

THE
BIBLICAL REPERTORY
AND
THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

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ART. I.—BIBLICAL ELOQUENCE AND POETRY.

SACRED Poetry and sacred Rhetoric have both shared, but too largely, in that inheritance from the heathen classics which has at once so enriched and corrupted the literature of Christian nations. The inspired volume *alone*, in its *original* and divine perfection, remains incorrupt and unmarred. Its poets and orators alone are found guiltless of idolatry, of flattery, of selfishness, of disingenuousness, or vain-glory. Whether by their antiquity, the peculiar customs and exclusive laws of their country, their unlettered condition, or solely and directly by the Holy Ghost, they were all secured from those fascinations of a foreign style and false philosophy, and an impure mythological fancy, which so often bewilder and betray those who essay to catch their spirit and execute their purposes. Even those devout and venerable "Fathers" who learned sacred eloquence from inspired lips, and employed its powers in a cause as sacred, are too often found like magnanimous, but unwary physicians, inhaling death while giving life; or like generous conquerors of a barbarous land, conferring liberty and peace, but catching tyranny and war, teaching truth, but learning error, imparting the gifts and graces of heavenly wisdom and Christian love, themselves, while, too often lingering in wistful meditation beneath the unhallowed shades of Academus, or dwelling in unguarded speculation on the storied

heresy-hunters, no disorganizers, no innovators. There must be sound Catholicism, latitude of thought, interchange of views. The discipline of the Church must not be handled with officiousness, or brandished in menace, or despised with impunity. Union must be desired, kindness manifested, and A UNIVERSAL REVIVAL OF RELIGION prayerfully and practically sought. Prayer must be more practised in secret by the ministry themselves, and its fruits more exemplified in all their deportment. Youth must abstain from forwardness, and age from usurpation. Ignorance must not be positive, nor learning dictatorial. Goodness must become more the criterion of worth than greatness or station; and HOLINESS TO THE LORD must be written—and ours is the responsibility to write it, each for one—on the principles and the actions of every individual.

SAMUEL H. COX.

New York, August, 1831.

ART. IV.—REMARKS ON DR. COX'S COMMUNICATION.

WE have departed from the established usage of periodical works in admitting the communication of Dr. Cox. For this departure, as well as on account of the character of the article in question, we owe some explanation to our readers. This is the more necessary, as we are not willing to be considered as now setting a precedent, which shall render it in any degree incumbent on us, to publish the rejoinders of all who may wish to appeal from the decisions of this Review, to the judgment of the public. There is an evident propriety in those who feel constrained to make such an appeal, choosing some other vehicle for the purpose. We have already been requested to give up a large part of a number of the *Repertory* to a vehement attack on the validity of our own ordination. Our Baptist brethren may think it reasonable to request us to assail infant baptism, in their behalf; and in short any man, no matter what his sentiments, might, on this principle, employ us as the means of advocating his cause before the public. There was the less ground for the present application, as Dr. Cox does not pretend that he has been unfairly dealt with. He has no wrongs to redress. By his own admission, his doctrines were fairly presented and kindly discussed.

If it be asked, why then we have inserted the Dr's. communication, in violation of a general and salutary usage? we have only to say, we were desirous of manifesting to him the sincerity of the kind feelings and confidence, which we had expressed; and that we really wished ourselves to know, and let our readers know more fully what views were entertained by the Dr. and others, on the subject to which the sermon and review relate. It was mainly on these grounds, in the exercise of the responsible sovereignty which all editors possess over their own pages, that we informed Dr. Cox of our willingness to admit his reply to our review, provided its contents should present no insuperable objection. We confess, however, when we came to read the expected article, we were a good deal staggered. Instead of a calm and instructive discussion of an important doctrinal subject, we found a series of the most extraordinary subsultations it has ever been our lot to witness. Under some of the more violent paroxysms, we saw that he was carried, at times, beyond our comprehension, and at others beyond the limits of becoming reverence for his subject. We found he had availed himself of this opportunity of setting himself right with the public, on an indefinite variety of points; of answering way-side remarks of critics on his sermon; of counteracting all rumours of his desire to leave "the See of Laight Street;" of giving side-hints to all classes of dissentients from his views and measures; of drawing the portraiture of men and parties, and in short, of careering, in the joyous consciousness of freedom from all logical trammels, over the whole field of things actual or possible. Still, as the victims of the *Chorea Sancti Viti*, in the multitude of their movements, do sometimes hit on those which are graceful and forcible, so, Dr. Cox, under the influence of the singular mental chorea to which he is subject, is not unfrequently interesting and striking. It is for the sake of these instances of the excellent in his address, and for the opportunity which it affords of remarks on several topics, that we concluded to give our readers the mingled pleasure and pain, the perusal of the article referred to must occasion.

Our opinion of its manner is perhaps already sufficiently indicated. We would only remark further on this point, that Dr. Cox seems in this matter very unfortunately circumstanced. For him to cast aside all that is out of the ordinary way as to style and method, would be to renounce his individuality as a writer or speaker, and to divest himself of the

very thing, which now excites attention and secures notoriety. And yet, it is obvious that the peculiarities of his manner may, and in fact have already, become so prominent as to constitute almost its whole character. Hence it is rare that his readers trouble themselves with what he says; their attention is engrossed in witnessing his feats at diction. This is a serious evil; but it is one which might be corrected. Dr. Cox, when filled with his subject and anxious to carry a point in a deliberative assembly, is capable of speaking after the manner of men, and that too, with great force and directness. What magic influence there is in a pen that it should send him off like a rocket, whizzing, scintillating and exploding in thin air, we do not know, and very much lament. The fact is, however, that there is as great a difference between Dr. Cox in debate and Dr. Cox with a pen in his hand, as between a piece of artillery and a piece of fire-works. There is danger, too, of constantly carrying the peculiarities to which we have referred to greater lengths; because there is pleasure in the exercise of almost all kinds of power; and it is evidently a source of much gratification to Dr. Cox to be able to execute sentences, which no other performer on the language would think of attempting. His friends, therefore, see with regret his fondness for the wonderful in style growing upon him. However much some other productions of his pen may have been admired, we think the one before us must, in many of its parts, be regarded as his *chef d'œuvre*, in its way.

There is another prominent feature of the Dr.'s manner as a writer, his profuse use of Latin phrases. We are not disposed to refer this to pedantry, but to that fondness for aptness, and taste for the unusual, which govern him. With a tenacious memory such phrases adhere to the mind, and without effort suggest themselves as the fittest vehicles for its ideas. But though it is easy for such a man to retire from "the feast of languages" well laden "with the scraps," he should remember that scraps are poor fare for other people, especially when they constitute so large a portion of all they get. As Dr. Cox loves frankness we trust he will not be offended with the foregoing exhibition of it.

With regard to the spirit of his communication, we have no complaint to make. On the contrary, we thank him for the kind feelings which he expresses towards the conductors of this work, which it gives us sincere pleasure cordially to reciprocate. We readily make this acknowledgment as to

the general spirit of the piece, although we think there is a grievous *ad invidiam* tendency pervading the greater part of it. What there is of argument in it, is entirely of this character. This offensive and mischievous characteristic, however, does not appear to arise from a deliberate, much less a malignant desire to cover those who differ from him with odium, but from an overweening complacency in his own peculiar opinions and measures, which to a lamentable extent perverts and narrows his views. The justice of these remarks, we fear, will too clearly appear in the sequel.

It is not our purpose to enter anew on the consideration of "regeneration and the manner of its occurrence." For this, the piece under remark, furnishes no apology. No one of our positions has been presented, much less discussed; Dr. Cox leaves the matter just where he found it; and there we shall leave it. Nor do we intend to follow the writer through the various mazes of his course, but simply to select a few from the numerous subjects around which he has corruscated, as the topics of a few remarks.

I. The first point to which we wish to refer for a moment, is the complaint, that we had no right to consider his discourse as an attack on Old School Calvinism. This, he says, is a gratuitous assumption, and asks, "What right, brethren, had you to feel aggrieved?" In the subsequent part of the piece, he tells us candidly, that his object in the preparation and publication of his discourse, was to destroy at one stroke, the very foundation of the objection of sinners to the duty of immediate repentance, and to stop the mouths of those who encouraged them in their cavils and delay. If, therefore, we did not justify the ground taken by sinners, we did not come within the scope of his remarks; and, consequently, as he was not acting the part of a partizan, we had no business to assume a foreign quarrel, and, by appearing to act on the defensive, to secure an undue advantage before the public. He seems to labour under a misapprehension, however, in supposing that we regarded him as acting as a party man in this affair. We distinctly stated, "Dr. Cox pins his faith to no man's sleeve, and is the follower of no party," p. 267. What more could he wish on this point. His avowed and laudable object in publishing his sermon, is perfectly consistent with every thing we have said of it. In prosecuting this object, however, he was led, as we believe, to commit great injustice. He stated, that to maintain that men are passive in

regeneration, or that the result of the Spirit's influence on the heart, is the production of a holy principle, is to teach the doctrine of physical regeneration, to maintain that the substance of the soul is changed, "the connatural diseases of its texture" healed; is to make man a machine, a stone, to destroy his responsibility, harden his conscience, and ruin his soul. Surely these are grave charges. And against whom are they directed? Not against A, B and C, by name, but against all who hold the theory of regeneration which the Doctor denounces; that is, against all Old Calvinists in a body, against the whole mass of the Reformed Churches, against the Puritans of England and America; against Edwards, Bellamy, and Dwight, among the dead; against Woods, Nettleton, and hundreds of others among the living. Now, we ask, how could we avoid feeling not only grieved, but aggrieved by such an assault, not on men indeed, but on principles; but still on our principles? It is a strange idea, that in caricaturing, misrepresenting, and holding up to contempt and reprobation the avowed opinions of men, you give them no ground to complain, and no provocation to explain and defend their views. Dr. Cox's position is unequivocal. He denounces as absurd and destructive, the opinion that moral principles can exist in the order of nature, or any other order, prior to moral action. And he does this, although he knew the opinion was and is held by all classes of Calvinists, except those who have adopted the "exercise scheme," and the advocates of the (yet im Werden) theory of our New Haven brethren. Though we fully approve, therefore, of the object which Dr. Cox had in view in his discourse, we must be permitted to think that he took a very unfortunate method of attaining it, and one which fully justified our assuming a defensive attitude, while we attempted to prove, first—that those who adopted the principle just stated, did not hold the opinions on regeneration which Dr. Cox ascribed to them; and, secondly, that these opinions are not fairly deducible from the principle in question. These are the two points laboured in our review. We undertook to show that those who believe in the existence of moral principles as distinct from all acts, constantly assert that they regard the change effected in regeneration as moral, in opposition to a physical change, involving neither the creation of a new faculty, nor any change of essence; that the mode of its occurrence is perfectly congruous to our nature, offering no violence to any of our powers; and that the influ-

ence by which it is effected, although immediate and certainly efficacious, is still a rational influence, employing truth as its instrument, and doing the soul no more violence than demonstration does the intellect, or persuasion the heart. We, therefore, complained that men, who constantly avow these views, are grievously misrepresented and defamed, when exhibited as teaching that regeneration is the creation of a new essence, a healing of the diseased texture of the soul; that it is effected, "by the prodigious efforts and labours of Omnipotence," in a way "to paralyze the soul, or strike it through with a moral panic." This, we say, is defamation, grievous and injurious. It may, and in Dr. Cox's case, doubtless, did proceed from a conviction of the truth of his accusations, arising from his confounding two very different things, philosophical and practical passivity, as we presume he would term them. But this, though it relieves him from all suspicion of malignity, does not render the charges less unjust or less mischievous; and the fact of their having been made, affords a full justification of the defensive attitude assumed in the review.

II. Another point on which Dr. Cox remarks, is the manner in which we conducted the discussion. He says, we seemed forever engaged in adjusting the relations between certain positions on the one hand, and certain systems of divinity on the other; that, instead of referring to the Bible, we quoted Owen, Charnock, Edwards, Dwight, &c. And he takes occasion heroically to assert his utter disregard for such authorities, and his independence on every thing but the Scriptures, in doctrinal matters. His remarks on this subject, are very good, although rather common place, for him, and not at all to the point. Who has questioned the supremacy of the Scriptures? Who pretended that the authority of men is worth a straw in comparison with that of God? What wonderful singularity is there in asserting that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice? The effect (we do not say the intention) of all this, however, is to place himself and us in contrast; to represent himself as walking in the broad light of the sun, and us as groping in the dark, with a farthing-light in our hand. This, we say, is the effect of his display of his regard for the Bible, and his lamentation over the sparseness of Scripture texts, found, oasis-like, (as he has it) in the desert of our review. Now, let us ask, what ground there is for such a complaint, and for this disadvantageous contrast. Dr. Cox had asserted, that all who held a certain

principle, represented regeneration as a change in the "entity" of the soul, produced by Almighty power in a way utterly destructive of the nature of the mind, and inconsistent with responsibility. We undertook to show that these men constantly disclaim the opinions thus injuriously ascribed to them. How was this to be done? By appealing to the Bible? Hardly. When the question of fact was presented, what did a certain class of men teach? we considered it the plain course to go to their writings to ascertain the point. And this, accordingly, we did. Dr. Cox, therefore, has suffered himself to indulge in a declamation about dependence on human authority, for which the review did not give the least apology.

We are indebted, however, to his zeal on this subject, (which led him to express his utter disregard for the standards of our church when placed in contrast with the Bible,) for an episode on creeds and confessions, which we consider the most valuable and sober-minded portion of the whole communication. The sentiments of Dr. Cox on this point we think are excellent, equally removed from the cavils of mere declaimers against all creeds, and from the mistaken zeal which would exalt them above the ground on which their object and their framers place them. The truth is, as Dr. Cox states, they are absolutely necessary as the bond of conventional agreement among those associated in the same ecclesiastical connexion; and, therefore, in one form or another, are employed by every religious society which ever existed or can exist. There does not appear, in fact, to be any diversity of opinion of consequence on this subject in our church. The great majority of ministers and private Christians are evidently of one mind as to the necessity of creeds. The great dividing question is, how is the subscription or assent to our standards to be interpreted? Or, with what degree of strictness is the phrase "system of doctrines," as it occurs in the ordination service, to be explained? On this subject, which is one of vital importance, there are, if we do not mistake, two extremes equally to be lamented. On the one hand, there are some, who seem inclined to give the phrase in question, such a latitude that any one, who holds the great fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, as they are recognised by all evangelical denominations, might adopt it; while on the other, some are disposed to interpret it so strictly as to make it not only involve the adoption of all the doctrines contained in the Confession, but to preclude all diversity in the manner of conceiv-

ing and explaining them. They are therefore disposed to regard those, who do not in this sense adopt the Confession of Faith and yet remain in the Church, as guilty of a great departure from moral honesty. This we think an extreme, and a mischievous one. Because, it tends to the impeachment of the character of many upright men, and because its application would split the Church into innumerable fragments. These are among its most prominent evil tendencies. That it is an extreme, we think obvious, from the following considerations. It is making the terms of subscription imply more than they literally import. Two men may, with equal sincerity, profess to believe a doctrine, or system of doctrines, and differ in their mode of understanding and explaining them. 2. Such a degree of uniformity never was exacted, and never has existed. The Confession, as framed by the Westminster Divines, was an acknowledged compromise between different classes of theologians. When adopted by the Presbyterian Church in this country, it was with the distinct understanding that the mode of subscription did not imply strict uniformity of views. And from that time to this, there has been an open and avowed diversity of opinion on many points, among those who adopted the Confession of Faith, without leading to the suspicion of insincerity or dishonesty. 3. It is clearly impossible, that any considerable number of men can be brought to conform so exactly in their views, as to be able to adopt such an extended formula of doctrine precisely in the same sense.

But if, as we think, nine-tenths of the ministers of the Presbyterian Church, will be ready to admit, there is some diversity of opinion admissible among those, who, with a clear conscience, can say they adopt the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the sacred Scriptures, where is the line to be drawn? What departure from the strict historical sense is allowable? This is confessedly a very delicate and difficult question, one on which we shall express our views with candour, though with deference to those who may differ from them. It has been said by some of the most prominent and zealous defenders of our standards, that they are willing to allow the same latitude of interpretation, which the old Synod which adopted the Confession would have done. This might be a very safe and excellent rule, could it now be clearly ascertained and authenticated to the Churches. As this, however, seems impossible, it may be stated in other words, although, perhaps, much to the same effect. The very

terms "system of doctrines," conveys a definite idea—the idea of a regular series of connected opinions, having a mutual relation and constituting one whole. In professing to adopt the Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrines taught in the sacred Scriptures, a man professes to believe the whole series of doctrines constituting that system, in opposition to every other. That is, he professes to believe the whole series of doctrines which go to make up the Calvinistic system, in opposition to the Socinian, Pelagian, Semi-Pelagian, Arminian, or any other opposite and inconsistent view of Christianity. These doctrines are clearly expressed; such as the doctrine of the trinity, the incarnation and supreme deity of Christ, the fall and original sin, atonement, justification by faith, unconditional personal election, effectual calling, perseverance of the saints, eternal punishment of the wicked, &c. &c. &c. Now, every man who, *ex animo* and *bona fide*, believes, all these doctrines, does, according to the correct interpretation of language, hold the "system of doctrines" contained in the Confession of Faith. And, we think, so long as this is done, we are safe. With respect to each of these several points, there are, and safely may be, various modes of statement and explanation consistent with their sincere reception. Thus, with regard to the Trinity, some may be able to adopt every expression found in the Nicene creed, or in Bishop Bull's exposition of it, while others may feel a strong repugnance to many of its phrases, and yet adopt every idea essential to the doctrine. And thus, too, in relation to the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ, some may adopt the strict *quid pro quo* system; others the infinite value theory; others that of its universal applicability; and yet all hold the doctrine itself. And thus, in reference to effectual calling, some may have one, and some another theory as to the mode or order of divine influence; some supposing divine illumination to precede the sanctification of the heart; and others regarding the former rather as the result of the latter; and yet, all believe that the effect is infallibly secured by the immediate agency of the Holy Ghost. In short, there are, with regard to every doctrine, certain constituent formal ideas which enter into its very nature, and the rejection of which is the rejection of the doctrine, and there are certain others, which are merely accessory and explanatory. About the latter, men may and will differ, though they agree as to the former. Such diversity always has and always must exist, where any considera-

ble number of men unite in adopting the same extended formula of faith. If it be asked, what latitude of explanation is to be allowed? we should answer, any which does not really affect the essentials of a doctrine. But who is to judge whether an explanation does or does not interfere with what is essential to a particular doctrine? We answer, in the first place, this is a question for every man to answer in the sight of God. It is to him a matter of the greatest interest and responsibility, to determine whether he really rejects the doctrines which he professes to receive. But secondly, the Presbytery has a right of judgment in all such cases. To enable them to do this intelligently, is one great object of the examination to which every candidate for ordination is subjected. It is their business to decide this very point, whether the candidate believes or not the doctrines of our standards, and they are under the most solemn engagements to God and their brethren, to do this honestly. And here the matter must be left. There can be no rule which does not place the responsibility of deciding on its application somewhere. There can, however, be no serious difficulty on this subject, so long as the determination is conscientiously adhered to, of admitting no one who rejects or explains away any of the doctrines constituting the system contained in the Confession.

The advantages of adopting this rule, which seems to us sufficiently definite, are obvious. It would put a stop to a multitude of difficulties—to much general crimination on the one hand, and much loose declamation on the other. It would furnish ground on which, it is believed, the strictest friends of the standards might safely leave the cause of truth, and where they would be joined by the great mass of all consistent and sincere Presbyterians. It would prevent the thousand evils which must arise from having a constantly varying rule on this subject—or from having one principle in theory and another in practice—or from attempting to enforce a degree of uniformity, impossible in the present state of human nature. While, however, such unauthorized strictness would ruin any Church on earth, it is no less obvious that the other extreme would lead to the same or still more disastrous results. There is, in the first place, a departure from strict moral principle in professing to receive a system of doctrines and yet rejecting one or more of its constituent parts; that is, in giving to the phrase “system of doctrine,” such a latitude of construction as is inconsistent with all just rules of

interpretation. If the question, what do these words, "system of doctrines" as they occur in the ordination service, mean? were submitted to a thousand impartial men—nine hundred and ninety-nine would no doubt answer, they mean the Calvinistic system distinctively as exhibited in our standards; and consequently that no man, who denied original sin, efficacious grace, personal election, decrees, or perseverance of the saints, or any other of its characteristic parts, could, with a good conscience, profess to receive it. The demoralizing tendency of a mere *pro forma* subscription, therefore, is one of the greatest of all objections to latitudinarianism on this subject. It is morally wrong. It is a violation of truth, in the estimation of all impartial men, and in the eye of the world. Better a thousand times to alter or discard the Confession than to sanction such a principle. But, secondly, it would effectually destroy the very intent of a creed. For if the principle be once admitted that one of the doctrines of the system may be rejected, there is an end to all meaning in the profession to adopt. One may reject one doctrine, and another another; one the doctrine of original sin, another that of election, and a third, both. It is no longer the system of the Confession, but one which an Arminian, Pelagian, Socinian or Deist might, on this principle, adopt. It is clearly absurd to have a rule of interpretation which defeats the very object of an instrument. Thirdly, such a rule would obviously lead to the prostration of the cause of truth, to a great extent. For although we do not maintain that creeds are able to uphold the truth in times of general defection, yet we think it obvious, that much of their want of efficacy in this respect is to be ascribed to lax views as to the terms of subscription, prevailing during the incipient stages of such defection, which opens the door to all manner of heresies, and takes from the Church the power of discipline for matters of opinion. There seems to be no more obvious principle, than that while a body professes to hold certain doctrines, it should really hold them. If the doctrines are discovered to be erroneous, let the profession of them be discarded.

These are the principles, which, if we mistake not, the great mass of Presbyterians are ready to adopt. They are ready to say that no man can consistently be a minister in our Church, who rejects any one of the constituent doctrines of the Calvinistic system contained in the Confession of Faith; while, from necessity and from principle, they are willing to

allow any diversity of view and explanation not destructive of their nature, that is, not amounting to their rejection. We fear, however, that this is not the ground always acted upon with impartial fidelity. While some may be disposed to resort to the discipline of the Church to correct mere diversity of explanation; others seem disposed to wink at the rejection of acknowledged constituent doctrines of the Calvinistic system. Evidence of this latter point may, we think, be found in the fact, that in more than one of the religious journals published in the heart of the Presbyterian Church, and under the supposed patronage of some of its clergy, every constituent idea of original sin has been openly renounced and even ridiculed. This is not mere difference in explanation, but the renunciation of a doctrine in all the forms in which it has been held by the Reformed Churches. For it is an undeniable, and, we suppose, an admitted fact, that this doctrine forms a part of every evangelical system adopted at the period of the reformation. Thus too the doctrine of unconditional, (i. e. not founded on the foresight of faith and good works,) personal election has in one or more of these journals, been with equal explicitness discarded. We do not say that these papers speak the sentiments of any of the clergy in our Church, but we think such is the presumption; and if this is the case, we are not able to reconcile such a course with the sound principles of morals.

In the present agitated state of our Church, we are persuaded that this, of all others, is the subject of the most practical importance. If it could be once clearly ascertained and agreed upon, where the line was to be drawn, there would be an end to a great part of the contention and anxiety which now unhappily exists. It is in this view, and on the principle that it is the privilege and duty of every member of a body to contribute his mite to its prosperity, that we have ventured to express our views on this important subject.

III. We come now to a third point in this article, in the consideration of which, we shall be obliged to expose the great injustice of which Dr. Cox has been guilty. A great part of his communication is taken up in a vague and indiscriminate declamation against what he calls "passivity," or "passivity doctrine." What he means by this, is not easy to determine; we presume it is, the idea that men must sit still and do nothing, when called upon to obey the gospel, but patiently wait God's time to make them holy, without any ef-

fort of their own. This is absurd and mischievous doctrine enough, and we are perfectly willing to abandon it and its advocates to the lash of Dr. Cox's sarcastic ridicule. But who are the men, whom he represents as holding such doctrines and pursuing such a course? Why those who teach that regeneration is not man's own act—that it consists in the production, by the power of the Holy Spirit, of a holy disposition. By what means does he connect these two things together? By what authority does he denounce those who entertain this view of regeneration as teaching that men must sit still and do nothing to effect their salvation—thus deluding their souls? The only ground which we can discover for this, is the right he has assumed of drawing inferences from other men's doctrines and then charging these conclusions on them as their practical opinions. He considers the one doctrine as leading to the other—if men cannot regenerate themselves—they are not to blame for not being regenerated, and consequently have nothing to do but wait patiently until the work is done for them. The principle on which this inference is founded, is that obligation cannot extend beyond the possession of adequate ability—that is, that men cannot be justly required to do any thing for which they have not the full requisite ability. We wish to say a word as to the soundness of this principle, in the first place—and then consider with what show of justice Dr. C's. charges are sustained.

First, as to the principle, that men are under no obligation to do any thing which they have not full ability to perform. In our last number we endeavoured to show, that this maxim which is self-evidently true when applied “to actions consequent on volition,” is the reverse of true, “when applied to dispositions, habits, and affections.” On this subject, however, Dr. Cox says, that impossibilities exclude degrees—that if the sinner suspects the impossibility of what is required of him, “he cares not for degrees or *modes*, as long as he thinks he cannot, he will never try, never feel his obligation, never do it.” Matters certainly have greatly altered. Once the fact of the sinners inability was admitted, and its nature was considered a point of primary importance. Now, the question about “*modes*” is declared to be insignificant. The mere fact that he is unable—“that he cannot,” is declared to be enough to produce “passivity,” and to prevent the performance of duty. This change in the manner of preaching seems to be an evidence of change of views on this subject, of the

adoption of a new theory of agency—one which we think ought to be more fully developed by its advocates. Of this, however, we shall say no more at present. We profess to belong so far to the old school, as to think that the question about modes is a matter of importance—that the nature of the inability under which a sinner labours is a matter of great consequence, and that the two propositions that he is unable—and yet responsible, are perfectly consistent. This inability we maintain is a moral inability, that is, arising from his own sinfulness—and that it is consistent with responsibility we think, may be shown, (without entering into a metaphysical discussion, which Dr. Cox so poetically eschews,) by a few simple considerations.

In the first place, the Bible every where recognises man's obligation to obey the whole law of God perfectly, and yet teaches that he is unable to do it. Neither of these points we think can be disputed. Paul says, "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." By carnal mind is doubtless to be understood, such a state of mind as is to be found in every one, not under the influence of the Spirit of God. In another place, he says of the natural man—that he cannot know the things of the Spirit of God. Christ twice in the sixth chapter of John, says to the unbelieving Jews, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him;" and he tells his own disciples, that without Him they can do nothing, i. e. bring forth no good fruit. The same truth is taught in a multitude of other passages directly or by implication. Every thing good in man is ascribed, not to himself, but to the Holy Ghost, to God, "who works in us both to will and to do." Regeneration is never referred to the will of man, but to the "mighty power of God, which wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." The fact is, the impotency of man is so clearly taught in the Bible, that few doctrines have been so universally received. If it be true, that in any one instance, God requires of man any thing which he declares he is unable to perform, two things are plain, first, that there is an inability consistent with responsibility, and secondly, that such must be the inability under which the sinner actually labours. But secondly, if universal experience does not prove that man is unable perfectly to keep the law of God, we know no fact which experience is competent to establish. What idea of inability can we have more definite, than that a cause never has and (as every man is intimately

persuaded) never will produce a given effect? Here is man's power to comply with the law of God—tried during thousands of years and under every variety of circumstances, and never, in any one instance, has it secured the result of perfect obedience. Surely that is a very inadequate power, which never has in a single case out of thousands of millions, produced the effect required. The declaration that any man has full adequate power to live from infancy to old age without sinning in thought, word, or deed—having his affections uniformly in a right state—being perfectly conformed to all God's requirements, strikes every one as absurd, and yet it is duty. Every one feels that perfection is a moral impossibility for man in this world, and yet every one feels that the want of it, is sin. These two facts, therefore, of inability, and obligation, so far from being inconsistent, are united in every man's consciousness. Besides, the assertion that a man sunk in sin, can in a moment change his own heart, every such man feels to be untrue. How is he to go about it? Will a simple volition effect it? Will the presentation of any motives, turning the mind towards the objects which he is bound to love, (the only ability which he possesses,) accomplish the work? Daily experience proves the reverse. Though the sinner knew he should inherit a kingdom, or be happy for eternity, if he should call into exercise holy affections for a single moment, he could not do it, however much, *from such motives*, he might desire it. How often would the dying sinner give worlds, really to possess the power so confidently attributed to him? But thirdly, the experience of Christians, as well as that of sinners, proves that men are unable to do what they still feel to be in the highest degree incumbent on them. Let any Christian ask himself, if he is not conscious of being unable perfectly to keep the law of God, and whether this sense of inability destroys his sense of obligation? Is he not conscious of his entire dependence on God—unable to do any thing as of himself; and yet so far from being disposed to plead this as an excuse, or extenuation, it is the most humiliating of all considerations. We have no doubt, Dr. Cox is conscious of his inability to be absolutely perfect. Nay more, that in seasons of coldness and languor of affection, he would give the world to have his heart filled with the love of God, and yet is fully aware that no efforts of his own can secure the result. His dependence is not on himself, but on the grace of God. Then why should a sin-

ner be told he can do what no saint can do? Why should he be prohibited from dependence on that grace, which the child of God feels to be his only hope? The fact is, the position that men are under no obligation to do what they have not full power to do, or that they are able to change the state of their affections at will—is contradicted by the Bible, by general, as well as all christian, experience. And the assertion that this inability destroys the sense of obligation, is equally inconsistent with the Bible, and the universal consciousness of men. That it leads to inactivity is no less contrary to fact and experience. So far from its being true, as Dr. Cox asserts, that the sinner so long as he thinks he cannot come up to God's requirements, will never feel his obligation, never try, never do it—the very reverse is the case. He never makes any approach to acceptable obedience, until penetrated with a sense of his helplessness. While his spiritual teachers may be endeavouring to persuade him of his full ability to do every thing, the Holy Spirit is striving to convince him of his dependence. And true conversion, we are persuaded, never takes place, until, in despite of such teaching of men, the soul is brought to feel that no efforts of its own can suffice for its recovery from the dominion of sin. If it be said, this doctrine will lead men to inactivity, we would reply, that sinners may wrest this as they do other truths to their own destruction; but that such is its tendency, we deny. Does a sense of his dependence lead the Christian to inactivity? Is the man who is most deeply sensible that he cannot make himself holy—that his only hope is in the grace of God—is this the man, who is most backward in his efforts to become holy? Just the reverse. He makes his efforts in dependence on divine aid, and because of his hope of that aid, and not because he feels himself able to do all that God requires. And this is the sinner's only hope. What a miserable substitute is his own fancied power, for the arm of God!

Besides, what right has Dr. Cox, of all men in the world, to start such an objection; a man, who in one breath tells us that it matters not about "modes" of inability, as long as the sinner thinks he cannot, he will not, and in the next, teaches the doctrine of absolute dependence on "the physical influence of God," for every act. If he cannot act without this physical influence, why may he not tell Dr. Cox he must wait for it, as well as tell others, he must wait for the influence of the Spirit? Dr. Cox would reply, perhaps, that the

influence for which he contends, sustains and secures our agency. But so say the others. If the sinner demand how this is? Dr. Cox answers "Ignoramus." And surely others may say as much. But the sinner may say to Dr. Cox, what he cannot say to others, 'you maintain that it matters not about modes: if I cannot act without God, I am not, according to your doctrine, responsible. Mere inability is a valid excuse; and according to your own showing, I am at liberty to sit still and wait God's time.' We do not say that such cavils of the sinner against Dr. Cox's doctrine are either candid or well founded, but we do say they are quite as much so, as his against the doctrine he so much derides. It will not do for him to say, that the nature of the inability under which those, who teach the common doctrine of regeneration, represent the sinner as labouring, destroys responsibility, for two reasons. First, he says it is inability, without regard to modes, that produces the evil; and secondly, because such persons acknowledge no inability which is not sinful, and which does not admit of being pressed on the conscience and consciousness of men, as inexcusable and worthy of condemnation; and they believe in no divine influence, which does not sustain the faculties of the soul in all their rights. And Dr. Cox has not even attempted to prove the reverse. He has therefore, no apology for charging those who hold the common doctrine, with either destroying the sinner's obligation to obedience, or leading him to listless inactivity.

Now, as to the second point, the injustice of Dr. Cox in making these charges. It needs no other proof than the perusal of his article, to show that he denounces all the holders of the common doctrine as passivity-men. The point of attack is that men are passive in regeneration; that this change consists in the implantation of a certain kind of holy principle. These are the dogmas which are declared "to solace the sinner in his distance from Christ, which excuse his disobedience to the gospel, and which ought to be rejected as false and ruinous." This is what he calls "passivity doctrine;" the places where such sentiments prevail, are stigmatised as "passivity districts," "arid as the mountains of Gilboa." These are doctrines which inculcate "a dependence which prevents obedience, and which leads to devoutly doing nothing in an orthodox way." Now, gentle readers, who, think ye, are the men who have held, or do now hold, these soul-destroying doctrines, doctrines which prevent obedience, lead to fatalism

and blast the whole face of the Church? Why, all the Reformers, all the Puritans, all the Pilgrim Fathers, all such men as the Blairs, the Tenants, Whitefield, Elliot, Brainerd, Edwards, Bellamy, Dwight, Woods, Nettleton. These, readers, are the men whom Dr. Samuel H. Cox, in effect, overwhelms with his obloquy; theirs was, or is, the passivity preaching; theirs the passivity districts, arid and blasted by the curse of heaven. We say, these are the men whom, *in effect*, he thus reviles, for we of course acquit him of the preposterous presumption of doing it with his eyes open. But here is the gross and cruel, though unintentional injustice (and absurdity too) of his declamation. Having in his eye we know not what class of antinomian drones, in his zeal to denounce them, and get at the very philosophy of their error, (and thus, as he has it, blow up the bastion of their strength,) he was led to take ground and decry doctrines which render all those whom we have mentioned, and the great majority of the best and most successful ministers of our country, the objects of his denunciations. Had he let the metaphysics of the matter alone, and contented himself with denouncing practical errors, with condemning the course (if such prevails) of telling men to sit still and wait in listless idleness God's time, he would have spared himself the guilt of condemning the innocent, and saved himself from the unenviable position which he now occupies, as the accuser of men who hold a given opinion, as teachers of passivity doctrines and destroyers of souls, while, in the same breath, he admits that Edwards and others like him, are of the number.

The direction which Dr. Cox gives his censures, is sufficiently pointed. On p. 509 he admits that it is proper to make men feel their dependence, but asks, how is this to be done? This, he adds, "is possibly the point which divides us," addressing himself to the conductors of this work. "One way is," he says, "to stop men from doing their duty, until they feel their dependence, hamper them, &c. &c. till they give God the glory, of what? of passivity, of dependence which prevents obedience, of devoutly doing nothing in an orthodox way." The other is by preaching obligation. The former is, of course, ours; the latter is his own. We now ask, what authority has Dr. Cox for ascribing to us, as individuals, or as members of a class, such opinions, or such conduct? This is a grave accusation. The assertion (or aspersion, for as such we view it) is entirely unfounded. We neither

believe nor preach that the sinner should do nothing when called to obey the gospel. We firmly believe that immediate repentance, faith, and universal obedience, is the duty of every sinner; that he is under no inability to perform those duties which is not inexcusable; that he should address himself at once, with all his powers, to the business of complying with the requisitions of the gospel, depending not on himself, but the grace of God for aid. Thus, however imperfectly, we have always preached as well as believed. We ask again, what authority has Dr. Cox for making the injurious assertion referred to? Had he been satisfied with saying that there were men who thus believed and thus taught, we should not have called the accuracy of his information in question, nor felt much concerned about the matter. But when he tells us so intelligibly, ye are the men, and so openly declares that this is true of all who do not belong to the new school, (for the exceptions, he says, are no exceptions at all,) the accusation assumes an injustice and injuriousness which we do not like to characterise as we think it deserves. He cannot pretend to have the authority of personal knowledge, that such is the style of preaching of the men whom he denounces. Here, as before, his accusation rests on his own metaphysics, and if on this ground it is just, it is just as directed against the various classes of theologians to whom we have already referred. It is an easy thing, instead of attempting to refute the opinions of any set of men, to range them off, and then cry them down as miracle-waiters, mere nothing-doers, rebuked of heaven, and condemned of men, while we arrogate to ourselves all good qualities and results. There is much of injustice, much of an *ad invidiam* character in all this. Let it be confidently asserted and reasserted that one set of men have all goodness and effect all good, and another have nothing and do nothing, and it needs no prophet to tell us, that the mass even of good men, will not stop to inquire whether this is really so, much less will they impartially examine the Bible, for a decision of the doctrinal opinions which distinguish the two classes. It really seems as though the time were coming, in which the mere fact, that some men dissent from certain views or measures, whatever other claims they may have to confidence and respect, will be enough to subject them to the scourge of cruel mockings, and to expose them to unmeasured denunciation. It is to be hoped, should this become general, (its commencement is already seen and felt,) such men will be able to possess

their souls in patience, avoiding all recrimination; examining anew their opinions in the light of God's word, and while they determine to hold fast the truth, endeavour by zeal, fidelity, activity and meekness to commend themselves to every man's conscience, in the sight of God.

IV. We come now to another point; to the consideration of a principle, the application of which, Dr. Cox seems to think, covers himself with glory and his opponents with shame; it is, that success is the test of truth—God's seal of approbation to doctrines, men and measures. This principle, we think fallacious and dangerous. And the rather, because there is much of truth involved in it. That is, it is true in some of its applications and bearings, and untrue in others, and those the most obvious and frequent. We readily admit, that where the effects of truth are produced, there truth must have been exhibited; and consequently, that where the conversion of sinners and the promotion of holiness is secured, the inference is fair to the truth of the doctrines through which the Holy Spirit has produced these results. But the fallacy lies here. Men neglect the consideration, that with all truth as presented by men, there is more or less of error, and in the most erroneous exhibitions of the Gospel, there is always more or less of truth. The consequence is, that the results which are produced, under God, by the truth which a man presents, is claimed as God's seal in behalf of his error. Hence we find this argument used by all classes of theologians, and in behalf of all systems of measures. God blesses the preaching of Arminians, of Moravians, of Lutherans, of Calvinists of all schools. He has blessed the system of measures pursued by Whitefield, by Mr. Nettleton, and Mr. Finney. Does this prove that these conflicting views of doctrine, and these inconsistent systems of measures, are all, in their distinctive features, true and wise? Has God decided affirmatively on both sides of the same question? The fact is, there is truth in all these doctrines, and wisdom in all these measures, and God, notwithstanding the attendant errors or folly, mercifully renders them effectual to his own glory. This, therefore, is one source of fallacy in the application of the principle in question—men do not discriminate—nor can they always tell, what it is God blesses, and by his blessing approves. It may be something very different from what they, in their self-complacency, imagine.

There is another ground of deception. It is difficult to trace

results to their immediate instrumental causes. When men are converted in great numbers, there are probably thousands of causes made to co-operate in the production of the effect. The preacher may think it is all to be referred to the skill and directness of his exhibition of the truth. Or, what happily is more frequently the case, he is constrained to give God the glory, from the fact, that he sees nothing peculiar in his mode of preaching, either as to the truth, or the manner of presenting it, which distinguishes his successful from his apparently fruitless efforts. He cannot tell what it is that God renders effectual, nor why this rather than that discourse has been blessed. This remark we have heard often and pointedly made, and that too, (to allay Dr. Cox's misgivings,) by new school men. The fact is, revivals have followed, most remarkably, from styles and modes of preaching strikingly diverse; from the strictly didactic, and loosely declamatory; from the terrifying exhibitions of the law, and the persuasive presentations of the Gospel. How vain would it be for the didactic man, to infer, that because God had blessed his mode therefore all others were wrong? But further, men are very apt to refer every thing to what appears to them to be the immediately exciting cause. They look to the truth presented, and the mode of its exhibition at the moment, and leave out of view the influence of all previous culture and instruction. An enlightened examination of facts, would go to show that the success of preaching depends much more on the previous religious instruction of the audience, than upon the minor diversities in the modes of stating truth which distinguish schools or even denominations. Dr. Cox, however, gathers up for himself and associates all the glory of these results as attributable to their felicitous exhibitions of truth; never considering that, in the first place, revivals are most frequent, the world over, where the ground is best prepared; and in the second, that during these seasons of refreshing, the subjects of divine influence are mainly those who have enjoyed most of previous religious culture; members of sabbath-schools and bible-classes. Those portions of the Church, and that class of preachers to whose lot most of these well prepared hearers have fallen—have been the most signally blessed in this way. It would be strange indeed if this were not the case; if religious instruction, parental prayers and counsels, were all to pass for nothing, and obligation-preaching to be all in all. If this be so, where is the necessity of all our efforts to diffuse the means of the

early communication of knowledge? Can Dr. Cox imagine there is no difference, as to the prospect of success, between preaching to a congregation in New England, and to one in Paris, Rome or Jerusalem? Or is he prepared to overwhelm with reproach, as passivity preachers and miracle-waiters, such men as Martyn, Carey, Fisk or Parsons, because their success was not equal to his own? How much in the shade would such men as Elijah, Isaiah and Jeremiah be thrown in comparison with Dr. Cox, if mere success were the criterion of skill and fidelity? Much of the effect therefore of this popular argument, (which we are sorry to see Dr. Cox use so much *ad captandum*, and *ad invidiam*,) is derived from not attending to the difference which circumstances make in cases; from attributing every thing to the immediate apparent exciting cause, and leaving out of view the numerous predisposing and concurrent causes which co-operate in the result. Besides, it is not even true, that under similar circumstances, success is always in exact proportion to the skill and fidelity in the exhibition of the truth. Is the idea of divine sovereignty to be left entirely out of view? Are we to infer that Dr. Cox is less orthodox, or less wise this summer than he was last winter? Is it a fact that the effect of every sermon is in proportion to its excellence? Every candid man must acknowledge that such is not the case; that the most extraordinary results at one time flow from discourses, which at others fall powerless on the ears of the people. Again, it is obvious, that it is not any one style of preaching which is uniformly followed with these striking results. The style of Davies, the Tenants, of Whitefield and others, in our own country, was very different from that which Dr. Cox thinks the only one which God blesses. And if we extend our view to other lands, we shall find this remark still more strikingly true. Gosner, the celebrated Bavarian Catholic Priest,* who has probably been the means of the immediate conversion of more persons than any individual now living, never preached what Dr. Cox would call an obligation-sermon, in his life. His manner seldom varies; the love of Christ is almost his constant theme—law and obligation seem scarcely to be alluded to. And this is very much the characteristic manner of his country. The law is rarely urged; the fears, or even sense of duty, of men seldom addressed; the doctrines of the Bible seldom formally discuss-

* At present a Protestant Clergyman in Berlin.

ed. Preaching is more a pouring out of the warm effusions of the heart on the love of God, the preciousness of Christ, the desirableness of heaven, &c. Yet a degree of success has attended such preaching, which would fill Dr. Cox's heart with joy to contemplate. We do not mention this fact in order to express our approbation of this style of preaching, but merely to show how improper it is to argue from success in favour of the correctness of any peculiarity of this kind. Success, it is obvious, depends on a great variety of circumstances. Much is to be referred to the sovereignty of God. This is clear from the Bible and constant experience. Much depends on the circumstances, previous culture, &c. of the people; much on the frame of mind of the preacher, and much doubtless on the skill and fidelity employed in the exhibition of the truth. We have no disposition to deny that *other things being equal*, the success of men in winning souls to Christ is, *as a general rule*, very much in proportion to the zeal, spirituality, fidelity, and wisdom employed in the exhibition of the Gospel. This rule is so general, that when a man finds his labours unsuccessful, he has much reason to inquire, with great anxiety, whether the fault be not in himself; and yet the exceptions are so numerous, they should effectually prevent censoriousness. There are doubtless characteristic excellencies and defects to be discovered in every class of ministers. And we are very far from denying that those whom Dr. Cox calls new school men, have very desirable qualities as public instructors. We are not disposed to seek these however, in their novel doctrines, but rather in their forming it as their definite purpose to bring men to Christ, labouring for that object, urging the point with earnestness on the hearts and consciences of men. Whereas, *some* of a different class, may keep that object less steadily in view, be more disposed to promote the edification of believers, preaching more frequently to professing Christians. It may be, that a characteristic defect of the former class is, that they attend too little to the injunction of Christ "to feed his sheep;" and of the other, that they abound too little in urgent pressing appeals to the sinner's conscience to make him feel his guilt, and the necessity of immediate exertion to escape the wrath of God. All that we have in view, however, under this head, is to expose the fallacy of arguing so generally and confidently from the success of men as preachers, to the truth of their peculiar opinions. This strikes us as especially unbe-

coming in Dr. Cox, as some of the opinions against which he so strongly inveighs are still cherished by some of his quondam associates; and others are entertained by those whose success has been more remarkable than that of any other men at the present day. Besides, those who consider themselves new school men are divided into several classes, separated by strongly marked diversity of theological opinion, and yet each having, in their own view, the right to claim the testimony of success in their behalf. But the absurdity of the attempt to cry down the doctrines which Dr. Cox denounces, on the ground of their practical effect, is glaringly exhibited by the single consideration, that the most extensive and pure revivals, which this country has ever witnessed, were produced under the preaching of these very doctrines. What were the sentiments of the Dickersons, Davies, Tenants, and Whitefields, and Edwards of the last century? The passivity doctrines, the physical depravity, and physical regeneration, as they are calumniously called by men who, we do them the justice to believe, would willingly sit as children at the feet of these patriarchs of the American Church. We have not said a word, nor do we intend to do so, in reference either to the correctness or incorrectness of Dr. Cox's assertion, that revivals are the peculiar and almost exclusive enjoyment of new school men. We have no disposition to enter into any such discussion. Let the glory of them be given where it belongs. We only wish further to remark on this subject, that the idea that not only the truth of doctrines, but the wisdom and zeal of preachers, are to be decided and measured by their success, has a tendency to produce self-complacency and censoriousness; and affords the greatest temptation "to get up revivals," and to swell unduly their results. This is too obvious to need illustration. The spirit which leads men to say—stand by, we are the men, we are the favourites of heaven, we have revivals, we do all the good in the land—does not seem to be the spirit of Christ. Every pious mind must revolt at the exhibitions of this temper which are sometimes witnessed. We have heard, on good authority, of a minister saying, 'If he could not convert more souls in so many months, than such a man had, in so many years, he would give up his office.' We deeply regret the whole tendency of Dr. Cox's remarks founded on the principle which we have been considering. His glorification of himself and party (if that hateful word must be used) and his unkind and

injurious insinuations against all others, are adapted only to alienate and exasperate. They may cover with odium, but they can neither convince nor benefit any set of men.

Though we have spoken thus freely, from a sense of duty, of the objectionable features of his communication, we are very far from having any unkind feeling towards Dr. Cox, personally. The injustice which he has committed, has been done heedlessly, from confounding principles and practices, which have no relation to each other. We not only readily acknowledge, but rejoice in his excellence and usefulness. Notwithstanding this, and notwithstanding we have never been ambitious of the character of zealous partizans, and have in fact little zeal about party questions, as such, we still feel bound to endeavour to repel what we deem unjust and injurious charges against those who hold what we believe to be truth of God. Let every man form his own opinions and pursue his own course, in the fear of God, endeavouring to commend himself more by good works, than by either boasting or censoriousness.

V. The fifth and last point to which we would direct the attention of our readers, is Dr. Cox's view of Divine influence and agency. It may be remembered that, in the review of his sermon, we distinctly stated our ignorance of his opinions any further than they were exhibited in that discourse. We were, therefore, careful to avoid attributing to him any sentiment which he had not clearly avowed. We saw indeed that he had adopted the idea that morality could be predicated of acts only; that he eschewed the notion of there being any thing distinguishable from voluntary action which could deserve the name of "principle of nature," in the language of Edwards, or, "moral disposition" in that of Dr. Dwight. But on what ground he did this, whether on the "exercise scheme," or on the theory of the liberty of indifference, (or as Dr. Dwight calls it, "casualty") or on some other theory, we did not pretend to know. In one portion of this communication a ray is shot across the darkness, and we have a formal, and, as far as it goes, somewhat distinct statement of his views on this point. We would request our readers to revert to what he has said on the subject, and compare for themselves his language with the following exhibition of our understanding of his meaning.

That there is a Divine influence apart from the truth, exerted in the regeneration and sanctification of men, he had

admitted in his sermon, and here reasserts with equal distinctness. In characterizing the nature of this influence, he remarks, 1. That we are entirely ignorant of the mode of its operation; 2. "The fact of it consists in the purpose of election and the execution of it;"* 3. It secures the event of our obedience, sanctification, and salvation; 4. It is a matter to which we have no moral relation, though, 5. To the doctrine of it we have: 6. It becomes a principle of action, not of passivity or passive doctrines! 7. It becomes a test of character, since to acknowledge it is a fruit of the Spirit, to disparage it is wrong: 8. "The principle of this influence is *universal*, and extends to our daily and constant actions. If, therefore, it makes us passive in any of them [passive in action?] it does in *all*." 9. In view of these premises, is this influence, he asks, in our way? "*no more than in our natural actions, secular ones, ALL OF THEM.*" It maintains, not infringes the perfect moral agency of all. 10. This influence is not identical with that which is often mentioned in Scripture, as in Gal. vi. 16—26—[where the Apostle speaks of the conflicts between the flesh and Spirit, and enumerates the fruits of the Spirit,] which may be opposed, smothered, resisted, &c. The latter is moral, the former providential or physical. I believe, he adds, *ex animo* in this physical influence in religion and out of it. Charnock, he thinks, goes as far, in his discourse on Providence, in asserting its ubiquity, as he does. 11. This influence in the hands of God gloriously coincides with the other. 12. It is of the greatest importance that both be preached in their harmony.

We shall now state what we take to be the amount of this exhibition. Dr. Cox distinguishes two kinds of influences. The one he calls moral, which may be effectually resisted, and which, we presume, operates by suasion, or the presentation of motives. The other, he says, operates apart from the truth, is providential or physical, is universal, extending to all our actions, of course bad as well as good; it is effectual, always securing its object, as seems plainly implied by its being placed in contrast with the moral influence which may be resisted, and from the direct assertions contained in remarks 3 and 9 just quoted. Regeneration is effected by the latter. This is expressly asserted. After stating, with much formality, that there is an influence which secures our obe-

* Where we are at a loss for his meaning we give his own words.

dience, he tells us, this is not identical with that mentioned in Galatians, which is a moral influence, whereas, the other is providential or physical. Regeneration, then, according to Dr. Cox, is effected by a physical influence of God, which is certainly efficacious and universal, i. e. operative in all our acts, "common, secular, all of them." It would seem, therefore, that Dr. Cox believes in the Divine efficiency in the production of sin: so we understand the assertion of a physical, effectual influence, in religion and out of it, extending to *all* our actions. Whether this is said on the ground that man is not an efficient agent, that is, not endowed with the power of originating his own acts; that all his exercises are created in him, and that "it is agreeable to the nature of virtue [and sin,] to be created;" or whether, he holds the shadowy distinction between an act and its moral quality, referring the former to Divine efficiency, and the latter, when evil, to man; or, what is still more obviously a distinction without a difference, making morality a mere relation, and therefore not an object of production, he ascribes the act to God's power, but not the morality of it, is not so easy to determine. Either theory, that of Dr. Emmons, or that of some of the old Scholastics, is consistent with most of what he says. Although we do not pretend to be wise on this subject, above what he has written, we think it will be tolerably clear from what follows, that the former is his theory. We regret, however, his not having spoken more intelligibly on the subject. For his readers and hearers must be anxious to know precisely what he means, when he speaks of a physical influence of God engaged in the production of all their actions.

Secondly, we not only understand Dr. Cox as teaching that there is a divine influence in the production of evil, but also as denying that there is any other influence in the production of holiness, than is exerted in all our actions. He tells us that the influence by which regeneration is effected is the providential or physical influence which extends to all our actions in religion and out of it. And he hence infers, that if it renders men passive in one case, it must in all. It seems, therefore, to be plainly implied that the same efficiency and no more is employed in producing our holy acts, as is engaged in the production of all others, sinful or natural. If this is a correct view of his meaning, it decides the question in favour of the theory of Dr. Emmons and against that of the School-men. For the latter make a broad distinction between these two

cases, which Dr. Cox does not. They cry out against, what they consider, the blasphemy of making God the author, or efficient cause of sin. It is opposed too to the whole drift and spirit of the Bible. There, a clear line is drawn between the relation of the sins of men, and that of their holiness to the divine agency. The Holy Spirit is there presented and promised as the author of all good, in a manner utterly inconsistent with the idea that he has no more agency in the production of holy acts, than in our "natural and secular ones." Dr. Cox, however, seems to throw us back on the mere providential agency of God, which has as much to do with the one class as the other. Has he been led to such a conclusion, by his supreme and lofty devotedness to scripture authority, or has he bowed his mind to the deluding influence of the wandering light of philosophy, falsely so called? What a bereavement for the Christian, to find that he has no more reason to bless God for his good deeds, than the wicked have to ascribe to him their evil ones. Whatever may be Dr. Cox's real opinions, the modes of expression, which he has adopted, are highly objectionable. They tend to produce the impression that man is not in truth an agent at all; that he is not invested with the power of originating his own acts. If all his exercises are produced by a divine physical influence, you may split hairs forever, without making men understand how acts thus produced are their acts. God, (according to the only theory to which Dr. Cox's language seems suited,) is the only agent in the universe. And if the only agent, why not the only essence; he is certainly the only essence of whose existence we have any evidence, and thus we are on the verge of what has been called by one, who had long felt its horrors, "the hell of Pantheism." It is wonderful, that an opinion which makes our whole constitution a riddle and a lie; which requires us to disbelieve the plainest dictate of consciousness; and which thus destroys the foundations of all knowledge, and launches us on the ocean of boundless and hopeless scepticism, should ever have found an advocate among men of sane understanding or Christian feeling. If we are not to render credence to the testimony of our own nature to the fact that we are the efficient of our own acts, or to that of our senses to existence of things without us,* what can we

* The ideas that the soul is but a continuous series of exercises created by the divine power, and that the external world has no real existence, are so intimately related, that they are in fact very frequently united.

believe? What foundation is there for any knowledge? We can be sure of nothing, if deceived on points apparently so plain and certain as these. Besides opening the way to general scepticism, this theory, tends to destroy all sense of responsibility. Men will be slow to believe that they are justly chargeable with the acts of God, or acts which he calls into existence by an almighty physical influence. They will rather feel that an inexorable fate decides the exercises, which by a strange contradiction they may continue to call their own. There is no plainer principle in morals, than that responsibility for acts, rests on their real author, and consequently, if we believe that God is the efficient cause and producer of all our moral exercises, the responsibility of them must rest with him. In thus tending to destroy the sense of responsibility, it tends also to pervert the moral sense, to deaden the moral sensibilities, to blind the mind to the distinction between right and wrong. When men think they see the Best of beings, constantly engaged in exerting his almighty power in the production of evil, how can they view that evil with abhorrence, or think that to be wrong which is the immediate production of his hand? And if they consider it right in God to produce evil that good may come, why may it not be right in man?

It is surely a singular exhibition for a man who uses the language which Dr. Cox employs on this subject, and who seems to entertain the opinions which that language naturally expresses, finding fault with those, whose views, even according to his own erroneous interpretation of them, would confine, to an inappreciable moment of a man's existence, the kind of influence which he extends to every act of his life. All the evils in a thousand fold increase, which he attributes to the opinion which he misrepresents and rejects, press on his own. An appeal to experience would bear out our remarks as to the tendency of the doctrine in question. We are indeed well aware, that men's character is not formed by the influence of any one doctrine which they may hold. There are commonly innumerable such influences at work, and some of them may be so powerful as to counteract, in a greater or less degree, the natural tendencies of their speculative opinions. Just in proportion, however, as such opinions enter into the practical faith of men, as they occupy their minds and engage their feelings, does their influence become visible. Dr. Cox can doubtless call to mind, instances in which the evils to

which we have alluded, have strikingly resulted from the opinions which his language seems to countenance. Skeleton-Christians, dry bundles of metaphysical abstractions, with no moral emotions and no pious affections, are the legitimate creations of the theory of the divine efficiency in the production of evil. The advocates of this opinion, as we fondly believe, are much fewer now, than they once promised to become. A theory by which the moral beauty of Jehovah is eclipsed, moral distinctions and feelings confounded or effaced, the consciousness and moral sense of men outraged, has indeed so much to oppose its progress, that its entire banishment from a Christian land, may be confidently expected. Whatever may have once been the views of Dr. Cox, on this subject, we are not without our hopes, that his language conveys more than he really meant to express; that an opinion against which the pious feelings of Christians so instinctively revolt, is not a settled portion of his creed. However this may now be, we trust he will exemplify his principle of adherence to the Scriptures, as the only rule of faith, and allow the theories and fantasies of Hume, Berkley and Emmons, (a strange though natural association,) to be driven away, as the phantoms of night on the return of day. Let him tread the path marked by the Prophets and Apostles, Christ himself, being the glorious leader. In that path would we gladly attend or follow him, until we all arrive at the happy place, where diversity of opinion is lost in the fullness and certainty of knowledge.

And now, as we cordially forgive, what we deem, the injustice of Dr. Cox, so we hope to be forgiven, if in any thing we have misapprehended his meaning, or written a sentence which Christian fidelity cannot justify at the bar of Christian love.