that so far as the Scriptures are concerned, he needs only their silence. It is enough that they do not contradict his theory. Secondly, that the intuitive principles of "honour and right," and the facts of the case, demand the doctrine of pre-existence. Thirdly, that that doctrine does effectually solve all the difficulties connected with the existence of sin, and throws a flood of light on the plan of the universe.

As to the first of these points, he says, after having shown that the Scriptures do not contradict his doctrine, "Thank God, we are free! The wide field of truth is before us, with none to molest or to make us afraid; let us arise at once, and, by the aid of the Divine Spirit, enter and possess it. The way is now prepared to resume the inquiry, Shall the theory of a previous existence be received as true?" p. 449. In answer to the objection that there is no scriptural authority

for the doctrine, he says, that "there are modes of proof besides express verbal revelation, and that these are the most powerful and trustworthy by which the mind of man can be influenced. Otherwise God would not have left the whole system to rest on them." The being of God and the authority of Scripture rest on evidence independent of the Bible. Until these truths are established, the words of the sacred writers "have no binding power over us." As, therefore, we receive the being of God and inspiration of Scripture on other grounds than "express verbal revelation," so we may receive the doctrine of pre-existence. On this it is obvious to remark that the cases are as dissimilar as possible. The being of God is affirmed ten thousand times and in a thousand ways in his word. It might as well be said we must prove the existence of a man whose voice is sounding in our ears, before we can tell whether his words have any meaning. We may not see a preacher, and yet his discourse, fraught with high thoughts and holy sentiments, may reveal to us not only his existence but his character. So God is revealed in his word, a thousand-fold more clearly than in the heavens, or in the darkened vaults of our own nature. So too, from the beginning to the end of Scripture, the inspiration of the sacred writers is affirmed, and if it were not thus affirmed it never could be proved. Is this true of the pre-existence of man? Does that underlie the Scriptures, and gleam through every pore? Is it affirmed, assumed, defended, argued from, and in every way implicated in the texture of the Bible, as is the being of God, so that to believe the one without the other is an impossibility? Is it not, to say the least, just as much ignored in the sacred volume as La Place's nebular hypothesis? If so, it can no more be made a matter of religious faith than that hypothesis. It is the doctrine of the whole Christian world, Romish and Protestant, that all matters of faith must rest on the testimony of God as revealed in his word. The difference between Romanists and Protestants is not as to that point, but simply as to whether the Bible contains the whole word of God as revealed to the prophets and apostles. Romanists maintain that a certain part of that revelation is not recorded in the Scriptures, but has been handed down by tradition.

Both agree, however, that supernatural revelation is the only ground of faith. The simple concession, therefore, of Dr. Beecher, that his doctrine of pre-existence is not revealed in Scripture, (and of course not through tradition,) of necessity excludes it from the objects of faith. It can never be more than a matter of opinion. This is a distinction which Dr. Beecher seems to have lost sight of. He has been so long accustomed to see systems of theology spun out of theories of virtue, or principles of moral agency or of liberty of the will, which the Scriptures are only required not to contradict, that he seems to think the testimony of God is not necessary as the foundation of faith. He speaks of the belief of the existence of a personal God derived from intuitive principles. What would that belief amount to without the Bible? What hold had it on the Greek or Roman mind? How far is it now received among Pagans—who have the same nature, the same intuitions that we have? In the moments of extremest excitement, he does not venture to claim for his doctrine higher evidence than that which exists for the being of God independently of the Bible. And yet that evidence, as all history proves, is utterly inadequate to produce any abiding and operative faith. The world by wisdom knows not God. The heathen, Paul says, were atheists. We deny the sufficiency of reason to establish any doctrine so as to give it authority and power over the minds of men. The state of the world, were the sun blotted out, and a man set with a single candle to give light to the nations, would afford but a faint image of our condition without the Bible. If without the Scriptures not even the existence of God can be effectively established, although when supernaturally revealed, it necessitates belief, what can be said of the doctrine of pre-existence, without scriptural warrant—a doctrine which probably not ten men in Christendom believe, and which is beset with unanswerable objections? If the Scriptures do not teach the doctrine of pre-existence, no Christian can consistently believe it, because it is a religious doctrine, modifying and controlling the whole system of redemption and scheme of the universe. The man who steps off the Bible, steps upon a fog-bank, and soon disappears.

The second step in the argument is to show that the intui-



tive principles of honour and right, taken in connection with the facts of human depravity, demand the assumption of the pre-existence of man. To prove this is not so much the design of this portion of the Fifth Book, as of the whole work. The author has all along endeavoured to show that the intuitive principles of justice are irreconcilable with the statements of the Bible, and with the facts of experience, on the assumption that men come into this world as new-created beings. These principles are fundamental laws of belief, inwoven in our constitution, of divine authority, and irresistible in their controlling power. We must, therefore, admit the doctrine of pre-existence, or reject, not merely the authority of the Bible, but faith in the providence and being of a holy God. This is the argument in the validity of which the author has the utmost confidence. "The argument for the being of a God," he says, "has no superior force. The proof that the Bible is the word of God is no more conclusive. The proof of the truth of the Newtonian theory is not more powerful, although that is regarded as established beyond any reasonable doubt." p. 453.

We readily admit the paramount authority of the intuitive principles of truth and justice. All knowledge, all faith, all religion, rest on the assumption of the veracity of our own consciousness, and the validity of the laws of our mental and moral constitution. To suppose the contrary is to suppose that God has made it necessary for us to believe a lie. It is as much impossible for us to free ourselves from the laws of belief implanted in our constitution, as it is to free ourselves from the laws of nature. This is a matter of consciousness. No man can disbelieve the well-authenticated testimony of his senses, or the axioms of geometry, or the intuitions of reason, or the primary principles of morals, any more than he can disbelieve his own existence. To believe is to affirm to be true. But to affirm that to be true which we see to be false, or that to be false which we see to be true, is a contradiction. The Scriptures everywhere take for granted the trustworthiness and authority of these laws of our nature, as impressed upon it by the hand of God himself. Nothing, therefore, can exceed the strength of the conviction with which men believe

that God cannot sin, that virtue is obligatory, that we are responsible for our moral character, and other truths of like kind. To say that any revelation of God can contradict these intuitive principles, is to say that God can contradict himself. As to this point, Dr. Beecher stands on ground universally conceded.

There are, however, two things to be carefully observed in reference to this subject. The first relates to the principles themselves; the other, to their application. As to the former, the important question arises, What principles are to be recognized as axioms? This is a point as to which men differ. What is intuitively true to one mind, is either not seen at all to be true by another, or else only as a conclusion from much simpler principles. The propositions of Euclid must be demonstrated in order to be apprehended by most men. By higher intelligences they are intuitively discerned. Besides this, in many cases we cannot, by our own consciousness, discriminate between our intuitions and our strong convictions. Hence, we constantly see men urging as intuitive truths the erroneous conclusions of their understandings, and even their prejudices, or perverted moral judgments. The only principles which we are authorized to assume as intuitive, are universal and necessary truths; that is, truths which are universally admitted, and which necessitate belief as soon as presented. If we go beyond these narrow limits, we enter on debatable and fallible ground, and others have as much right to deny as we have to affirm. Tried by the criterion just referred to, there is hardly one of the six principles represented by Dr. Beecher as intuitively true, and already quoted in the former part of this article, which must not be either entirely discarded, or essentially modified. So far from having been universally believed, several of them have been almost universally disbelieved; and so far from necessitating faith, they cannot in any way gain it. Our limits, already unduly encroached upon, forbid an examination of these principles in detail. We select the third and fourth as the most important, and as having the most direct bearing on the object of the book. According to the former, it is said, God cannot justly hold his creatures responsible for any thing which "existed in them anterior to and independent

of any knowledge, desire, choice, or action of their own." p. 34. This, of course, means that nothing can be of the nature of sin but voluntary, personal action, or what is the result of such action. By parity of reason, nothing can be of the nature of virtue, but personal acts, and their subjective results. These two things are inseparable. They are only different statements of the more general principle that moral character is the result of personal conduct.

This principle, so far from being intuitively true, is contrary to Scripture, to the faith of the universal Church, and the common judgment of mankind. It assumes a mechanical theory of the moral government of God, as though rewards and punishments were always something positive and accessory, instead of being involved in the nature of good and evil. According to Scripture, to be spiritually minded is life; and to be carnally minded is death. To be holy is to be blessed and glorious. To be sinful is to be degraded and miserable. It matters not how a man becomes holy; whether he was so born, whether he made himself holy, or was new created by the power of the Holy Ghost. In like manner, whether a man inherits a sinful nature, principles, or habits, (these are only different expressions for the same thing,) or whether he renders himself corrupt, or is made so by the influence of Satan, does not alter the fact that he is sinful. Pride and malignity do not cease to be hateful and sinful, whatever may be their origin. A holy being is and ought to be an object of love and approbation; and an unholy being is and ought to be an object of dislike and disapprobation—simply because the one is holy and the other unholy. In other words, it is the doctrine of the Bible, the faith of the Church, and the instinctive judgment of men, that moral principles derive their character from their nature, and not from their origin. The Church has held universally that innate depravity is of the nature of sin, though inherited from Adam; and that inherent grace is of the nature of holiness, though infused into the soul by the power of God. Men regard the cannibals of New Zealand as degraded and vicious, without waiting to determine how much of their character is due to inheritance, how much to their circumstances, and how much to the will. Character, in all cases, is deter-

mined by a multitude of causes, of which voluntary agency is but one, and that not always the most important. To deny this, is to deny what all men in their moral judgments affirm. The Arab, the Hindu, the African, are what they are mainly in virtue of influences over which they have no control; and yet this does not alter their moral nature. The question how rational creatures became sinful, has its own difficulties; but those difficulties do not touch the matter now in hand. Sin is sin, and holiness is holiness, wherever found and however originated, just as much as light is light, from whatever source it comes. Adam was holy as he came from the hands of God, though his character was not self-originated. We hold, therefore, that Dr. Beecher's third principle, on which his whole theory rests, is much nearer being intuitively false than intuitively true.

The fourth principle is that the sin of one man can never be justly so laid to the account of another, as to be a legitimate ground of punishment. If there is any force in this principle, it must include the general proposition that one man cannot be justly made to suffer on account of the sin of another; for the injustice does not consist in the motive for the infliction, but in the infliction itself. It is as unjust to inflict suffering on one person on account of the sin of another, for the good of society, as for the satisfaction of justice—for the support of justice is essential to the good of society. There is, therefore, no force added to the principle above stated, by the introduction of the idea of punishment, for punishment has no relation either to the kind or degree of suffering, but only to the motive or design of its infliction. Provided the end to be attained by the infliction be itself good, it matters not what that end is—whether it be the promotion of virtue, the prevention of crime, or the satisfaction of justice. Whatever injustice there is in the case, consists in the sufferer being made to bear a burden incurred by no act of his own, and over which he had no control. There is not a semblance of an objection to the doctrine that we suffer the punishment of Adam's sin, which does not bear against the doctrine that we suffer the consequences of his sin. The principle advanced by Dr. Beecher as intuitively true, and which is made the corner-stone of his whole theory,

bears just as much against the one mode of statement as the other. And this he seems to admit. Now, so far from this principle being intuitively true, we venture to say there is scarcely a principle more thoroughly interwoven with the texture of Scripture, with the faith of the Church, the history of the world, and the constitution of society, than this decried principle of imputation. The Greek Church incorporated it in their doctrine that the natural death of men is the penalty of Adam's sin; the Latin Church adopts it in making original sin or spiritual death a penal evil; so do the Lutheran and Reformed Churches. These are the great divisions of the Christian world, and as to this point they are all agreed. They are all agreed, also, in incorporating the same principle in their doctrine of vicarious atonement.

In the Bible the threatening made to Adam in case of transgression, from its nature was made against his posterity, and was in fact inflicted upon them. God, in the solemn declaration of his character to Moses, said he was "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and upon the children's children unto the third and to the fourth generation." The prophet Jeremiah exclaims, "Thou showest loving-kindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquities of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them. The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of Hosts, is his name." On this principle God has acted from the beginning. The curse pronounced on Canaan rests on his posterity to this day. Esau's selling his birthright shut out his descendants from the covenant of promise. The fate of the posterity of the several sons of Jacob as predicted by the dying patriarch, was in several instances determined by the conduct of their parents. The children of Moab and Ammon were excluded from the congregation of the Lord for ever, because their ancestors opposed the Israelites when they came out of Egypt. "Their wives, their sons, and their little children" perished with Dathan and Abiram. So it was with the sons and daughters of Achan. God said of the unfaithful Eli,

that "the iniquity of his house should not be purged with sacrifice and offering for ever." To David it was said, "The sword shall not depart from thy house for ever; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife." Elisha said to the disobedient Gehazi, "The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed for ever." The sin of Jeroboam and of the men of his generation determined the destiny of the ten tribes for ever. The awful imprecation of the Jews, when they demanded the crucifixion of Christ, "Let his blood be on us and on our children," is still fulfilled. The whole Bible from beginning to end is full of the doctrine of imputation—full not only of illustrations of the declaration of God, that he will visit the iniquities of the fathers upon their children, but of the doctrine of vicarious punishment. This is the basis of the whole sacrificial ritual of the old economy, and of the doctrine of redemption. The principle in question pervades history as thoroughly as it does the Scriptures. The sins of parents are in fact visited on their children. There is not a nation on the face of the earth whose present condition is not determined by the conduct of their ancestors. Jews, Spaniards, Italians, Poles, Austrians, Englishmen, &c. of the present age all bear the iniquities of their fathers. The family of every criminal shares his punishment. The condemnation of men for the sin of Adam is but one illustration of a principle which pervades all Scripture and the very constitution of society. Men may spin out their intuitive principles endlessly; they can no more thereby arrest the working of God's plan, than they can hold back the planets with cobwebs. We have before remarked that no relief is obtained by saying that the sufferings which come on one man, or on one generation, for the sins of another, are not of the nature of punishment, but simply undesigned consequences which incidentally flow from the operation of a general law; for, in the first place, in the divine government nothing is undesigned; in the second place, the Scriptures expressly declare that these sufferings are not undesigned consequences, but judicial inflictions, threatened and foretold and executed as such; and in the third place, it makes no difference whether they are regarded as of the specific nature of

punishment or not. If a king orders all the children of a rebel to be put to death, it makes no difference, so far as the justice of the act is concerned, whether the motive assigned for it be the general good or the satisfaction of justice. In like manner, if God in his providence causes the intemperance of a father to ruin his family, or the sins of one generation to involve coming generations in misery, it matters not whether this be called with the Bible, "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children," or not. It is the same thing, by whatever name it is called. The doctrine of imputation, therefore, or that one man suffers the penalty of another's sin, is not got rid of by denying the fall of the race in Adam, or by denying the Bible, or even by denying God—for it is the working principle of the universe, the plan on which the world is actually carried forward. Every man should lay to heart that he is not an isolated individual, that others are implicated in his acts; that his iniquities will be visited on his children and his children's children. This is not merely a doctrine, but a fact, which can no more be altered than the law of gravitation. Nothing, therefore, can be more superficial and erroneous than these pretended axioms, by which Dr. Beecher would subvert the Scriptures and the moral government of God.

If, however, it is necessary that we should be careful what principles we admit into the class of intuitive truths, we should be no less careful in their application. It is intuitively certain that God cannot do wrong, and this is really the only sound principle included in Dr. Beecher's list of moral axioms. Every thing, however, depends on the application of the principle. If applied, as it is to a great extent by our author, on the assumption that every thing would be wrong in God that is wrong in us, or in a human sovereign, it would destroy all faith in Scripture and in providence. What would be thought of a king who should exterminate a nation, small and great, for the offences of its adult population, as God destroyed the world by the deluge, or as he rained down fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, or swept away the inhabitants of Canaan? Who would be justified in slaying all the first-born children in a land for the sin of its sovereign, as God did in Egypt? Who would confine the knowledge of the means of salvation for four thousand

years to one of the smallest of the nations of the earth? Who would permit, if he could prevent it, the great majority of men to remain until this day ignorant of the gospel? Who would allow so large a portion of the Christian Church to sink into heresy and superstition? Who would permit millions of souls to perish for ever? The Pelagian may say, God cannot prevent these evils in a moral system. This only introduces new difficulties, without alleviating the old ones. Could not God prevent the deluge, or the destruction of the infants of Sodom, or the little ones of the land of Canaan? Nay, did he not command those little ones to be slain? The infidel may say these are all scriptural facts, and only prove the Bible to be untrue. But even infidelity brings no relief. Does not the earthquake, famine, war, pestilence, overwhelm the innocent and guilty, the young and old, in indiscriminate ruin? Any man who has looked upon the agonies of a dying infant, has stood in the presence of as awful a mystery as the universe contains. We must have confidence in God. We must be willing that his judgments should be unsearchable, and his ways past finding out. To apply even sound principles to the Bible, as Dr. Beecher does, would make any man an infidel; and so to apply them to history, would make him an atheist. Unless we are willing to act on the principle that as God cannot do wrong, therefore, whatever he does must be admitted to be right, whether we can see it or not, we may as well give up all religion at once. Religion without faith is impossible, and faith that will not go beyond sight ceases to be faith. If we can explain the ways of God, and show them to be consistent with truth and righteousness, very well; we should be grateful for his condescending to give us this light. But to deny God's declarations or doings because we cannot understand or reconcile them, is sheer infidelity, and the certain road to outer darkness.

The unbelieving spirit which underlies and pervades this book, is its most painful feature. Its grand design seems to be to bring down God's nature and dispensations to the level of human comprehension. It sets up the standard of human judgment as the rule by which God is to be judged, and refuses to believe unless every thing can be made perfectly intelligible.



What would be thought of a child who should totter to the knee of a great monarch, and say, "Father, I cannot reconcile your administration of your kingdom with my intuitions. I cannot see how jails and gibbets are consistent with benevolence, or how this and that law comports with justice?" Would not his father say to him, "You poor little sceptic, it is well for you, you do not see; faith, and not sight, is the proper element of your being. You are no child of mine, unless you believe, though you see not." No man can be a child of God—no man can believe in God, on the principle of understanding all God does, or of banishing mystery from Scripture or from providence.

We come now to the last stage of the argument. Does the theory of pre-existence solve the great problem of sin, and dissipate the clouds which have heretofore gathered round the throne of God? Does it accord with the obvious facts of Scripture and experience? The theory is that men, or rather certain spirits, were created holy, or with constitutions and under circumstances favourable to holiness. In that original state they freely sinned. God, purposing their redemption, determined to adopt a remedial system, by which these fallen spirits should be brought under the means of recovery in another world or state of existence. They appear, therefore, here on earth, clothed in human bodies, and through the work of Christ, and the power of the Holy Ghost, multitudes of them are restored to holiness and God. Men, consequently, are born into this world in a state of condemnation, and corrupted by sinful habits and propensities, formed by their own voluntary agency in a previous state of existence, and for which they are responsible. p. 467. This accounts for original sin, or innate and total depravity, in a manner consistent with the character of God and the responsibility of men. It furnishes the solution of the mysteries which hang over the moral and providential government of God. It exhibits the true design and nature of the Church, consisting of these redeemed spirits, as the great centre of the universe, illustrating the character of God, and furnishing the moral power for securely training to holiness the endless coming generations of new-created minds.

We have already shown, as we think conclusively, in the

first place, that this doctrine, being confessedly extra-scriptural, forming no part of the revelation contained in the word of God, must on that account, if for no other, be rejected. No doctrine destitute of scriptural authority, can, consistently with Christian principle, be allowed to enter into our faith, or to control our views of religious truth. In the second place, it was shown that the theory of pre-existence is not only extra-scriptural, but directly opposed to the express assertions and widely extended implications of the sacred volume. We shall now endeavour to show, very briefly, that the doctrine breaks down as a theory, that it does not answer its intended purpose, and is inconsistent with the plainest facts of Scripture and observation. In the first place, it is not consistent with the nature of man, as that nature is revealed in Scripture, consciousness, and experience. According to the Bible, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. . . . So God created man in his own image, after the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it." Again, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul." We have here an account of a new order of beings, composed of a material element derived from the earth, and of a spiritual element derived from the inspiration of the Almighty. Of this nature thus constituted, all men by inheritance partake. With this scriptural account, the doctrine that Adam was a fiend from a higher state of being, inclosed in a human body, and that every new-born infant is a fresh instance of the incarnation of a fallen spirit, is in direct contradiction.

It is not less at variance with our own consciousness. We are not to ourselves adult spirits from another world. We have no knowledge derived from a previous state. We have no recollections or associations connected with such a state. If it is said, the same is true with regard to our existence in "our mother's womb," the answer is obvious. The latter is an existence of undeveloped consciousness; the former one of intelligence and responsibility. This negative argument is of itself decisive. Our nature reveals itself in consciousness,

and as there is no subjective evidence that we are spirits from another world, it is plain that such is not our nature. Everything revealed in Scripture concerning the nature of man, finds a response in consciousness. The Bible teaches that we are composed of two distinct elements, a material and a spiritual. Every one has the evidence within him that such is a true account of his constitution. The Bible teaches that we are free agents, that we are sinful, that we are responsible. All this is abundantly confirmed by our own consciousness. The Bible teaches the unity of the human race, and we instinctively recognize all men as our fellow-creatures. The Bible teaches the immortality of the soul, and the soul hears the annunciation as a revelation of its true nature. Thus the Scripture and consciousness harmonize as different parts of a piece of music. The one answers to the other without a discordant note. But the doctrine that we are spirits fallen from a pre-existent state finds no responsive string in the human breast. It affirms us to be what every man instinctively knows he is not.

Again, this theory of our nature is not only contrary to Scripture and consciousness, but also to notorious facts. We know things only by their phenomena. To affirm that the glimmering intellect of a new born infant is an adult spirit, capable of rebellion against God, and of the formation of moral character, is contrary to apparent facts. There is scarcely a distinctive attribute of the one which belongs to the other. The one has self-consciousness, thought, knowledge, conscience, self-determination. The other has no one of these prerogatives except potentially. We might, therefore, as reasonably assert that a mouse is an elephant, as that the soul of an infant is a spirit which has already rebelled against God, and formed its moral character in a previous state of being. Dr. Beecher's theory, therefore, must be false, because it does not accord with the true nature of man as revealed in Scripture, consciousness, and experience.

A second objection is that the theory fails to give a satisfactory account of the fact, that men are born in a state of sin and condemnation. This is indeed the purpose for which it is proposed. But here is the precise point where it specially

fails. Admitting the fact of pre-existence, there is such a solution of the continuity of our being in passing from one state to the other, as effectually to destroy our moral identity and responsibility. Experience indeed teaches that the metaphysical sameness of the soul may be preserved in the change from infancy to manhood, and from manhood to the fatuity of disease, or old age. But metaphysical sameness is far from satisfying the conditions of moral responsibility. An idiot is irresponsible, not only for acts performed during idiocy, but for all prior acts, so long as he continues irrational. And to make him a proper subject of punishment for acts committed before the loss of intelligence, you must not only restore his intellect, but the consciousness of his identity. You must so reconnect the present with the past as to awaken the sentiment of guilt. In other words, the indispensable conditions of punishment for *personal transgression* are present rationality and possible consciousness of sin. We limit the application of the principle to the case of personal transgression, for two reasons. First, because that is the case in hand. Dr. Beecher teaches that new-born infants are punished for personal sins committed in a previous state of existence. Secondly, because the principle is not applicable to any other case. The Bible and experience abundantly teach that infants, though not in the exercise of reason, nor conscious of guilt, are "children of wrath"—that a condemnatory sentence has passed upon them for that one offence on account of which death has passed on all men, and that they bear the iniquities of their fathers. We see the blood shed by one generation often exacted at the hands of another. The Bible also teaches that inherent corruption in infants is of the nature of sin, because it is in its own nature evil, precisely as those habits or dispositions which result from a repetition of sinful acts, though neither one nor the other, (*i. e.*, neither innate nor acquired habits,) are matters of consciousness, and also because innate corruption in infants is the result and penalty of voluntary transgression in Adam, of whose nature they partake. All this being admitted, the principle still holds good, that present rationality and consciousness of guilt, (or, at least, the possibility of it,) are the indispensable conditions of punishment for personal transgression.

To punish a man in a state of idiocy for crimes committed in a state of sanity, is impossible. We might as well talk of the exhumation and gibbeting the remains of Cromwell as a punishment for his part in the death of Charles. The outrage offered to the lifeless body of that great man did not rise to the dignity of punishment. It was mere brutality. Neither can the sufferings and death of infants be a punishment for personal transgressions of which it is impossible they should have any knowledge or consciousness of guilt. If men were born into this world in full maturity of intellect, with the knowledge of sins committed in a previous state of being, or with a continued or restored consciousness of personal identity, then we admit that innate corruption and the various calamities of this life would find in that fact a solution; just as the miseries of a future state find their solution in the consciousness of sins committed in the body. But that an idiot or infant can be held responsible, on the ground of personal guilt, for sins committed in a previous state, of which state it can have no memory or consciousness, is revolting to every sentiment of right and justice. If the impenitent in the next world become idiots, forgetful of this life, without the consciousness of their identity, or knowledge of the sins committed in the body, a future state of punishment would lose all its dignity and power. Its whole significancy would be destroyed, and it would present a revolting spectacle of unmeaning and unmerited suffering.

Such then is the theory which, without Scripture and against Scripture, we are called upon to adopt as a rational solution of mysteries! How often is the Bible doctrine, that those who will not submit their intellect to God are given up to delusion, illustrated in experience! Those who refused to believe the true God, came, the apostle says, to make brutes their gods. The only security against the degradation of reason, is the subjection of the finite reason of man to the infinite reason of God.

A third objection to the theory of pre-existence is that it affords no relief from the difficulties attending the moral and providential government of God. The general prevalence of sin and misery, the unequal distribution of good and evil, the

restriction of the knowledge of redemption, of the means of grace and of the gifts of the Spirit, the destiny of millions being made so often to turn on the action of an individual, the sins of one generation being visited upon another; these and similar mysteries remain in all their darkness. The fact that men sinned in a previous state of existence affords no relief. First: Because the sins of that state are never, so far as Scripture is concerned, specified as the ground of these dispensations. The deluge, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the Canaanites, of the Egyptians, when thousands perished who knew not their right hand from their left, were not inflicted for the sins of pre-existence, but for the sins of this life. Secondly: The sins of a previous state, according to the principle already stated, cannot justly be punished in this world. No man can be made to feel guilty of the sins of pre-existence; and therefore suffering inflicted for such sins can never be to him of the nature of punishment. The relation which he bears to those sins is the same as that of an idiot to the sins of which he is incapable of forming a conception. The chasm which separates the present from our assumed previous state, by breaking the continuity of consciousness, effectually destroys all moral responsibility for the sins of that state, and forbids their being made the ground of punishment in this world. The theory of pre-existence, therefore, furnishes no solution of the mysteries of God's moral and providential dealings with men.

Finally, the theory leaves the great difficulty of the origin of evil, precisely where it was. For six thousand years the human mind has laboured at the solution of this great problem in vain. It remains in all its original darkness. The sublime, the satisfactory and the sanctifying answer to the question, why God permits sin, is to be found in the words of our Lord: "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." Here we must ultimately rest, and here only can rest be found. It is by faith and not by sight, we know that the existence of sin is consistent with the character of God. And those who refuse to believe without sight, soon come into a state of mind in which they can neither see nor believe.

All the solutions of the origin of evil end either in denying

sin or denying God. One class of these solutions make sin necessary as having its source in nature, or as the transition point to good, or as a mere metaphysical limitation of being, or as having no existence in the sight of God, or as the necessary means of the greatest good. All these views more or less directly destroy the nature of sin as a moral evil. The other class deny the perfection of the Supreme Being. They either reject entirely the doctrine of a personal God, or they make him the author of sin, or they deny his power to prevent sin, in a moral system, or in some other way reduce the Almighty into bondage to the creature.

It is obvious that the question where sin originates, whether in this, or in a previous state, does not affect the difficulty of reconciling its existence with the perfection of God. Dr. Beecher, therefore, might have left the question alone—content to leave that difficulty as common to both doctrines. But that would be inconsistent with his whole status. An unresolved mystery is for him an eclipse of the glory of God, which renders it impossible to worship him. What would it avail for a mind in such a state, though man's innate corruption were satisfactorily explained, if his becoming corrupt under the government of God is left unaccounted for? The author is compelled, therefore, in consistency to bring his theory to bear on the great problem of the origin of evil. His doctrine is that the fall and redemption of a certain part of the spiritual world, was necessary in order to give God moral power to govern the universe successfully, and especially to educate in holiness the new created minds which age after age are to come into being. The only difference between this and the old Pelagian theory, which has been instinctively rejected by the common consciousness of the Church, is that the limitation of the power of God is not made to result from the very nature of free agency, and therefore, perpetual so long as free agents exist. It supposes the limitation to be temporary and confined to the early period of creation, and to arise not out of the nature of free agency, but from the deficiency of motives by which to influence created minds for good. When God has had time to develop his character in

the view of his creatures, he acquires sufficient power over them to secure their obedience to holiness. In either case, however, the limitation is the same. God cannot secure his creatures in holiness; in other words, he cannot prevent sin in a moral system. "Either," says Dr. Beecher, "the limitation of divine power in the earlier stages of creation, which I advocate, exists, or it does not. If it does not exist, then no man can defend God from the charge of malevolence. If it does exist, then there is, as I have shown, a simple and natural solution of the origin of evil." p. 486. Of course, if God cannot prevent sin, the question is answered, why he does not prevent it. But then we have lost our God. A being limited, conditioned, controlled by any thing out of himself, is not absolute, independent, infinite—he is not God. This is not a question which admits of argument. If the conception of God presented in Scripture, as a Being infinite, eternal and unchangeable—without limitation or control by any thing out of himself, and who does, and can do whatever he wills, does not commend itself at once as true, it can be of as little use to prove it, as to prove that the firmament of stars is beautiful. This conception of God is the controlling principle of religion and morality. It lies at the foundation of all piety, it is so inwrought in the religious experience of men that it is denied only by theorists; just as the existence of matter is denied. Why should there ever have been a question about the existence of evil, had not men known that God could prevent it? If they had conceived of God as a limited, that is, a finite being, there would be no difficulty in the case; and this conflict of ages had never occurred. It is simply because the idea of freedom from limitation enters into the scriptural, and even into the rational conception of God, that men have been in all ages in such straits to reconcile the existence of evil with the divine holiness. What thanks, then, to any man who pretends to solve the problem by simply denying one of its elements? The problem to be solved is not the existence of sin and the holiness of a finite being who cannot prevent it—any child can master that question—but the existence of sin, and the holiness of an infinite Being. That is the question.



We prefer ten thousand times to leave that question unanswered, or to wait till God sees fit to answer it, rather than to give up faith in God as uncontrolled and infinite.

A lower conception of God pervades this book than almost any other from a good man we ever read. Dr. Beecher constantly speaks of the Supreme Being as being subject to law, as bound by the principles of "honour and right," just as though he were a creature.\* This mode of thought and expression is not only highly irreverent, but incompatible with the true idea of God. God cannot be bound; he cannot be under obligations, or subject to responsibilities. All these modes of expression suppose subordination and subjection to authority. Wherever there is law, there is a lawgiver; and therefore if God is under the law, he is under a moral ruler. On this principle one of the strongest arguments for the being of God is founded. Moral obligation implies subjection to a moral ruler; therefore, as we are conscious of moral obligation, there must be a moral ruler to whom we are responsible. This argument is sound, and is so regarded by all theists. But if this mode of reasoning is correct, then it follows, that if God is bound by the moral law, he too is responsible to a superior. It is, however, a false and anti-theistic idea that moral excellence supposes moral obligation. It is the favourite argument of pantheists, that God cannot possess any moral attributes, because moral attributes suppose subjection to a moral law, a voluntary conformity to that standard of duty, and a possibility of non-conformity to it. But all this is inconsistent with the idea of an absolute Being, and therefore, they say, moral excellence cannot be predicated of God. Dr. Beecher adopts the same principle, though he draws from it a different conclusion. His conclusion is, that God is not independent,

\* His first intuitive principle, stated on p. 31, is, that "increase of power to any degree of magnitude produces, not a decrease, but an increase of *obligation* to feel and act benevolently towards inferiors." This is applied to God. "If God gives existence to inferior and dependent minds, is he . . . under any other or different obligations?" In another place, he says, "God is *bound* to give every new-created being a sound and healthy moral constitution," &c. p. 353. The strife between God and his rebellious creatures, he says, is one "which imposes the highest responsibilities on him whose power, knowledge, and other advantages, are greatest." p. 480. Such modes of expression are of frequent occurrence, and the idea of God from whence they spring pervades the book.

absolute, and infinite. He is bound by the moral law as much, and even infinitely more than his creatures. This whole mode of thought is anti-scriptural, and anti-theistic. We might as well speak of reason being bound to be wise, or benevolence being bound to be kind, as of God, who is the infinite Reason and Love, being bound to act wisely or mercifully. It is a solecism to speak of unwise reason, or unkind benevolence. No less incongruous are the ideas of evil and God. They cannot be brought together. To say that God is bound to be wise and good, is an absurdity. He is infinite wisdom and goodness, and he can no more be otherwise, than light can be darkness, or wisdom folly. This is the charm, the mystery, the glory of the idea of God, personal, self-conscious reason and goodness, and power—and as such, perfectly incapable of being in subjection, or being bound by anything but his own nature. God is above all law; he has the right to do what he wills; whatever he wills is right, and is right because he wills it. This is not the old scholastic doctrine of absolute power, agreeably to which God can make right to be wrong, and wrong to be right; vice to be virtue, and virtue vice. This, in the first place, is an absurdity. Contradictions are not the objects of power. Right can no more be wrong, than pleasure can be pain, or heat can be cold, or something nothing, existence nonexistence. Secondly, there is great difference between making the will of God the ultimate ground of moral distinctions, and making God's nature that ground. His will is for the creature the ultimate rule of right and wrong, but his will is determined by his nature, and is subject to no other law. Therefore it is that God has a right to do what he wills, and that whatever he wills is right, because he wills it, and because his will is the expression of his nature. What higher reason can be given that anything is wise, than that it is an act of infinite wisdom; or that it is right, than that it is the act of infinite holiness? The infinite reason is the ground and treasury of all truth; infinite goodness is the ground and rule of all right. But to subject God to law, to make him responsible, is to make him a creature.

As Dr. Beecher's fundamental conception is that of a finite God, he finds no difficulty in representing him as unable to

prevent sin, and as gradually gaining power to carry out his plans. For the same reason he can bring himself, without trembling, to speak of God's being unhappy. He says, "the entrance of evil has involved a period of long continued suffering to God;" that the glorious results to which he is "conducting the universal system have been purchased at the expense of his own long-continued and patiently endured sufferings," p. 487, and that God developes, "through trial and suffering," his character in view of his creatures. Now, when a man gets so low as this in his idea of God, we do not see why he should trouble himself with any thing. If the world is badly governed, if sin and misery overrun the kingdom of God, He cannot prevent it. He can do no better. If the hurricane break loose from the hands of this feeble God, and sweep innocent children and hoary sinners to a common destruction, he is only to be pitied. How can he help it? If hell should burst its gates and invade heaven, God can only stand aghast. If this has happened once, despite his protest and his tears, it may happen again. The universe is under the government of a well meaning but impotent Being, who can control created minds only by "moral power;" who can bind Satan and restrain fiends only by telling them it is wrong to be wicked—whose blessedness and whose dominions are at the mercy of his creatures, and who holds his throne only by sufferance. If God is a finite Being, if his power is limited, if he governs his rational creatures only by the ascendancy he gradually acquires over them by the exhibition of his character; if he has failed, despite all his resources, to prevent millions of millions of his creatures becoming and remaining sinful; if he endures great and continued suffering on account of the disobedience of his inferiors, which he cannot prevent, then Dr. Beecher has a right to place himself over against this God, as in nature his equal, to summon him to an account, to tell him, as he does throughout this book, he is bound to do this, and bound to avoid that, and that he will forfeit all respect unless he not only acts right, but makes it apparent to all Lilliput that he does so.—No! ten thousand times no! This is not our God. This is not the Lord Jehovah, who does his will among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the earth; who works

all things after the counsel of his own will; who turns the hearts of men as the rivers of water are turned; of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; in whose sight all nations are as the dust of the balance; whose judgments are unsearchable, and whose ways past finding out, and who gives no account of his doings.

The first and most indispensable condition of piety is submission—blind, absolute, entire submission of the intellect, the conscience, the life, to God. This is blind, but not irrational. It is the submission of a sightless child to an all-seeing Father; of a feeble, beclouded, intelligence to the Infinite Intelligence. It is not only reasonable, but indispensable, both as a safeguard from scepticism, and for the rational exercise of piety. As we must end here, we may as well begin here. First or last we must come to say, It is Jehovah, let him do what seems good in his sight. Jehovah can do no wrong. The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice. If then, Adam sinned, and all men are thereby brought under sin; if we are born children of wrath; if sin and misery reign over the earth; if children bear the iniquities of their fathers; if our present condition is the result of the conduct of those who go before us; if the storm and pestilence respect neither age nor character; if clouds and darkness are round about the throne of God, we must still hold fast our confidence in God, for if we let go our hold, we fall into the bottomless abyss of darkness and despair.

We lay down this volume with very mingled feelings. It records the struggle of a strong and devout mind with the great problems of life, under the guidance of a false principle. Raised by the teachings of Scripture and his own religious experience, above the superficial views of the nature of sin and of the depravity of man which prevail around him, instead of submitting to the plain assertions of the Bible and obvious facts of providence, our author has attempted to understand the Almighty unto perfection, and of course has failed. The issue to which the book brings the reader, is, an infinite God and mystery, or a finite God and a satisfied understanding. This is only the old alternative, God or man; one or the other must rule. This is the real Conflict of Ages, and the result cannot be doubtful. Happy are they who are on the Lord's side!