

**ESSAYS**  
**ON**  
**LIBERTY**  
**AND**  
**NECESSITY;**

**IN WHICH**  
**THE TRUE NATURE OF LIBERTY IS STA-**  
**TED AND DEFENDED;**

**AND**  
**The principal Arguments used by Mr. EDWARDS, and**  
**others, for NECESSITY,**

**ARE CONSIDERED.**

**IN TWO PARTS.**

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**PART SECOND.**

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 **THE** Reader is requested to correct the following Errors, which passed the most critical examination, viz.---Page 21st, 22 lines from top, for "perception"--read--perfection.---Page 23d, line 13, for "Divine Saviour"--read--Divine favor.



## INTRODUCTION TO SECOND PART.

**I**N the year 1793, and in the month of July, I published three Essays on Liberty and Necessity. I was repeatedly told, that my Essays would certainly be answered; and Dr. WEST, of Stockbridge, was nominated as the person who would answer them. ~~After~~ waiting a considerable length of time, I was told, and as I thought, upon pretty good authority, that Dr. EDWARDS, of Connecticut, was about writing an answer to them. But finding no answer published to my Essays, I undertook, last winter, to write four more Essays on Liberty and Necessity; which I finished in the latter part of the winter, with a determination immediately to publish them. But upon communicating my design, I was very earnestly desired, not to be in haste about the matter, but to delay the publication of my Second Part for some months; for I might depend upon it, that I should receive an answer, in a proper length of time.

THIS advice was given me last March: accordingly I have waited ever since, it being now the 22d of October, 1794, and cannot find, that any answer has been published, or that it is at all probable any answer will be published. I therefore have determined to wait no longer, but to get my Essays published as soon as I can. I have had one private letter directed to me upon the subject: My remarks upon it, will be published in an Appendix, at the end of these Essays. One gentleman began to write some strictures upon my Essays, which he promised I should have when he had completed them; but as I have heard nothing from him since last March, I conclude he has altered his mind, and has determined to drop the matter.

WHAT

WHAT reason can be rendered, why no answer to my *Essays* has yet been published, I know not. Perhaps they may have given up Mr. EDWARDS as indefensible in all the particulars upon which I have remarked: or perhaps, as it is a metaphysical subject, they may think, that it is very immaterial whether Mr. EDWARDS or myself, be upon the right side of the question: or perhaps they may think, that my *Essays* are too futile and insignificant, to deserve an answer. But however futile and insignificant the performance may be, in itself, yet there are many, who are convinced of the truth of the sentiments contained in it; and therefore, however insignificant it may be judged by some, to be in itself, yet it becomes a matter of importance to endeavor to undeceive those, who are in danger of being led astray by it; and the more insignificant it is, the easier it will be to shew the absurdity of it, and exhibit sufficient matter of conviction to those who have been deceived by it. Neither will they say, it is very immaterial whether the doctrine of necessity or self-determination be the truth; for if the doctrine of necessity be given up, then it will follow, that the doctrine of sins taking place through the positive efficiency of Deity, must fall with it. It is most probable then that it is judged, that Mr. EDWARDS cannot be defended against the remarks, which are made upon him in the *Essays*; though they may still think, that the doctrine of necessity may be defended upon some other principles.

THE whole dispute about liberty and necessity, as it appears to me, turns upon the resolution of this single question---Is there an infallible connection between *motive* and *action*? If the affirmative be true, then the doctrine of necessity is true: if the negative be true, then the doctrine of self-determination is true. I cannot conceive, that any one will attempt to shew, that a logical necessity proves a previous necessity of volition; for that only implies, that a thing can't be, and not be at the same time; and therefore the argument for the previous necessity of volition, taken from a logical necessity, must stand thus---Whatever takes place, can't  
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take place, and not take place at the same time. But volition has taken place, therefore there was a previous necessity of volition. This mode of reasoning is certainly very illogical: consequently the knowledge of a past, present, or future event, only implying a logical necessity, can by no means prove a previous necessity of volition. Will any say, that foreknowledge in Deity is the effect of his decree? Will not this be virtually denying that foreknowledge is an essential attribute of Deity? For if foreknowledge is an essential attribute of Deity, he must know whatever things he meant to decree, antecedent, in the order of nature, to his decreeing them. It is very surprising, that any one should ever imagine, that an essential attribute of Deity could be founded on his decree; seeing, that whatever is an essential attribute of Deity, must be uncaused and self-existent, and consequently not the effect of the *Divine will*. Those who assert, that the Deity is the positive efficient cause of sin, cannot, consistent with such an assertion, hold that the Deity hates sin; for that would imply, that he hates his own work, or that he hated himself: nor can he hate the sinner for being just such a creature, as the Deity was pleased to make him.--- When, therefore, they say, that the Deity hates sin, & is angry with the wicked, the only meaning is, that the Deity will make them miserable for being just what he has made them to be. But these things I submit to the learned and judicious.

THERE is one thing that I would say something upon, before I close this introduction. It is said by the maintainers of necessity, that the mind is always determined by the strongest motive. Now it appears to me, that in order to compare motives together, to enable us to determine which is the strongest, the motives compared must all belong to the same faculty of the soul; and that if they belong to different faculties of the mind, no comparison can be made between them. Thus we find ourselves possessed of two different faculties, reason and propensity. Objects that are agreeable to our propensities, are easily compared: thus, of different kinds of food,

food, compared by the mind, we can easily tell which we have the greatest relish for; and we often know, that we have a greater fondness for one kind of amusement, than we have for another; that we have a much stronger affection for some persons, than we have for others: for the objects belong to the same faculty of mind, and are agreeable to our appetite, taste or fancy. We can also compare things that are agreeable to reason and judgment: thus, we know that a hundred dollars is of more value than ten; that the arguments produced for the affirmative side of a certain question, are much stronger than those for the negative; and that Christianity is a more rational religion than Mahometanism. In all the cases that have been mentioned, it is easy to tell ~~which is the strongest motive, when any of them~~ are proposed to us as objects of choice.

But how can we compare things together, that belong to different faculties of the mind? e. g. one has an inordinate thirst after strong drink, though his reason tells him it will ruin his soul, his health, his estate, and his reputation. Another has a strong affection for his neighbor's wife, though his reason tells him, that it is very criminal to indulge such a passion. Now as these last instances belong to different faculties of the mind, how shall we compare them together, how shall we determine which are the strongest, those from reason and judgment, or those from appetite and passion? We know that men sometimes govern themselves by their reason, and sometimes by their appetites and passions; this plainly shews us that we are free agents, and can act rationally, or make ourselves the slaves of base passions, as we please; but it affords us no rule to determine, in any given case, which are the strongest motives, those from reason, or those from propensity, unless we say, those motives by which men govern themselves, are the strongest; but this is taking the thing in question for granted, viz. that men are always governed by the strongest motive--which we deny.



# ESSAY I.

OBJECTIONS *answered*, and the nature of ACTION and VOLITION *considered*.

**I** FIND, it has been said, that volition must be an Effect, because it is something which has an existence; but whatever exists, must be either self-existent, or an effect, produced by an extrinsic cause. If then volition is not an effect, it must be self-existent; i. e. it must be Deity: But as volitions take place in time, it follows, that these Deities are not eternal, but have, in time, started into existence, by meer chance, out of nothing. But this being absurd, the objector concludes, that volition must be an effect; i. e. if I understand the objection, volitions are beings distinct from the mind: but if this be true, then the mind is not accountable, for any volition good or bad.

THIS objection arises wholly from a mistake of the point in question; which was (Essays p. 21--22.) that volition when used with a proper meaning---can signify nothing but the being operating or acting. If volition then is nothing but the mind acting, it is as absurd to separate volition from the mind, as it would be to separate the motion of a ball, just discharged from the cannon, from the ball itself: for the motion of the ball, being only a certain accidental modification of the ball in its present situation, cannot be conceived to have any existence separate from the ball itself. In like manner, if volition be nothing but the mind acting, it can no more exist separate from the mind, than motion can exist separate from the ball. The objector, therefore, ought to have shewn, that volition was something different from the mind acting. **BUT**

BUT perhaps when it is said, that volition is an effect, and has a cause, the meaning is, that volition is a certain modification of the mind, which is produced in the mind by the immediate positive efficiency of the Deity. But if volition is produced by the positive efficiency of Deity; if the Deity is the proper efficient cause of volition, then the mind is entirely passive in all its volitions, and, consequently, cannot be in any proper sense an agent; for every effect must be passive, seeing it cannot contribute any thing towards its own existence.

HERE I would propose an alternative: either volition is only the immediate action of Deity on the mind, or it is distinct from it. If volition is distinct from the action of Deity on the mind, then the action of the Deity on the mind, is only to produce all the necessary requisites for action; and consequently there is no absurdity in supposing, that when all these requisites have taken place, that the mind is then only put in a capacity for acting or not acting. But if it be insisted upon, that, besides presenting to the mind the requisites for action, the Deity does produce a certain modification of the mind, called volition, in which modification the mind is wholly passive, then there is no action but only the immediate action of the Deity on the mind; and volition is nothing distinct from the immediate action of Deity. But if this part of the alternative be true, then as activeness is essential to the life of every mind, it will follow, that the Deity is the life of every mind; i. e. he is the only living principle of the universe, or the soul of the world, of which the material part is his body: Consequently there is no such thing as creation; i. e. there is no Deity who has made, and who governs all things by his power and providence. It is readily granted, that the human mind has no power or faculty, but what it has received from its Creator in its first creation; and that it depends every moment, upon the will of the Deity, for the preservation and exercise of its powers and faculties: But the question is, whether the Deity has not implanted in man an active

active faculty, or a principle of activeness; and whether, when the Deity is said to work in us to will an act of his own good pleasure, the meaning is not that this, that the Deity does both uphold and preserve all our powers and faculties, in such a manner as to enable us to enjoy the free use and exercise of them, and that he presents to our minds all the requisites necessary for action; i. e. all means & motives necessary to enable us to chuse or refuse the object which we have in the view of our minds; and then that he strengthens us to perform the things which we have chosen. All these requisites to action the Deity must present to the mind to enable it to act.

BUT is there any need that the Deity, whenever a new object is presented to the mind, should form a new volition in the mind? In order to our seeing objects, we must have eyesight and light: while these two requisites for seeing remain, we can see any particular objects, that are presented to our view; and there is no need of any new eye sight to enable us to discern every new object that is presented to our eyes. In like manner ideas and objects are necessary to be presented to the mind, otherwise it could not act: but there is no need of a new activeness of the mind for every new object that is presented to its view; for as soon as ideas are presented to the mind its active faculty is exerted, and the mind continues constantly acting as long as it has ideas, just as the act of seeing takes place the very instant the eye is turned to the light, and continues as long as the light strikes the eye. Deprive the eye of light, & it cannot see, but is in total darkness; so deprive the mind of ideas and it cannot act, but is in a state of death. And as the eye when turned to the light, cannot avoid seeing, yet can turn itself and its attention to one particular object to the neglect of the other objects; so the mind, tho passive in the reception of its ideas yet can turn its attention to any one of the objects that it has in view, to the neglect of the rest. Thus, when one is riding on the road, there is a great variety of objects which he discovers; many of which he pays

no attention to ; yet he will find, that his mind is always acting on some particular object. This shews that though the mind is always acting, yet of the various objects presented to its view, it finds nothing, in common cases, to confine its attention to one object, rather than another.

If when the mind acts on any particular object, the Deity produces a new act, or a new operativeness in the mind, then there must be a change in the mind ; for I take it for granted, that every effect is either a being produced, that did not exist before, or else some change in a being, that does already exist. But if when the mind acts on a particular object, there is a change produced in the operativeness of the mind, one would suppose, that we might perceive it. But I confess, that upon the closest examination, I cannot find any change in the operativeness of my mind, let the objects on which it acts be ever so different.

As this perhaps will appear new to many, I shall endeavor to illustrate it. To prevent mistakes, it is granted, that the mind by attending to any particular subject, and closely examining it, often gains new ideas, and greatly enlarges its understanding. Here is a change produced in the perceptive faculty of the mind, in consequence of its acting on a particular subject : so when the mind meditates on certain subjects, the affections and notions of the soul may be very greatly excited, and the mind much agitated. Here again is a change produced in the mind, which is the effect of the operativeness of the mind, on certain subjects ; but in neither of these cases does it appear, that there is any change produced in the operativeness of the mind.

In the common affairs of life, which require no study, the operativeness of the mind on the objects presented to its view, is so rapid, that we can hardly distinguish it from the reason upon which we act. Thus in chusing to eat agreeable food, offer'd to us when we are hungry, or suitable drink when we are thirsty, the mind hardly distinguishes between the agreeableness of the object, and its choosing the object ; but in all sub-  
jects,

jects, which require attention, there we perceive a manifest difference between the operativeness of the mind, and the objects on which it acts: thus, when we would investigate the truth of a proposition, we find the operativeness of the mind, by which it is kept attentive to the subject, to be essentially different from every idea which we have in consequence of our attending to the subject: or if the subject is calculated to excite our affection, we find, the activeness of the mind, by which it is kept engaged on the subject, to be extremely different from the affections, which are excited in consequence of the operation of the mind on the subject, and we shall find, that let the things be what they will, which become the subjects of the mind's attention, examination, or meditation, that the operativeness of the mind by which it is enabled to attend, examine, or meditate, is always one and the same, without the least perceivable alteration.

If any person is of a different mind from me in this point, let him bring the matter to a fair trial, and I presume he will be convinced, that whenever he has set himself down to think closely on any subject, he will find that the operation of the mind, by which he fixes his attention, is always one and the same, let the subject be ever so different. Now if this be true, then it will follow, that the activeness of the mind on different objects does not constitute so many new events, or new actions of the mind. Activeness of mind, may be illustrated by its contrary, viz. passiveness in body. Let ever so many beings act upon a particular body, and produce ever so many changes in it, still its passive nature remains the same, and is neither increased nor diminished by one or more operations upon it; so the activeness of the mind, by its operating on various subjects, is neither increased nor diminished, nor any way altered, but always remains the same.

But perhaps it will be said, that volition means something different from the mind acting; that it always has respect to the thing chosen: Now if this is what is intended by the term volition, that it means

not the mind acting, but the thing actually chosen, then it will follow, that there are as many different volitions, as there are things chosen : and then volition may, in a qualified sense, be called an effect ; because volition, or the thing chosen, stands in a new relation to the mind, viz. as an object on which the mind has acted ; of which relation, the mind is the cause, by its acting on the thing chosen. We observe further, that when any thing is chosen in consequence of the mind's determining to examine and compare different things, in order to discover which is the best, a choice made in consequence of such a comparison, may with great propriety, be called an effect ; being the consequence of the examination which is made by the mind. Hence it follows, that acts of the will, volition, choice, and determination of the mind, may, with propriety, be called effects, when they signify those determinations, or conclusions which the mind makes, in consequence of its comparing two or more things together.

It is plain, that Mr. EDWARDS by volition, means the conclusion which the mind forms, in consequence of its comparing two or more things together ; for he says, (p. 54. Lond. Ed.) "*The very act of volition itself is doubtless a determination of mind ; i. e. it is the mind's drawing up a conclusion, or coming to a choice between two or more things proposed to it.*" But the mind cannot draw up a conclusion between two or more things, without first comparing them together : now this comparing two or more things together, is certainly an act of the mind. Therefore, according to Mr. EDWARDS, choice, determination of mind, and an act of volition, are the effects of a previous act of the mind, viz. the act of comparing two or more things together.

Thus it appears, that the terms volition, acts of will, and choice, have been used in very different senses : sometimes to signify only the mind, considered as acting on a particular object ; sometimes for the object upon which the mind acts ; and sometimes for the conclusion which the mind arrives at, in consequence of its comparing two or more things together. I

I HAVE used the term *volition*, in the first of these senses, viz. to signify the *mind*, considered as *acting*. In this sense, and in this only, I say volition is not an effect, but a cause; and that the operativeness of the mind on different objects, is always uniformly one and the same thing; and not that there are as many operations, as there are objects on which the mind acts. In the other senses of the word, I allow, that volition is an effect; and that there are as many volitions, as there are things chosen.

I HAVE already allowed, that the human mind is an effect, produced by the great Creator; and so are all its powers and faculties: among which is its capacity for acting or not acting, all previous circumstances remaining the same. This being considered as the property of a created mind, may be considered as an effect. But the maintainers of necessity (if I understand them) mean, that whenever the mind acts upon an object, there is a new effect produced in the mind, which they call an act of the mind; and consequently that there are as many *new acts*, as there are objects on which the mind acts: whereas it appears to me, if this be the case, that the mind does not act, but is the passive subject of an extrinsic cause.

I, ON the contrary, suppose, that the operativeness of the mind, always remains the same; and that the mind *acting*, is the mind *causing*: activeness being essential to the definition of a cause; and that *causes*, as *causes*, are not *effects*. This is all I mean, when I say, volition is not properly an effect; i. e. if volition be only the mind acting; and if the mind acting, is properly a cause, then it is not proper to call it an effect.

THE making use of the term *volition* in so many different senses, serves to breed confusion, and greatly to perplex the mind. Mr. EDWARDS seems to include in his idea of volition, the inclinations and propensities of the mind; and Dr. WEST, of Stockbridge, seems to make *volition*, or *choise*, to be nothing but an agreeable perception. Both, therefore, seem to exclude the operativeness of the mind, in comparing of things together:

gether : for this, I am sure, is very different from mere inclination or propensity of mind, or from the agreeable perception of an object. For the truth of this, I appeal to every man's own experience.

FROM what has been said, it will plainly appear, that volition (if by it we understand the mind acting) cannot properly be called an effect, but is in reality a cause ; though it is confessed, that the human mind, considered as a *creature*, is properly an effect ; yet in acting on objects, it is a *cause*. Neither can we conceive, that there is a new effect produced in the active faculty of the mind, whenever it acts on a particular object.

MR. EDWARDS, and his followers, suppose, if I understand them, that there must be a particular reason, why every determination of mind, both in God and the creature, is in this particular manner, rather than in any other ; and that if this were not the case, there could be no determination nor effect : which will imply, that there can be no two objects, either in the Divine or human mind, that can be equally eligible, or equally fit to answer the same purpose. The contrary we know to be true, by our own experience : for though the mind never acts, without some reason for acting, or without some design, yet we often find two or more different objects equally eligible, and equally fit to answer our present purpose. Mr. EDWARDS allows, that two or more things may appear with perfect indifference to the mind. In this case, he says, "*the mind determines to give itself to what is vulgarly called accident : e. g. Suppose one should propose to me, in order to try my liberty, to touch one of the squares on a chess board : I determine to give myself up to touch that which shall be most in my eye, or most prevalent in my mind.*" Let us bring this matter to a fair trial.-- Suppose then, that in order to try my liberty, I draw four lines, of equal length ; and for distinction sake, name them A, B, C, D. I shut my eyes, and slowly repeat over their names, A, B, C, D---and then ask myself, which I will touch ? I immediately answer, I will

I will touch C. Now while I was repeating them over to myself, C was no more in my mind, than A, B, or D: it cannot be said to be most in my mind, till the last step, when I determined to touch C; and then it appears evidently to be most in my mind, only because I was obliged to name it, in order to my determining to touch it; i. e. in the very act of determining to touch it, I voluntarily called it to mind. So that Mr. EDWARDS' accident of being most in the mind, appears to be the determining act of the mind, and turns out to be an evidence against him; for it undeniably proves, that man has a self-determining power.

MR. EDWARDS says---“*I will not deny it to be possible for God to make two bodies, perfectly alike, and put them in different places.*” Let us then suppose, that the Deity has made two globes, A and B, perfectly similar, and has placed A on the right hand, in a state of rest, and B is placed on the left hand, to be in motion. Here are two very different effects, produced on two bodies, perfectly similar, though numerically different; and though there may be a very important reason, why these two globes should be made, and placed one on the right hand, to be at rest, and the other on the left hand, to be in motion, yet there can no reason be rendered, why A should not have been placed on the left hand, to be in motion, and B on the right hand, to be at rest.

MR. EDWARDS asks, “*Whether it will not follow, that there is an infinite number of numerically different possible bodies, perfectly alike; among which, God chuses, by a self-determining power, when he goes about to create bodies?*” Mr. EDWARDS has furnished an answer to his question, by granting, “*that it is possible for God to create two bodies perfectly alike:*” for if he can create two, he can create any assignable number, ad infinitum. And that they are numerically different from each other, appears from this consideration, that if the globe A, on the right, should be removed to a far distant place, the Deity could create another just like it, and put it in the same place from  
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which A was removed. It is evident that these two globes are as really two, as though they were ever so dissimilar; and that they were made to answer different purposes; and yet being perfectly similar, A could have answered the purposes of B, and B of A. Here then is a plain proof of a self-determining power in the Deity.

MR. EDWARDS seems to think, that to make two different globes perfectly alike, is the same thing, as to repeat the same sound, or the same words, at different times. But I take the cases to be widely different: for the two globes are considered as two distinct bodies, put to different uses, and designed to answer different purposes: whereas repeating the same sound, or same words, is only impressing one and the same object, at different times, on the mind. Here then MR. EDWARDS has confounded similarity with identity.

MR. EDWARDS' reasoning upon this subject, appears to me very singular: for after having granted, that it is possible for the Deity to make two bodies perfectly similar, and put them in different places, he adds---  
*“for this determination, viz. of putting two bodies in two different places, he has some reason. There is some end, for which such a determination and act is necessary, and has a peculiar fitness above all other acts. Here is no one thing determined without an end, and no one thing without a fitness for that end, superior to any thing else.”* Indeed! Is it so? Here let me ask, What superior fitness has the globe A, to the globe B, that makes it necessary, that it should be placed on the right hand, and be at rest---or what superior fitness has the globe B to the globe A, that makes it necessary, that it should be placed on the left hand, and be in motion? It is certain no reason can be assigned: for they being perfectly similar, one cannot, in the nature of things, be more fit than the other. So then, here are two very different effects of the Divine power on two bodies, without any possible reason why A should not be at the left hand, in motion, and B on the right hand, at rest. But how can these things be reconciled together? Why MR. EDWARDS says---  
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*the supposition, the two spheres are different in nothing but their place; and therefore, in other respects, they are the same. Each has the same roundness: it is not a distinct rotundity in any other respect, except its situation. There are, also, the same dimensions, differing in nothing but their place, and so of their resistance, and every thing else that belongs to them."* That is to say, that one and the same body, may be in two different places at the same time; and that it may be the subject of two different and contrary effects at the same time, viz. rest and motion. But we know, that the same body cannot be in two places at the same time, nor be both in motion and at rest at the same time. But there is another difference, besides that of place, viz. a numerical difference: for if they differed only in place, then put A in the place of B, and it would become B; and B, by changing with A, would become A, which is not the case: for should we see A and B change places, still we should call each by the same name we did before; which plainly shews, that they are two distinct bodies in themselves, which is the reason why they cannot both occupy the same place at the same time.

ANOTHER reason, that proves, that these two globes are really distinct, and not one and the same globe, in two places, at the same time, is, if one of the globes should be dashed in pieces, it would not in the least affect the other, but it would be as whole as it was before; whereas, if the two globes were one and the same, in every respect, except their occupying two places at the same time, then whatever accident should take place with respect to one, would equally take place with respect to the other; that is, if A be dashed in pieces, B must share the same fate: which we see is not the case. Therefore, A and B differ from each other, not only because they occupy two places at the same time, but also, because they are subject to different accidents, as much as if they were entirely dissimilar bodies; that is to say, they are numerically different, or in reality are two distinct bodies; as much so, as any two bodies whatever. This shews, that similarity, and identity, ought never

never to be confounded together ; which Mr. EDWARDS seems to have done, in his reasonings upon this subject.

MR. EDWARDS, in the case of the squares on a chess board, makes three determinations of the mind. The first is a general determination to touch one of the squares : the second, is another general determination to give itself up to accident, viz. to touch that square, which shall be most in the eye or mind ; and thirdly, a particular determination to touch that particular square, which is most in the mind. Mr. EDWARDS asserts---“ *That it must needs be so, that the mind must be influenced in its choice by something, that has a preponderating influence upon it.*” And he further says, “ *That the acts of the will, in each step of the fore-mentioned procedure, don’t come to pass without a particular cause. Every act is owing to a prevailing inducement.*” Here we may observe, that in the case of the squares on a chess board, he supposes the mind, in the last step, to be determined by accident, viz. by that which happens to be most in the eye or mind : but he saw the absurdity of supposing that the Deity was determined by accident. The two globes are as different as any two squares on the chess board ; for, according to the question, it is supposed, that the mind views them with perfect indifference, in the first step ; and in the last step is determined by accident, and not by any preference in the things themselves : which is the same, in point of argument, with their being perfectly similar ; and consequently as many determinations in the Divine mind, about placing the globes, are necessary, as in the human mind about touching the squares. But if it be absurd, to suppose that the Deity is determined by accident, we must allow, that as to the point in question, he is self-determined.

WE may observe further, that two or more things may differ in many respects, and yet may be equally eligible and fit to answer a particular purpose. Thus it may be equally eligible to a hungry man, whether he dines on lamb or veal : in like manner, entertaining the eye with beautiful paintings, or the ear with agree-  
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able music, may be equally eligible, or entertaining, to a man who is desirous of amusement : and when a man is engaged in business, he may find two different ways, that may appear equally fit to answer his purpose. So in the Divine mind, there may be innumerable things that may have equal degrees of eligibility and fitness to answer his particular purposes. To say, that no two things can have equal degrees of eligibility and fitness in the Divine mind, is to confound the reason of acting, with action itself ; and to make the Deity a mere passive being, or a mechanical medium of fate. Nothing can be impossible to the Deity, except those things, which in their own nature imply a contradiction. But there is no contradiction in supposing, that two or more things may have equal degrees of fitness or eligibility, to answer a particular purpose in the Divine mind : consequently we are to suppose, that this is the case, or that active power and understanding, are two distinct attributes in Deity ; which I cannot conceive to be the case, if the Deity is always determined by a superior fitness in every thing---or that the Deity is properly a necessary agent : for I take it to be an important truth, that wherever necessity begins, liberty ends : and that a necessary agent is a contradiction.

BUT I shall be asked, Whether I do not think, that the Deity is necessarily holy ? to which I answer in the affirmative. But this, in my opinion, has nothing to do with the question, Whether the Deity acts necessarily ? To act, or chuse, implies, that the object of choice appears fit and eligible to the mind of the being who chooses : but to an infinitely perfect mind, sin and folly can never appear fit or eligible ; and consequently the Deity can never do any thing, but what is agreeable to the holiness of his nature. But because he cannot do that which he hates, i. e. cannot chuse sin and folly, because they are contrary to his nature, it does not from thence follow, that the Deity is under a necessity of doing all that he can do, or of choosing every thing that is eligible ; for among the innumerable things  
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that are eligible and fit in the Divine mind, the Deity can either act or not act.

BUT against this assertion it will be objected, that then the Deity must be determined by accident or chance. Mr. EDWARDS' definition of accident is, "*that it is something that comes to pass in the course of things, in some affairs that men are concerned in, unforeseen, and not owing to their design.*" The same definition may be given to the term chance, viz. something that is unforeseen, and not owing to any design in the persons to whom it happens. Now, how can this apply either to God or the creature, upon the supposition of a self-determining power? Neither Deity, nor man, acts without a design to answer a particular purpose: but if two or more things will equally answer the same purpose, What chance or accident is there in taking one, and omitting the other? It cannot be said, that the thing taken was not foreseen, or was not in the view of the mind, previous to its being taken for a particular purpose; which is ever the case, when a thing happens by chance or accident: it is always unforeseen, and not in the view of the mind, till it does take place; and consequently is not taken to answer a particular purpose. Here then is a new sense given to the terms accident and chance; viz. that it is something that is foreseen, and is in the view of the mind, antecedent to its being adopted to answer a particular purpose: and that it is taken with a design to answer a particular purpose, and it is called chance, only because some other thing might answer equally the same purpose.

MR. EDWARDS supposes, "*that if God has a certain foreknowledge of the volitions of moral agents, antecedent to any purposes or decrees of his about them, that then they have a fixed certain futurity, prior to any designs or volitions of his, and independent on them, and to which his volitions must be subject, as he would wisely accommodate his affairs to this fixed futurity of the state of things in the moral world; that this is truly repugnant to the absolute sovereignty of God, and inconsistent with the supremacy of his will, and really*  
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*subjects the will of the Most High to the will of his creatures, and brings him into dependance upon them."* with more to the same purpose, in Part IV. Sect. 8th. p. 353, London Edition. But how shall we reconcile Mr. EDWARDS with himself? See Part IV. Sect. 7. p. 325, where he acknowledges, "*that we are obliged to conceive of some things in God as consequent and dependent on others; and of some things pertaining to the Divine nature and will, as the foundation of others; and so before others in the order of nature, as we must conceive of the knowledge and holiness of God as prior in the order of nature to his happiness; the perfection of his understanding, as the foundation of his wise purposes and decrees; the holiness of his nature, as the cause and reason of his holy determination.*" Now, either foreknowledge in the Deity, is part of the perfection of the Divine understanding, or it is not. If it is a part of the perfection of the Divine understanding, then it is the foundation of his wise purposes and decrees; and so his objection lies just as strong against him, as against us. If foreknowledge does not belong to the perception of the Divine understanding, then he has no such attribute; and, consequently, cannot know what his creatures will do, until the action does really take place; which, in a multitude of instances, may necessitate him to alter his own purposes and designs. If they say, that foreknowledge is founded on the Divine decree, and is the effect of it, this will imply, that the Deity has two kinds of understanding; one essential, which is the foundation of his decrees, and the other a derived knowledge, which is the effect of his decrees. But this is saying, that foreknowledge is not an attribute of Deity, as I have already shewed in my third Essay of the first Part.

BUT if the understanding is the foundation of his wise purposes, and determinations, then the Divine understanding is antecedent to his decrees; i. e. the Deity must know what he would decree, antecedent, in the order of nature, to his decree; and, consequently, must know, what creatures he would bring into

existence, and how they would conduct, under every possible circumstance; therefore, we must suppose, that he would never bring any creatures into existence, whose actions should not be overruled to his own glory and the general good. But how this can subject the Divine will, to the will of the creature, is past my skill to conceive: for no creature can exist without the Divine will, nor act without the Divine will; for the creature, in every moment of its existence, is subject to the Divine controul; consequently, no act can take place, but what the Deity foresaw, and determined, from all eternity, to overrule to his own glory, and the general good. If the Deity foresaw, that a certain creature, if he came into existence, would do that which could not be overruled to the Divine glory and the general good, he would either never bring that creature into being, or if he did, bring him into existence, he would restrain him from doing that, which could not be overruled to the Divine glory and the general good, agreeable to *Psa. 76. 10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* From what has been said, it is plain, I think, that the doctrine of self-determination, no more implies a subjection of the Divine will to the will of the creature, than the doctrine of necessity does.

AN objection similar to the last, is this---that self-determination makes men proud and self-sufficient, and to feel themselves independent of the Almighty. But it is impossible, that any such consequence can be drawn from our principles, rightly understood: for we not only acknowledge, that we depend upon God for our existence, in our first creation, but that we depend upon him for our preservation, and for the continuance of our powers and faculties, and even for the exercise of our active faculties; i. e. for our volitions. For the Deity must place before our mind, all the requisites necessary for acting, or willing, otherwise no volition can take place; and tho' we assert, that when the requisites are placed before the mind, that then the mind can act or not act, yet this must be understood to imply, that

that we can only act by the Divine permission; for there is not a moment of our existence, when the Almighty cannot hinder our acting or willing. Consequently, the principle of self-determination, makes us no more independent of the Divine power or controul, than the doctrine of necessity does. On the other hand, the principle of self-determination; is the only one that is consistent with true humility, and a sense of ill desert: for when a man considers that he is not moved by any extrinsic cause to do evil, but that his wickedness, has originated wholly from himself, he must feel himself exceedingly vile and unworthy of any Divine Saviour: but if he feels himself efficaciously moved by Deity to every wicked act, he cannot feel himself guilty of any ill desert; and consequently will feel himself incapable of true humility, being, in the temper of his mind, just what the Deity would have, and has made him to be; and, therefore, he can have no horror of conscience, or remorse of mind, for his wicked conduct. If he believes he shall be subjected to hell-fire for his sins, he will hate and want to dethrone that Being who has formed him for misery; for he will think it very unjust, that he should be punished for being just what the Deity has made him to be. But how one who believes that he has a self-determining power, should be puffed up with pride, and vainly imagine that he was really independent, or that he was able to act independently from a superior cause, is past my skill to conceive; but I must say with Dr. CLARKE, *“that this objection is only a childish trifling with words. For a power of acting independently in this sense, communicated at the pleasure of the Supreme cause, and continued only during the same good pleasure, is no more a real and absolute independency, than the power of existing, or than the power of being conscious, or any other power whatsoever, can be said to imply independency.”* Thus he. But if there be no existence distinct from Deity, nor no consciousness distinct from Divine consciousness, then the whole universe is but one substance, of which we are parts. This will  
effectually

effectually exclude the Deity out of the universe, and reduce us to downright Atheism. But if men have an existence, distinct from Deity, endowed with a consciousness distinct from Deity, then they have a self-active principle, distinct from Deity; i. e. they have a self-determining power.



## ESSAY II.

Treating of MORAL AGENCY---and that SELF-DETERMINATION is consistent with it.

**M**R. EDWARDS says, (Part I, Sect. 5, p. 41, Lond. Ed.)---“ *A moral agent is a being that is capable of those actions that have a moral quality, and which can properly be denominated good or evil; in a moral sense, virtuous or vicious, commendable or faulty. To moral agency belongs a moral faculty, or sense of moral good and evil, or of such a thing as desert, or worthiness of praise, or blame, reward, or punishment; and a capacity which an agent has of being influenced in his actions by moral inducements or motives, exhibited to the view of the understanding and reason, to engage to a conduct agreeable to the moral faculty. The brute creatures are not moral agents: the actions of some of them are very profitable and pleasant; others are very hurtful: yet seeing they have no moral faculty, or sense of desert, and don't act from choice, guided by understanding, or with a capacity of reasoning and reflecting, but only from instinct, and are not capable of being influenced by moral inducements, their actions are not properly sinful or virtuous; nor are they properly the subjects of any such moral treatment for what they do, as moral agents are for their faults or good deeds.*” Again he lays---“ *The essential qualities of a moral agent, are in God in the greatest possible perfection; such as understanding to perceive the difference between moral good and evil; a capacity of discerning, that moral worthiness and demerit, by which*

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*some things are praise worthy, others deserving of blame and punishment; and also a capacity of choice; and choice guided by understanding, and a power of acting according to his choice or pleasure; and being capable of doing those things which are in the highest sense praise worthy."*

HERE we see, that to understand the difference between moral good, and moral evil, and a capacity to discern what things deserve praise, and what ought to be blamed; i. e. to discern the moral fitness and unfitness of things, are as essential qualities of a moral agent, as a capacity of choice, or what we call a freedom of will: and this I take to be a just account of moral agency; and that no one can be a subject of moral law, who is not capable of discerning the force of moral obligation. For certainly no one can be the subject of a law, which he has not a capacity to understand; because the very end of law, is to guide and regulate the conduct of the subject: but no one can regulate his actions by a law, which he has not a capacity of understanding; consequently, nothing can be a law which the subject has not a capacity to understand. And this is agreeable to what our Saviour has taught---John 3. 19. *"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."* And again, Chap. 15, *"If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my father."* From both these texts it appears, that there is no condemnation nor sin, where light and evidence have not appeared, and been hated. Again, our Saviour says, John 9. 48. to the Pharisees, *"If ye were blind ye should have no sin; but now ye say we see, therefore your sin remaineth."* The plain meaning of which is, that if they had no means, nor capacity of knowing the truth, they would not have been to blame for not receiving it. But as they had both means and capacity of knowing the truth, they were, of consequence, to blame for not receiving it: which implies,

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that no ignorance is criminal, but that which is voluntary; and that an invincible ignorance always excuses. And further, that it is the duty of every one to gain all the light, and knowledge of the truth, to which he can attain: for should he remain ignorant of any Divine truth, through carelessness or obstinacy, he is most certainly criminal in the sight of God.

OUR Saviour tells the inhabitants of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, "*that because they repented not when they had seen his mighty works, that it should be more tolerable for Tyre, Sidon, and the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for them.*" Doubtless, because they had sinned against greater light and knowledge, than those heathen cities. It then their condemnation was aggravated, upon the account of their resisting greater degrees of light and knowledge, than the heathen were possessed of, it follows, that moral agency is always in proportion to the capacity, and means of knowledge, which any one enjoys.

HENCE, then, we learn the necessity of religious instruction: for without knowledge, we can neither choose the good, nor refuse the evil. We see the propriety, that persons properly instructed, should be the subjects of the Divine commands, invitations, promises, threatenings, &c. But Mr. EDWARDS asserts---"*That the principle of a self-determining power is utterly inconsistent with moral government, and with all use of laws, precepts, prohibitions, promises or threatenings; and that there is no way whatsoever to make this principle consistent with these things. For if it be said, that there is no prior determining act of the soul preceding the acts of the will, but that volitions are events, that come to pass by pure accident, without any determining cause, this is most palpably inconsistent with all use of laws and precepts; for nothing is more plain, than that laws can be of no use to direct and regulate perfect accident; which by the supposition of its being pure accident, is in no case regulated by anything preceding; but happens this way or that perfectly by chance, without any cause or rule.*" I have shown above, that in  
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whatever sense volitions can be considered as effects, or events, in that sense they have a cause ; and therefore cannot be said to come to pass by pure accident : that when volition is used to signify the mind acting, that in that view, it is properly a cause, and not an effect : that when two objects are equally fit, to answer a particular purpose, if one is taken, and the other left, it cannot be said, that this happened by mere accident or chance, seeing the mind had a purpose to answer, and found the thing taken to be fit for the purpose.---To call this accident or chance, is giving a new sense to the terms, and holding up the idea of a designing chance : for by chance, or accident, we commonly mean, that which happens without design, or without being foreseen. But here Mr. EDWARDS seems to mean, that which does not happen at all ; for of two things which are equally fit to answer a particular purpose, that which the mind takes, is taken for this reason, that it will answer the present purpose ; but about the other, which is not taken, the mind exercises no act at all : there is, therefore, a reason for every action ; but no reason can be assigned for the non-existence of that which is not. If then, by accident and chance, Mr. EDWARDS means that which has no existence at all, i. e. a mere nothing, he certainly uses the terms in a sense very different from other writers.

BUT the objection is truly forcible against the doctrine of necessity : for he that cannot govern his own mind, but is constantly determined by an extrinsic cause, is certainly the subject of mere chance and accident : for however his mind may be disposed at present, he cannot foresee how soon it may be altered : for this extrinsic cause, can move him as it pleases, and can alter all his present purposes and designs, to something essentially different from his present views and intentions. I will now leave it to the common sense of mankind, who is the most proper subject of law and government, he, who like a football, is entirely moved by a cause, wholly without himself, or he, who moves and determines himself, and is therefore always capable

ble of chusing that which is wisest and best, and acting accordingly.

Our doctrine of self-determination implying, that when the mind acts, it always has an object in view, and that there is always a reason for acting, is as fully consistent with our being the subjects of commands and promises, prohibitions and threatnings, and establishes as sure a connection between means and ends, as he can suppose to arise from the doctrine of necessity.

MR. EDWARDS supposes the doctrine of self-determination, to be inconsistent with the habits of virtue and vice---with the use of motives and arguments to persuade and influence the mind---with commands, promises, threatnings and invitations ; because all these things serve to influence and bias the mind, and put it out of a state of indifference. Two things seem to be the foundation of Mr. EDWARDS' arguments, to prove that self-determination is inconsistent with moral agency.---The first is, that the self-determination, which he opposes, is (if I take him right) a power to act without and against every kind of motive---without and against every kind of reason or argument. As I hold no such kind of self-determination, I have nothing to do with any of the arguments or objections, which he brings against that kind of self-determination. The second reason of his objections is, that he every where confounds the propensities of the mind, with volition. Hence he tells us, p. 235, Lond. Ed. "*That the affections are only certain modes of the exercise of the will :*" whereas I think, that the propensities of the mind, whether you call them inclinations, affections, or passions, are as different from the exercises of the will, as light is from darkness. These propensities are often in direct opposition to the will : this is proved to be fact, not only by every day's experience, but by an express testimony of the apostle Paul, Rom. 7. 18, 19. "*To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not ; for the good, that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do.*"---The reason of this thing, he assigns in v. 23, viz. that there

there was a law in his members which warred against the law of his mind, and brought him into captivity to the law of sin which was in his members. This plainly shews, that his vile affections, which he calls the law of the members, were in direct opposition to his will. Again, he tells us, Gal. 5. 17. *"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."*

It is very evident from both these passages, that the will and the propensities are so distinct, that they may be in direct opposition to each other; and that, tho' these propensities may be so strong as to hinder us from doing that which we choose, yet they cannot take away the freedom of the will; i. e. that the freedom of will, or a self-determining power, is consistent with the strongest habits of virtue and vice. One may be convinced, that his affections are vile---he may abhor them; but this will not immediately deliver him from them. He will see the need of divine assistance, to do that for him, which he cannot do for himself. This will lead him to rely on that promise, Mat. 5. 6, *"Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."* If a man is led by any means, or motives, or reasons, to choose that which he formerly abhor'd, and to abhor that which he formerly loved, he is still as free as ever he was: for nothing being an object of choice, but what appears eligible, it is impossible that the mind should choose that which is neither eligible in itself, nor in its consequences; i. e. nothing is an object of choice, but eligible things. When then, things appear to us eligible, which formerly we abhor'd, and we abhor things that formerly were eligible, we have only changed the objects of our choice, but not our freedom: we are as free now, as we were before; and the victorious christian enjoys more liberty than he did before, for he is deliver'd from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

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For though, before this victory, he had freedom of will, yet had not power to do that which he willed: Now he finds, that through the grace of God he has both power to will and do, that which he chooses, and his heart approves. I believe now, that it will appear, my notion of self-determination, is very different from that which Mr. EDWARDS opposes; being a kind of medium between that, and the doctrine of necessity: and that, as no being can choose that which is not eligible, it will follow, that the Deity can never choose that which is sinful, because it cannot be eligible to a perfectly wise benevolent mind, neither in itself, nor in its consequences.

To conclude this Essay. If knowledge is necessary to complete the character of a moral Agent, and that our moral agency does increase according to the knowledge we have acquired, or according to the capacity and means which we have for acquiring religious knowledge, then religious instructions are absolutely necessary for our religious and moral improvement. Again, if the mind never acts without some motive or reason for acting, then it follows, that the motives or reasons for a virtuous conduct, and the reasons or arguments against the practice of iniquity, ought to be set before us in the strongest light, to enable us to chuse virtue, and to avoid the practice of vice; and the great difference between Mr. EDWARDS and us, is, that according to our Doctrine of self-determination, we can always regulate our choice, according to the dictates of reason and conscience; but according to Mr. EDWARDS, the mind must always be governed by chance or accident; i. e. by something unforeseen, or not designed by the mind beforehand. Thus, let a man's mind be ever so strongly determined at present, to pursue any particular object, yet that extrinsic cause, which has the entire command of his will, may, the next hour, frustrate all his purposes and determine him to a quite contrary pursuit. If this is not to be governed by blind fate and chance, I know not what is. Hence it appears, that a self-determining power is absolutely necessary

fully to our becoming moral Agents, and acting steadfastly with design, and uniformly governing ourselves.

ESSAY



## ESSAY III.

*Shewing, that the DEITY'S PERMITTING, and OVER-  
RULING SIN, to his own Glory, and the General  
Good, is a STRONG PROOF, that men have a SELF-  
DETERMINING POWER.*

**D**R. S. WEST, in his Essay on moral Agency, p. 184, mentions several excellent ends that have unquestionably been answered by the existence of moral evil, or the taking place of sin. In the first place he tells us, "*that the existence of moral evil hath undoubtedly occasioned a more perfect, full, and glorious discovery of the infinite aversion, and irreconcilable hatred of the holy and pure nature of God, to all sin, than could any otherwise possibly have been made to the views of creatures. How exceedingly great and infinitely strong the opposition of the Divine mind is to all sin, and his utter abhorrence of all moral evil, and aversion to it, are more clearly and perfectly delineated & expressed in the just punishment of it, than it is possible or conceivable, that it should be in any other way—and, as this infinite purity and holiness—this most perfect and irreconcilable hatred of the Divine mind to moral evil, are the peculiar glory of God; so all the appearances and manifestations of this disposition in whatever God doth, are lovely and excellent: it being in the nature of things most desirable, that there should be made the most full and clear discovery and manifestation, that can be of this disposition of the Divine mind, to the view of intelligent creatures, who are capable of beholding and admiring it.*" I can hardly

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conceive of a better argument to prove the Doctrine of self-determination, than that which is contained in this quotation. Were there no other argument, this alone would be abundantly sufficient, to convince me of the truth of the doctrine of self-determination. But it appears to me absolutely impossible to reconcile it to the doctrine of necessity; for, upon this supposition, it appears to me that the Deity must constantly be at war with himself: because, if the doctrine of necessity be true, and we are not self-determined, then it will follow, that we are constantly determined by the positive efficiency of Deity; and consequently sin is as much the work of God, as any thing, that he has made. But that the Deity should have an infinite aversion, and an irreconcilable hatred to his own works, is inconceivable. It is sometimes said, that the tendency of sin, is to dethrone the Almighty; to kill and utterly to destroy his existence. But is the Deity constantly working to destroy himself? This will make the Deity a strange contradiction to himself, and will constitute such a Being, as cannot exist in the universe. If the Deity forms wicked volitions in the human mind, and then infinitely hates and abhors these very works of his, he must be infinitely miserable and wretched. God is said to rejoice in his own works: and in Gen. 1. 31. that God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good. If then sin is God's work, he rejoices in it; if it is something that he has made, it is very good: from whence it will follow, that God is the greatest lover of sin in the universe, being the source and fountain of it.

BUT DR. HOPKINS tells us, "*that if God be the origin or cause of moral evil, this is so far from imputing moral evil to him, or supposing that there is any thing of moral evil in him, that it necessarily supposes the contrary,*" vol. 1. p. 254. and consequently, if God be the origin and cause of holiness, this, by the same kind of reasoning, is so far from imputing holiness to him, or supposing that there is any thing of that nature in him, that it necessarily supposes the contrary; that is

to say, that the Deity has no moral character at all: therefore the Apostle was under a mistake, when he said, "*that the invisible things of God, from the creation are clearly seen and understood by the things, that are made:*" for it seems we know nothing of the purity of his nature, nor his hatred of sin. Intelligent minds can only learn, that he makes some beings wicked, that he may have the pleasure of making them miserable, and that he makes others holy, that he may have the pleasure of making them happy: and that he equally delights in sin and holiness, and in the misery and happiness of his creatures.

"ANOTHER excellent end which has been answered by the existence of moral evil," says Dr. WEST, "is, that it has laid a foundation for the establishing his supremacy, authority, and government, over his creatures, upon a more sure and firm basis, than there would have been advantage and opportunity for, had no such thing ever appeared in event; for they will see what a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God, and the infinite hazard they run in presuming to rebel against him." This is another very excellent argument, to prove the doctrine of a self-determining power; but not at all consistent with the doctrine of necessity: for the sinner who believes that his will is always determined by the immediate operation of the Deity upon his mind, will conclude, that it is as impossible for him to refuse the evil, and chuse the good, as it is for him to remove a mountain, or create a new world.

IN the third place he tells us, "*the infinite goodness and love of God appear in a far more strong and glorious light to the views of creatures than they ever could, if moral evil had not taken place---* The event and consequence of the existence of moral evil, in fact are the most surprising discoveries of the infinite goodness and grace of God." Who could wish for a better, or a more powerful argument, to prove the doctrine of self-determination?

He proceeds to shew the several ways, wherein the  
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infinite goodness, love, and marvellous grace of God, now appear, “*in an abundantly more clear, strong, and glorious light, to the views of creatures, than there could be any advantage, or opportunity for them to discover, had moral evil never taken place, particularly in his opposing that which opposeth the general good.*” Most certainly a benevolent mind will be opposed to that which opposes the general good ; but upon the doctrine of necessity, how does it appear that the Deity is opposed to that which opposes the general good, seeing every creature is just as he is pleased to make him ? He has made the wicked for the day of wrath, and has infused into them all the malignity of heart, they possess : he has implanted in the righteous a principle of holiness, in order to make them happy. But can it be said, that he is more pleased with the virtue and happiness of the righteous, than with the sin and misery of the wicked, seeing, they are both equally his own work ? Suppose one should assert that the Deity was malevolent, that he delighted in the misery of his creatures, and hated whatever tended to promote the general good, but found it necessary, in order to make his creatures completely miserable, to make a few beings completely happy, and to place them in the view of those, that were miserable, in order to increase their wretchedness, and aggravate their misery ; would this be a proof that he delighted in the happiness of his creatures, or that he was benevolent ? Surely it would not : but upon supposition, that the number of happy beings, was just equal to the number of the wretched, the character of the Deity would then appear to be only this, that he meant to shew his power, and convince intelligences, that he would do what he pleased, but no evidence of his delight in goodness. Nor can I conceive that there can be any evidence of the benevolence of the Deity, and of his opposing that which opposes the general good, so long as it is asserted, that the Deity efficaciously determines the wills of men to sin : for, upon this supposition, it is not they who have opposed the general good, but the Deity,

Deity, who has used them as the workman uses his ax, to cut down a tree ; so that the Deity is the only agent in the opposition which is made to the general good.

In the next place he observes, “ The Divine goodness appears particularly free, generous, and conspicuous, from the consideration of the exceeding unworthiness and vileness, and the utter ill-desert of such as are made the subjects of Divine grace : the more unworthy the object, the more doth all good appear to proceed from the very nature of him that bestoweth it, and to take its rise purely in the temper and disposition, which are inherent in him.” A very excellent sentiment, but utterly irreconcilable, and totally subversive of the doctrine of necessity. For what unworthiness or vileness can there be in God’s work ? If there is no volition nor no disposition in the heart, but what is infused by the Almighty, can we call it vile, without reflecting upon the Deity in the highest degree ? Or with what propriety can it be said, that God endures with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction ? What long-suffering is there in the Deity towards sinners, when all that he does is to make them wicked, to form sinful volitions in their hearts, and to infuse into them wicked affections, and diabolical dispositions ? Is this waiting upon sinners to be gracious ? How can it be said that he bears with sinners ? Is this the meaning of such phrases---when he is said to bear with sinners, and to endure them with much long-suffering, that he bears with himself, and endures his own work in the hearts of sinners ? This gentleman must bear with me : for I confess, upon the doctrine of necessity, I can put no other meaning to these expressions, and shall be heartily rejoiced, to find him able to put a better meaning to these phrases consistent with his principles.

I would ask this gentleman, what the Deity means when he says (Isaiah 5. 4.) “ *What could have been done to my vineyard, that I have not done in it ?*” According to the doctrine of necessity, he had given them a wicked will, constantly to oppose all his external

nal dispensations towards them; and consequently had done nothing for them, with a view to do them any good. Hence I conclude, that all the instances of divine love and goodness towards sinners and all their vileness and unworthiness, are evident proofs of a self-determining power. Again, he says, “*The love of a friend is manifested, by the hazards to which he will expose himself, and the dangers and sufferings to which he will submit for us.*” This he beautifully illustrates in the sufferings and death of Christ, and his purchasing redemption for his people, and with infinite condescension and indulgence, inviting us to put our trust in him, “*and freely to cast all our cares and burthens upon him; pouring our complaints into his bosom, with the fullest assurance of finding in him an infinitely powerful protector, and cordial, faithful, and indulgent friend.*” This is certainly a most glorious truth. But, alas! how is it spoiled by the doctrine of necessity! For upon this scheme, while in the gospel he is inviting of us to come to him for life, and to put our trust in him, he is secretly working in the minds of many, who are thus invited, the most dreadful obstinacy and unbelief. While the love of God appears displayed, in the sufferings and death of Christ, in so astonishing a manner, that one would suppose it must soften down the hardest heart of any one who will seriously attend to it, the Deity is all this while inspiring the minds of many, with the utmost malignity and wickedness, and gives them a sight of heaven, only to make hell the more intolerable. This is enough to shew, that the love of God, in Christ, is another proof of a self-determining power.

AGAIN, he tells us---“*Relief is never so acceptable and grateful, as when our distresses are at their height; and never is any so ready to acknowledge, and so prepared to behold the glory of free sovereign grace, as when he hath the deepest sense of his own infinite vileness and unworthiness, and most sensibly feels his own helplessness and dependance.*” Very true---if the scheme of self-determination is allowed; but not a word

word of truth in it, if the doctrine of necessity be true : for I have already shewn, that necessity fluts out all sense of vileness and unworthiness ; and tho he may feel himself helpless and dependent, yet he can see no glory, nor Divine grace, because he can discover no vileness nor unworthiness in himself.

Thus have I shewn, that all the excellent ends that are answered by the existence of moral evil, are so many plain proofs, that we are made with a self-determining power. In short---I see no foundation for any humiliation in the sinner, nor any ground for exalting the Saviour ; nor motives to promote holiness, nor any display of the moral perfections of God, but only upon the doctrine of self-determination : or how a man can have any horror of conscience, while he believes, that the Deity is the positive cause of every volition and disposition in his heart. I am willing to submit my sentiments to the inspection of the candid and judicious, and heartily desire, if in any thing I have missed of the truth, that I may be set right : and hope, that while we are all desirous of promoting the glory of the Divine character, our imperfect conceptions of these sublime truths will be forgiven.



## ESSAY IV.

*An attempt to shew, that the DEITY is not the POSITIVE, EFFICIENT CAUSE of SIN : and the TEXTS, usually brought in support of it, are CONSIDERED.*

**T**HERE are many, in the present day, who maintain, that sin takes place through the positive efficiency of Deity ; that it is properly his creature, and as really his work, as any thing, which he has created in the natural world. This seems to be a sentiment, which has never been published to the world, till the present day; for though the Popish Dominicans, and some among the Protestants, have asserted, that the Deity was the Author of all the volitions or actions of men, yet they said he was not the Author or cause of the depravity, or sinfulness of the volition or action; for though the Deity was the Author of the act, considered as a natural act, yet the sinfulness of the act arose from the imperfection of the creature. This plainly shews, that they were afraid to charge the Deity with being the Author or cause of sin : And even Mr. EDWARDS himself, plainly appears to have had no idea, that the Deity was the positive efficient cause of sin, any more than that the sun can be considered as the positive efficient cause of darkness, because we see darkness always to ensue when the sun has withdrawn itself from us. In like manner, Mr. EDWARDS supposes, that men never commit sin, but only when God leaves them to themselves, and necessarily sin when he does so ; and consequently sin is not from God, as the positive efficient cause of it.

Now

Now one would naturally suppose, if the Deity be the positive efficient cause of sin, his nature must be sinful. To obviate this objection, Dr. HOPKINS tells us, "*that if God be the origin or cause of moral evil, this is so far from imputing moral evil to him, or supposing that there is any thing of that nature in him, that it naturally supposes the contrary.*" But if this be true, then it will follow, that if God be the cause of holiness, this is so far from imputing holiness to him, or supposing that there is any thing of that nature in him, that it naturally supposes the contrary. This mode of reasoning will prove, that the Deity has no moral character at all, either of sin or of holiness; which will sap the foundation of all religion: for all true religion is founded upon the moral perfections of the Deity.

BUT that he who is the cause, i. e. the producer of a sinful volition in another, must himself be sinful, I prove by the following argument, viz. In order to an act of choice, it is necessary that an object appear with a certain degree of eligibility to the mind; for every thing chosen must be either eligible in itself, or in its consequences: and, according to these gentlemen, before the mind chuses, the object must appear preferable to every other thing, which is then in the view of the mind; i. e. in Mr. EDWARDS' language, the mind always is, as the greatest apparent good is. Hence it follows, that the Deity, in order to produce a sinful volition, must place the object in such a view before the mind, as to make it appear the greatest good, under present circumstances; i. e. he must place such reasons before the mind, as will effectually induce it to commit the sinful action, as the best thing that it can do, under present circumstances; which implies, that the Deity does entice and persuade men to the commission of sin, by presenting the object in a false point of light; and by deceitful reasonings, and false colourings, does effectually decieve the mind, so as to make it believe, that to commit sin, is the best thing it can do: for I have no idea, that the Deity can produce a sinful volition

tion in the human mind, in any other way, than what I have now described.

BUT if the Deity produces sinful volitions in the minds of men, by deceiving them, and giving them a false view of sin, then certainly the Apostle was under a great mistake, when he said it was impossible for God to lie; and we have been in an error, in supposing that the Deity was a God of truth. But it is impossible that the Deity should deceive and impose upon the mind, and not be himself sinful, unless it be said, that lying and deceit are not immoralities.

I KNOW it is said, that the Deity produces sin, for the sake of the great good, which it is the occasion of, to the universe: but this will not help the matter at all; for the goodness of the intention, cannot sanctify the wickedness of the action. If an action is in itself immoral, it cannot change its nature, nor cease being immoral, though the author should really design, and actually produce a great deal of good by it; because this supposition implies, that there is no eternal fitness in things, but the same actions, viz. lying and deceit, may be either right or wrong, according as circumstances happen to take place.

DR. HOPKINS informs us, vol. I. p. 214, "*That God does not exhibit any thing to the view of men, or set any thing before them in his word or works, in false colors, or that has any tendency to deceive them, or draw them into sin; but every thing which he suggests to them in his word and providence, has a contrary tendency, and is perfect truth. And if men view objects in a wrong and false light, it is wholly owing to their lusts, by which the light and truth, which God sets before them, is perverted and abused.*" But if God is the author of men's lusts, and of the moral depravity of them, how will this help the matter? If God has given me lusts, by which I naturally and necessarily view things in a wrong light, so that light and truth must appear to me like darkness and falsehood, and darkness and falsehood, like light and truth, this will plainly prove, that light and truth have never been properly,

properly placed before me : for my lusts being the medium through which I view objects, and those being depraved, it is impossible I should view these objects in a true light ; i. e. light and truth have never been justly exhibited to my view. Hence it appears, according to this gentleman, that whatever the Deity suggests to sinners, by his word and providence, is entirely perverted by the depraved lusts which he has implanted within them : that is, the Deity properly deceives them by causing them to view things through the false medium of their lusts.

BUT if the Deity could produce sin, without being himself the sinner, and without having a sinful volition, there would, as it appears to me, be several very absurd consequences, which would attend this supposition : for in the first place, if the Deity produces sinful volitions, by his positive efficiency, then sin is his own work ; if it be his own work, then he cannot hate sin, but must love it, and delight in it. It is said, that the Deity's producing sin, no more proves his delight in it, than his producing natural evil, viz. pain and misery, proves that he delights in natural evil : but the two cases are by no means parallel ; and that for this plain reason, that the Deity is no where represented as being angry at his creatures, because they suffer pain and distress ; so far from it, that he is frequently represented as pitying and relieving them from their affliction ; whereas with regard to moral evil, God is always represented as hating of it, and punishing the impenitent for their iniquities.

BUT if sin is God's work, which it must be, if God is the positive, efficient cause of it, then to say, that he hates and abhors sin, is the same as to say he hates and abhors his own works ; i. e. that he hates and abhors himself ; that he is a contradiction to himself, and is constantly at war with himself ; for when he produces sin, he produces that, which strikes directly at his own attributes : for the sinner, we are told, would rear the Almighty from his throne, would stamp him under his feet, would kill him, &c. But if all this is his

his own work, and an infinite evil, then it follows, that the Deity takes infinite pains to kill and destroy himself: but as he is a self-existing being, it becomes impossible, that he should destroy or annihilate himself, although he has created sin, which is an infinite evil, and aims directly at the destruction of the Almighty. And besides, if he has an infinite hatred to sin, while he is under a necessity of creating it, he must be infinitely miserable and wretched: for he who is obliged to perform a thing hateful to himself, must be unhappy in proportion to his aversion to the thing about which he is engaged; but if sin is infinitely hateful to the Deity, it follows, that he must be infinitely wretched all the while he is engaged in producing it.

AGAIN, if the Deity be the positive efficient cause of sin, then there can be no foundation for repentance: for how can a man repent or be sorry, that he is just such a creature, in every respect, as the Almighty has been pleased to make him? Or what remorse of conscience can there be, when the sinner believes, that every sinful volition was formed in him by the Deity? To be opposed to God's work, is to be opposed to God; and if the Deity has formed sinful volitions in a man, because his glory could not be promoted without it, then surely the sinner, if he loves God, must love him because he has made him a sinful creature, and ought to thank him for all the sins which he has committed. Hence some, as I have been credibly informed, have declared, that they were never sorry for any sins, which they had committed; and some have thought, that it was their duty to thank God for all the sins of which they had been guilty, because by these sins they had been instrumental of promoting the Divine glory. It has also been asserted, that a sinner ought to thank God for damnation. These are the natural and unavoidable consequences (as it appears to me) which will follow from a belief, that God, for his own glory, has created sinful volitions in the human heart. Hence, consistently with these principles, there can be no repentance for sin, and consequently no reformation of  
life

life and manners; but the floodgates of iniquity are set open, that vice and wickedness may have free course, and be glorified through the whole world.

If we are to thank God for all the sins which we have committed, this will imply, that sins are blessings or favours; and consequently, if the sinner is to thank God for damnation, then damnation is a blessing and favour: for thankfulness is an acknowledgement of benefits or favours received. If a man then is to thank God for sin and damnation, then sin and damnation are to be esteemed as blessings from the Almighty. Hence sinners, who believe this doctrine, will be apt to conclude, that it is a matter of no consequence, whether they live in the commission of sin or not, or whether they are saved or damned; seeing, upon either supposition, they are sure, that whatever they receive from God, will be such a blessing that they ought to be thankful for it. Another consequence, directly contrary to the former, has been drawn from these principles; for some believing that God has made them sinners, on purpose to damn them, have entertained the most malignant thoughts against the Deity, and have afterwards declared, that at that time they wanted to kill God, to tear him from his throne, and stamp him under their feet. Such a temper of mind, betrays gross ignorance of the Divine character, and cannot properly be called a conviction of sin: for a true conviction of sin, consists in a sense of the fitness and propriety of the law, which the sinner has broken, and of the justness of the penalty to which he is subjected; i. e. true conviction of sin, consists in an approbation of the holiness and moral perfections of the Deity. A consciousness that the punishment is just, makes the sinner much more unhappy than he possibly could be, if he thought himself innocent, and that the punishment was unjust and tyrannical. According to Dr. HOPKINS, "*both moral evil and holiness, are equally the productions of the Almighty; but whether the same mode of operation that produces moral evil does also produce holiness we cannot tell,*" according to him.

But this makes it extremely unhappy for us ; for we seem to have no way to know a true revelation from a false one, both equally coming from the Deity ; and, so far as we know, by the same mode of operation : So that there can be no way to determine a true inspiration from a false one. The Apostle tells us, “ *that as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the Sons of God ;*” but according to Dr. HOPKINS, will it not follow, that many who are led by the spirit of God, are the children of the Devil ? The Deity is called the *father of Lights, from whom proceeds every good and perfect gift ;* but according to these principles, may he not, with as much propriety, be called the father of Darkness, from whom proceeds all malignity and wickedness ? All these horrible consequences may be avoided, by only asserting that sin takes place by the permission of Deity. But Dr. WEST, in his moral Agency, p. 243. says, “ *We have no occasion for the gentle, and I may say in this place insignificant term permit-----it is a term therefore in my humble opinion, which hath been improperly used ; tending to relieve only the imaginations of men ; and that by begetting in the mind an apprehension of certain powers in creatures which do not belong to them ; and of a certain neglect in providence, and carelessness in the Divine mind, which are infinitely reproachful to him.*” This is a very wrong and injurious representation of the doctrine of God’s permitting sin : for we firmly believe, that the providence of God extends to the smallest and most minute event that can take place ; for he who has made all things, and who every moment preserves them in being does regulate and govern all things, and sets bounds to the actions of all rational creatures, and therefore cannot, with any propriety, be said to neglect or not to take care of them. We believe that the Deity, by his permissive decree, superintends and overrules all the actions of his creatures, to accomplish his own glorious purposes, in as strong a sense, as though he brought them to pass by his positive efficiency ; and are as ready to acknowledge our continual dependence

dependence upon him, as any of our opponents can be : and we certainly ascribe much more to the unbounded power and sovereignty of the Deity, than they possibly can, upon their principles : for we believe, that the Deity has communicated a self-moving, or self-active principle ; a principle which they suppose the Deity cannot communicate ; and we believe that the Deity governs and overrules the actions of these beings to bring about his own purposes and designs, as infallibly, and with the same ease, as though they were mere passive beings. Every pious and practical sentiment therefore, is better secured on our principle, than on theirs : we therefore can freely subscribe to what the assembly of Divines, at Westminster, say, in their confession of faith, Chap. 3, sect. 1---“ *that though God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass, yet so, say they, as thereby neither is God the Author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.*” To this effect, Dr. TWISSE, who, as I am told, was prolocutor of the Westminster assembly of Divines, and doubtless understood their sentiments, says, (as I find him quoted) *Grace defended*, p. 156, “ *That whereas we see some things come to pass necessarily, some contingently ; so God hath ordained, that all things shall come to pass, but necessary things necessarily, and contingent things contingently, that is avoidably, and with a possibility of not coming to pass : For every university scholar knows this to be the notion of contingency.*” I know, that the terms to decree and ordain, are very obnoxious sounds in the ears of many, who are governed more by sounds than sense ; but to ordain contingent things, contingently, i. e. avoidably, and with a possibility of not coming to pass, can certainly mean nothing different from our notion of Divine permission. Hence we see, that in this point, Dr. HOPKINS and Dr. WEST, have most evidently departed from the sense and meaning of the Westminster

Westminster assembly of Divines; and that our doctrine of Divine permission, comes fully up to the sense of the passages just quoted.

IN order to illustrate our idea of Divine permission, I would observe, that the Deity, in all his works, aims at the display of his own glorious perfections, particularly of his benevolence; consequently, the grand end of Deity, in creation, was to communicate happiness to his creatures. In order to accomplish this design, the Deity must bring into existence the highest order of created intelligences; and in order that they may enjoy the greatest degree of happiness of which they are capable, there must be a great variety of subordinate beings: for as the happiness of the first order of beings must most eminently consist in their discovery of the Divine perfections, so the greater variety there is of creatures in the universe, the greater display will there be of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Deity: and consequently this first order of created beings, must be much happier, than they could be without the existence of these subordinate beings: and besides, these subordinate beings will greatly add to the sum total of good, by their own positive happiness. But then it is impossible, in the nature of things, that the second order of beings should be so perfect or happy as the first order, for that would imply, they were the first order, which is a contradiction: and so we may suppose the Deity to proceed, till he comes to the lowest order of sensitive beings, in whose whole existence there will be, perhaps, but ten degrees of pleasure, and nine of pain; yet is his existence a benefit to him, because his happiness is greater than his misery, and he adds to the sum total of good, by adding one degree of neat happiness to the whole; and besides, his existence may be necessary to the happiness of beings of a higher class, by supplying them either with food or medicine. Now in this variety of beings there must be somewhere such a creature as man, who cannot arrive to the greatest degrees of happiness of which he is capable, without being virtuous; and he cannot be virtuous, with-

out being free, and in a state of probation; and he cannot be free, and in a state of probation, without having a power to do wrong as well as right.

BUT it will be asked, Why the Deity brought into existence beings, whom he foresaw would be guilty of moral evil? The answer is, that their existence was necessary to promote the general good; and the Deity has determined, that they shall answer this purpose, which may be done two ways: first, by their becoming virtuous themselves, by which they will promote the general good, by their own positive happiness, or upon their becoming vicious, they shall promote the general good by having their wickedness overruled to the glory of God, and to the advancement of the happiness of the righteous. Hence we see, that the foresight of moral agents abusing their freedom, by committing iniquity could not be a sufficient reason for their not existing, so long as their existence could be equally subservient to the general good, if they were vicious, as if they were virtuous: and that the Deity has decreed, that free agents shall act freely, during their state of probation, so far as is for the general good; for every thing beyond that, must be restrained agreeable to that of the Psalmist, "*Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee, the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain:*" i. e. God will overrule all the wrath and malice of men, to his own glory and the general good; and whatever is not for the Divine glory, shall be prevented from taking place; i. e. that the Divine being does, by his permissive decree, set bounds to the actions of his creatures, so that nothing shall take place in the universe, but what shall be overruled for good upon the whole; and that the Deity shall never be frustrated in any of his designs, but his will, his counsel, and purpose shall ever stand, and the Divine pleasure shall ever be accomplished. Hence, according to our sentiments, every thing is as firmly fixed in the Divine mind, by his permissive decree, and shall as infallibly be accomplished, as though he was the immediate author, or efficient cause, of all the actions of his creatures.

THE Scripture account of God's taking from men the advantages which they enjoy, and giving them up to a reprobate mind, as a punishment for their sins, is so far from holding up the idea, that God is the positive efficient cause of sin, that it rather implies the contrary; and that sin is frequently occasioned by God's leaving men to themselves, and taking his holy spirit from them. Hence our Saviour tells his disciples, "*That it was given to them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the Jews it was not given.*" And the reason, which he renders, why it was given to the Apostles, and not to the Jews, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, is this, "*That whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance; but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*" And this reason he illustrates by observing, that "*their heart was waxed gross; that their ears were dull of hearing, and that they had closed their eyes,*"---"*But (says he to his disciples) blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear:*" i. e. you honestly improve the means and advantages which God has given you, therefore has he granted you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; but the Jews have neglected, and abused the means and advantages which they enjoy; therefore it is not given them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and the means and advantages, which they now enjoy, shall be taken from them. The parable of the talents, shews us, that the Deity bestows on men certain means and advantages, for their moral and religious improvement; and that he deals with them, according as they improve or neglect to improve the privileges which they enjoy: and, therefore, the slothful servant had his one talent taken from him, and given to him who had ten talents; and it is added; "*For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: and from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath:*" i. e. he who improves what God has given him, shall not only have the natural increase acquired by his labor,

but, but also an additional free gift, over and above what he has acquired; and he who has neglected or abused his privilege, shall have it taken from him. The talent which was laid in a napkin was not lost, but given to him that had ten talents. This shews, that none of God's gifts will be lost, but that they shall be taken from those who misimprove them, and be given to those who will make a right improvement of them.

From these texts we learn, that God never forsakes any till they first forsake him. Agreeable to this, is that declaration of the Almighty, Psal. 81. 11, 12. *"But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me: So I gave them up to their own hearts' lust, & they walked in their own counsels."* The Apostle Paul informs us, That the heathen world, for their abuse of the light of nature, were given up by the Deity to enormous vices.--See Rom. 1. 24 & 26 v. Thus the Psalmist, when he was confessing the crimes of murder and adultery, prays, that God would not cast him out of his presence, nor take his holy spirit from him.---Psal. 51. 11. These texts shew, that the Deity takes his holy spirit from men, and gives them up to a reprobate mind, as a just punishment for their iniquities. Some of the texts which are brought to prove that sin takes place through the positive efficiency of Deity, and upon which great stress has been laid, as though they were fully decisive of the point in question, prove no more, when fairly interpreted, than that the Deity gives men up to a reprobate mind, as a just punishment for their iniquity. Such are all those texts which speak of God's hardening the hearts, and blinding the minds of men. If we let the Scripture be its own interpreter, we shall soon see the only sense in which God is said to harden the hearts of men: for this purpose, see Isa. 6. 9, 10. *"And he said, go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, & convert,*  
and

*and be healed."* Our Saviour, in Matt. 13. 14, 15. renders this text thus, "*By hearing, ye shall hear, and shall not understand : and seeing, ye shall see, and shall not perceive : For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.*"

In John 12. 40. this text is rendered thus, "*He hath blinded their minds, and hardened their hearts, that they should not see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*"—

We may observe, that in Isaiah, these effects are ascribed to the prophet; in Matthew, to the persons themselves; and in John, to the Deity himself. Here is then a sense in which the prophet is considered as hardening their hearts; a sense in which the persons themselves harden their own hearts; and a sense in which God hardens their hearts. If we desire to know in what sense God hardens the heart, our Saviour will inform us, in the forecited text from Matthew; where he assures us, that this passage in Isaiah was fulfilled in the Jews of his times; and therefore it was not given them to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven: for says he, "*Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath :*" so that this fulfilment of this prediction in Isaiah, according to our Saviour, consisted in God's taking from them, that which he had granted them, as a just punishment for their neglect and abuse of the advantages which they enjoyed: this, then, according to our Saviour, is the only sense in which God is said to harden the heart. Thus, as the Sun hardens the clay, by drying up the moisture which is in it, so the Deity hardens the hearts of men, by withdrawing his spirit and grace, and giving them up to a reprobate mind. If we want any further confirmation of this sense of God's hardening the heart, the Apostle Paul will give it to us, in Rom. 9. 18---22. "*Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy,*  
and

and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction." Here it is evident, that the persons hardened, the vessels to dishonor, and the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, all mean the same persons. The metaphor of the potter and his clay, is evidently taken from Jeremiah, 18 Chap. first ten verses.---"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build, and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them." Here we see, that as the potter makes a vessel, according to the nature and fitness of the clay, so the Deity deals with a people, when he threatens them with destruction, because, according to the metaphor, they

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are vile clay and fit only to be made into a vile vessel; if they turn from their evil, that is, become good clay, then the Deity will repent of the evil that he thought to do unto them, and will make a good vessel of them. If the Deity declares that he will build and plant a nation, make a good vessel of them, because they have the appearance of good clay; if they do evil in his sight, by disobeying his voice, i. e. become vile clay, then he will repent of the good wherewith he said he would benefit them, i. e. will make a vile vessel of them, will take away the good which he had promised them. Here again we see, that God's hardening men, is only by withdrawing and taking away the good things which he promised them. The Apostle Paul has used the same metaphor in another place--see 2 Tim. 2. 20, 21.

*"But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor. If a man, therefore, purge himself from these (viz. dishonorable vessels) he shall be a vessel to honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work."*

Here again, we see, that a man's becoming a vessel to honor or dishonor, is in consequence of his own conduct and behavior; and that the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, according to Paul, had the means of grace; and because they rejected these means, therefore they were made vessels of wrath, appears from his own words--

*"What if God willing to shew his wrath, and make his power known, endured, with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?"*

Here we see, that God did not execute his wrath, till he had endured them with much long suffering; and if we want to know what is meant by long suffering in Paul's writings, Peter will inform us---see 2 Pet. 3. 15.

*"And account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you."*

Here we are assured by Peter, that the word long-suffering, in Paul, means salvation---see Romans 2. 4,

*“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”* Here we learn, that these vessels of wrath, before vengeance was executed upon them, had the means of salvation even that long-suffering and goodness of God which leadeth to repentance; but that through their impenitence and hardness of heart, they treasured up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Hence it follows, that those whom God hardens, and who become vessels of wrath, are those from whom God takes the means of salvation, those who are given up to a reprobate mind; and therefore, he who is formed, and become a vessel of wrath, cannot blame the Almighty for making him such a vessel: he can, with no propriety, say to the Deity, *Why hast thou made me thus: seeing that the Deity has made him thus, as a just punishment for his abusing the long-suffering of God, and rejecting the means of salvation, and that goodness that was designed to lead him to repentance.*

FROM these texts it plainly appears, that God does not harden the hearts of men, by any positive efficiency in forming or infusing any wickedness into their heart, but only by taking from them, those things, which were designed to restrain them from the committing of sin, and by permitting them to walk in their own wicked ways. Thus we find, that Pharaoh was sometimes so humbled, by the judgments that were brought upon him, that he confessed his sin, and promised to let Israel go: but when the judgment was removed, and God had taken away his correcting rod, then we find it said, *that Pharaoh's heart was hardened, neither would he let the people go.* The removing of the judgment, was evidently the reason of Pharaoh's hardening his heart; and yet this, which takes place in consequence of God's leaving men to themselves, is spoken of as though it were brought about by the positive efficiency of Deity. This not only appears from

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the texts already cited, but from several other passages in sacred writ: see to this purpose Isa. 63. 17. "*O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear?*" Now it is certain, from the texts that have been already examined, that nothing more is intended, than that God leaves men to err, and to harden their hearts; besides, it is observed by critics, that these verbs are in the conjugation Hiphil: and that verbs in Hiphil, often signify only permission.---See Pool's Synopsis in locum. This shews us the necessity and vast importance of becoming thoroughly acquainted with the peculiar phraseology of Scripture; otherwise, we may be very confident, that we have gotten the true sense of Scripture, merely from its agreement in sound with certain modern phrases, when a better acquaintance with the Language of the Bible would shew us, that we had entirely missed the mark, and had put a meaning upon the words directly contrary to the sense of the sacred pages. The texts that have been examined, will afford us a clue, that will lead us to the meaning of several other passages of scripture. We may very easily understand the Apostle, in Rom. 11. 7, 8. "*What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for: but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded: According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear unto this day.*" Here we are told, that the unbelieving Israelites were blinded, and that God had given them the spirit of slumber: in Isa. 29. 10. it is, "*The Lord hath poured upon you the spirit of deep sleep.*" We see, that to give the spirit of slumber, or to pour out the spirit of deep sleep, is the same as to blind the mind, or harden the heart; but we have already shewn, that the Deity blinds the mind, only by taking from persons, the means and advantages which they enjoyed; consequently, to pour out a spirit of deep sleep, or to give a spirit of slumber, can only mean, taking from persons, that which they once enjoyed: and the meaning is doubtless this, that when

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God has withdrawn his spirit and grace from men, and given them up to a reprobate mind, they are like men, who, by taking too much of an inebriating and stupefactive liquor, are fallen into a deep sleep. And in the same manner we may understand. Isa. 19. 14. "*The Lord hath mingled a perverse spirit in the midst thereof; and they have caused Egypt to err in every work thereof, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit.*"

We read of Saul, 1. Sam. 16. 14, "*That the spirit of the Lord departed from him, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled or terrified him,*" as the original word signifies: i. e. he was judicially left of God to his own gloomy and frightful imaginations. That this was the true state, appears from his servants advising him to send for a skilful musician, to play before him upon the harp; telling him, "*that then he should be well.*" Saul consents to the advice: accordingly David was sent for, and when he played upon the harp, Saul was refreshed and was well. All this is very intelligible, upon supposition, that his mind was troubled with gloomy and frightful imaginations: For in that case, music might very naturally be a proper relief to his mind. But what effect could music have to drive away a malignant Demon, when our Saviour tells us, *this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting,* and consequently cannot be driven away by music: nor was music a whit more likely to remove a wicked and immoral principle, fixed in his heart. And besides, if this were the case, Saul would not have consented to send for a musician; for immorality being that which is voluntary, Saul could not be supposed to be sensible that any thing was amiss with himself: or if he was he had only to change his resolution; and neither would he ever have thought to send for a musician to do that which he only could do for himself. Thus I think it appears plain, that the case of Saul was only his being given up to a gloomy, frightful, and disordered imagination, which was a just punishment for his wickedness.

WHEN it is said of Eli's wicked sons, that "*they hearkned not to the voice of their father, because the*"

*Lo! I would stay them,*" 1st Sam. 2. 25, it implies, that the Deity had given them up to an obstinate mind, as a just punishment for their sins, but there is nothing that looks like the Deity's producing a wicked heart in them by his positive efficiency. This, and the case of Amaziah, of whom it is said, "*that he would not hear, for it came of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of their enemies,*" (2 Chron. 25. 20.) both relate to the case of those whom God is said to harden. After what has been said, it will be needless to run over all the instances of the blindness, or insaturation of particular persons, which is said to come from God, in order for their destruction.

In the 45 chap. of Isa. v. 7, God says in his address to Cyrus, "*I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.*" In these words it is supposed, there is an evident reference to the Persian religion, in which Cyrus was educated; and who, it is said, held to two first Beings; the one, the author of all good, and the other, the author of all evil, natural and moral. I know this has been commonly said and believed, but Dr. HUGHES, who lived many years among the Parsees, or disciples of Zoroaster, who was the founder of the Persian religion, tells us (if my memory does not greatly fail me, for I have not the book now by me) I say, he tells us, as I find him quoted in the universal history, "*That the followers of Zoroaster look upon the evil being as a fallen creature.*" But be that as it may, and let us grant, that God creates sin in the same sense in which he creates darkness, and what will our opponents gain by it? Surely nothing at all; for as darkness is a mere privation of light, and has no positive existence, so the Deity can no otherwise be said to create Darkness, but only by the withdrawing of Light. If then the Deity creates sin, in the sense in which he creates darkness, it will follow, that as Darkness is the consequence of God's withdrawing the light, so the consequence of God's withdrawing his spirit and grace from any person, is sin; which will fall in exactly with

with our sense of God's hardening the heart ; and it, I think, a very strong confirmation, that our explanation of these texts, is true. As darkness cannot take place, till light is withdrawn, so neither can sin, till men are left to the freedom of their own will ; and if this be the only sense in which God creates sin, then it is certain, he does not produce it by his positive efficiency ; and if we would not make the Scriptures contradict themselves, we must construe every text so as to be consistent with this text, now under consideration : i. e. we must construe every text so as to imply, that the Deity permits sin, by leaving men to themselves, and withdrawing his restraints from them.

DR. LOWTH, in his exposition of this text, has the following observation : "*The latter part of the sentence, explains the former ; light being often put for happiness, and darkness for adversity. The sense is, that all the vicissitudes of good or ill success, are to be ascribed to Providence. God sets up one kingdom, that of Cyrus, and pulls down another, the Babylonian Monarchy.*" And this I take to be the true sense of the text ; for the word peace, is more naturally opposed to such kind of adversity as consists in the pulling down of monarchies, than it is to moral evil. And beside, the design of this address to Cyrus, being to assure him, that God had raised him up, and established him to pull down nations, &c. to deliver the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, it seems hardly capable of another meaning, than that which Dr. LOWTH has given it. Another text, which is bro't to prove, that sin takes place through the positive efficiency of Deity, is the saying of David to Abishai, concerning Shimei's cursing him, "*So let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, curse David. Who shall then say, wherefore hast thou done so ? Let him alone, and let him curse ; for the Lord hath hidden him.*" Now none of these Gentlemen, I presume will say, that the Deity actually spoke to Shimei, and commanded him to curse David ; for if so, then it was his duty to curse David or else they must acknowledge, that it is sometimes wicked to obey the  
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the command of God: Neither of which, I presume, will they be willing to own: they must, therefore, recede from the literal sense of the text, and then it may as well be accommodated to a permissive, as to an effective decree. A phrase, very similar to this may be found in 1 Sam. 26. 19. where David speaking to Saul concerning the treatment, which he had received from the people, says "*they have this day driven me out from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying, go serve other gods.*" By which he only means, that they having sought to take his life, made it necessary for him to flee away, and retire among Idolatrous nations, in order to save his life; but they had not ordered him to quit the inheritance of the Lord, nor commanded him to go and serve other gods. This place appears to me exactly parallel to that under consideration; and there is just as much need of softening the one, as the other. David was obliged, for his safety, to retire among idolatrous nations. This he expresses by a strong figure, that they had said to him go serve other gods; because he was as effectually compelled, for his own safety, to reside among idolatrous nations, as though they had commanded him to go and serve other gods. In like manner Shimei, finding that David was fleeing from Absalom, felt himself free from all restraint and fear of David's being in a capacity to hurt him, and availed himself of this opportunity to vent his malice against him. David here acknowledges the hand of God, in delivering him up to the buffetings of Shimei, as a just correction for his former transgressions: he therefore would receive it as coming from God, with as much humility, as though the Deity had commanded Shimei to curse David. The providence of God is as much to be acknowledged, upon the supposition of a permissive decree, as though it were brought about by the positive efficiency of Deity; and the sense is as natural and easy upon the former, as upon the latter supposition.

IN Prov. 16. 4, it is said, "*The Lord hath made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.*"

evil." These words should have been rendered, agreeable to the Hebrew, *The Lord hath made all things to bear testimony to himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil*: i. e. all things shall bear testimony to the glorious perfections of God; even the wicked shall be made to proclaim the glorious perfection of God, when they are justly punished for their crimes.

IN Psal. 105. 25, it is said, "*He turned their heart to hate his people.*" It is observed by Hebricians, that when an active verb, in the third person, is put absolutely, i. e. without a nominative case, it is then used impersonally, and to be rendered by the passive voice, thus, *their heart was turned to hate his people.* And so it seems the Chaldee and Kimehi understood it---see Pool's Synopsis in Locum---see, also, Gen. 2. 20, and chap. 16. 14. and 1 Sam. 23. 22. But if we suppose *lebam* to be the nominative case to *hapech*, then it must be rendered thus---*Their heart turned to hate his people.* Upon either of these interpretations, this text cannot be brought to prove, that the Deity does by his agency produce moral evil in the heart.

To prove, that God does effect the sinful deceptions and volitions of men, Dr. HOPKINS has cited Ezekiel, 14. 9. "*And if the prophet be deceived when he hath spoken a thing, I the Lord have deceived that prophet.*" If the meaning of Dr. HOPKINS is, that the Deity does really inspire the prophet with a false revelation, then the Apostle labored under a great mistake, in saying, "*It is impossible for God to lie*:" but if the Deity does sometimes impose upon prophets, and inspire them with false revelations, how shall we know when he gives them a true revelation? And if we have no rule by which to determine, when the Almighty speaks the truth, or when he means to deceive us, then there is an end to all revealed religion: for we never can tell what we ought to believe, and what we ought not. Had he not better have rendered this, *I the Lord have suffered or permitted the prophet to be deceived*? For thus Hebricians tell us, verbs in *pihil* are sometimes to be rendered. But waving this criticism, there is an-

other important sense, in which the Deity may be said to deceive an idolatrous prophet; for of such, it seems from the context, the Lord is speaking: for the Lord declareth of himself, Isaiah 44. 25, "*That he frustrateth the tokens of the liar, and maketh diviners mad: that he turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish.*" For the better understanding this passage, we may remember, that according to Moses (Deut. 13. 1, 2.) an idolatrous prophet, or dreamer of dreams, may give a sign or a wonder, that shall come to pass: and that God sometimes permits this, for to try the obedience of his people: but according to that in Isaiah, he often frustrates their tokens, and thereby maketh the diviners mad, i. e. as I understand it, when they have given signs and wonders, which would certainly come to pass, if the Deity did not interpose, in such cases, he frequently interposes, and prevents those signs and wonders from coming to pass: so that these prophets find themselves greatly disappointed and deceived, and their knowledge, of which they boasted, becomes foolishness. Thus the Lord does deceive the prophet, by preventing his tokens from coming to pass, in a way perfectly consistent with his moral rectitude. And this seems plainly to be the sense of the text under consideration: for in v. 4, the Lord declares, that, "*He, who hath set up his idols in his heart, and cometh to the prophet, I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols*"---v. 8. "*And I will set myself against that man, and I will make him a sign and a proverb:*" i. e. by frustrating all the tokens of the idolatrous prophets, in whom he trusted; and that, in so clear a manner, that he shall become a proverb of reproach among the people. And we are further told, v. 10. "*That the punishment of the prophet shall be even as the punishment of him, that seeketh unto him:*" i. e. both shall become a sign and a proverb, and both be cast off from the midst of the people: he that cometh to the prophet, and the prophet himself, shall be so plainly convicted of trusting in a refuge of lies, that they shall become a  
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sign and a proverb unto the people. One might be apt to wonder, at first, that Dr. HOPKINS should bring this out to prove, that God does deceive men by his positive agency on the heart, when it is so natural to observe, that according to that interpretation, we can never know when we are to receive any thing as truth, which the Deity reveals: but we must remember, that according to his principles, the Deity deceives men in every sinful volition; for doubtless he will say, that the mind is as the greatest apparent good is, and therefore, in choosing sin, the Deity must deceive the sinner, by making him believe that that sinful act, is the greatest possible good that can take place at that time.

ANOTHER text, which the Doctor has brought to prove his point, is, Prov. 21. 1. "*The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; as the rivers of water, he turneth it whithersoever he will.*" The Dr. ought to have remembered, that we assert it to be the peculiar glory of God, to govern and overrule the actions of free agents, to bring about all his own purposes by his permissive decree, as certainly and infallibly, as if it were done by his positive efficiency; and therefore, according to our sentiments, these words have as consistent and as clear a meaning, as they have upon his. But if we must understand these words, as speaking of a positive efficiency of Deity, it will lie upon him to prove, that the Deity does ever by his positive efficiency, move any one to commit iniquity.---To be sure, he cannot, if his nature is holy. We read of some who are taken captive by the devil at his will.---Does the devil ever move these captives to any holy actions? Surely he does not: and that for this plain reason, that he is a malevolent being. For the same reason, we are to suppose that the Deity, who is a benevolent being, can never move any one to a wicked action.

BUT there is another text, which the Dr. has brought to prove his point; and that is, 2 Sam. 24. 1. "*And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.*" Here, through the kind providence

idence of God, we have a parrallel text, by which we are enabled to fix the sense, and all other similar expressions—see 1 Chron. 21. 1. “*And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.*” This shews, that the way in which God moved David to number Israel, was only by suffering Satan to provoke David to that act, as a just punishment upon Israel for their sins. And thus we see, what God suffers to be done by his permissive decree, is spoken of as though it were done by his positive efficiency; because nothing can come to pass without the providence of God.—See to this purpose, Zech. 8. 10. “*For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in, because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbor.*” The sense is very plain, that the poverty and affliction was so great, as to be the occasion of every man’s being set against his neighbor: and because this calamity was brought upon them by the Deity, therefore he says, “*I set all men, every one against his neighbor.*” So Christ says, Mat. 10. 34, 35, 36. “*I think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.—For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.*”—i. e. The preaching of the gospel shall be the occasion of this, through the incredulity and perverseness of men, and not, that Christ designed to cause strife and dissension among men; for the natural tendency of his gospel, was to promote harmony and good will among men. From what has been said, we may see in what sense God is said to move, stir up, or incline men to evil actions, viz. by permitting Satan to tempt men to evil, or by permitting things to take place which occasion men to become perverse.

LET us now attend to the vision of Micaiah, recorded in 1 Kings 22. 20--23. “*And the Lord said, Who shall*

shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. Now, therefore, behold, the Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the Lord hath spoken evil concerning thee." Hence we may observe, that the Deity is represented as enquiring who will persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? He does not command any one to go and entice Ahab: he is represented as hearing the several plans that were proposed to persuade him, without proposing any himself; and when one is represented as presenting himself before the Lord, and saying, I will persuade him, the Almighty is so far from suggesting any ways or means for him to pursue, that he only asks, Wherewith? i. e. How wilt thou persuade him? What means wilt thou use? The answer is, "I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets." The answer is, "Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so." We may observe, that the words go forth and do so, do express only a permission, and not a command; for if they were a command, then this spirit did his duty, in becoming a lying spirit in the mouth of all Ahab's prophets. But God cannot, consistent with his moral perfections, command any one to be guilty of lying; nor can I think, that any judicious person will ever understand these words to mean any thing more, than a bare permission. A similar mode of expression we have in 2 Kings 2. 16, 17 and 18th ver. where we find, the sons of the prophets urging the prophet Elisha to permit them to send fifty men to search for Elijah, he says to them "Ye shall not send. But when they urged him till he was ashamed, he said to them, Send. And when they had sent and searched for

for him three days, and could not find Elijah: he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?" This proves, that when he said unto them, Send, he did not command, but only permitted them, to satisfy their impertinent curiosity. So the words in the text we are now considering, Go forth and do so, only express a permission. Hence then, God's permitting evil spirits and wicked men, by way of punishment to seduce them, who had pleasure in unrighteousness, and received not the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved, is expressed in 2 Thessal. 2. 11, 12. by God's sending them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned. A plain allusion to the passage now under consideration, and receives great light from it. But when Micaiah says, "The Lord hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets," the word translated PUT ought to have been translated, The Lord hath PERMITTED, or SUFFERED, a lying spirit to be in the mouth of all these thy prophets: for the verb here translated put, frequently signifies to permit or suffer. For the truth of this, I appeal to every good Hebrician. Thus in Ezekiel 20. 25. instead of, "I gave them statutes that were not good," it should be, I suffered them to have statutes that were not good. Upon the whole, this vision of Micaiah is so clear a proof, that sin takes place through the permission, and not through the positive efficiency of Deity, that it is a sufficient answer to all that has, or ever can be said, to prove that the Deity, by his immediate agency, does produce sin in the heart.

THE saying of Joseph to his brethren, Gen. 45. 8. "So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God," only proves, that there was a peculiar hand of God in his coming into Egypt: for neither his brethren nor the Ishmaelites, could have brought him, without the providence of God; for Joseph might have died upon his journey, or found means to escape, or the Ishmaelites might have kept him for their own servant, or have sold him to some others besides the Egyptians: but as God designed that he should come into Egypt, hence

hence he prevented any of these things from taking place. Now as his brethren could prevent none of these things from taking place, so his coming into Egypt, must be ascribed to the providence of God; and the sense is in every respect as agreeable to a permissive decree, as to the contrary hypothesis. Similar to this, is what the Lord says to Isaiah concerning the king of Assyria, in Isa. 10. 6. "*I will send him against an hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets;*" and yet it is certain, he had received no commission nor command from God, in so many express words. This appears from the next verse--"*Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few.*" Here it is very plain, that the king of Assyria had no idea, that he was accomplishing the Divine purpose; and consequently, had received no commission or command from God, to fight against the Jews. And therefore, when God says, "*I will send him against an hypocritical nation; and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge,*" the phrase must be considered as figurative and poetical, and to imply no more, than that the Deity meant to punish the Jews, by letting loose the king of Assyria upon them: and therefore the Deity calls him the rod of his anger, and compares him to a staff, an ax, and a saw, to shew that he was as much under the controul of the Deity, as the ax and saw are under the controul of the workman. But all this is perfectly consistent with our idea of a permissive decree; for we suppose, that the Deity governs free agents as perfectly, and makes them perform his purposes as infallibly, as though they had no agency at all: therefore, neither this text, nor the case of Joseph's being sent into Egypt, can, with any propriety, be urged against the idea of a permissive decree. I shall therefore go on to observe.

ANOTHER text, prest into the service by Dr. HORTON, is in Rev. 17. 17. "*For God hath put in their hearts*

hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree ;” or rather, as DODDRIDGE translates it, “ *For God hath given it into their hearts to execute his sentence even to perform one purpose, and to give their kingdom to the beast, till the words of God be fulfilled.*” This is spoken of the ten horns ; and the Divine sentence that they are to execute, and the one purpose which they are to perform, is to give their kingdom to the beast, till the words of God shall be fulfilled. In v. 13. it is said, *These shall have one mind, or one purpose, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.* Now by beast, we know is meant, a ruling empire or kingdom ; and it appears, that the ten horns agree to put themselves under the protection of this empire, or ruling power, and to become its true and loyal subjects : and the true reason of their putting themselves under the protection of the beast, is plainly signified in the 16th verse--“ *And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast,*” i. e. supported and protected by him, “ *these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.* For God hath given it into their hearts to execute his sentence, even to perform one purpose, and to give their kingdom to the beast, till the words of God be fulfilled :” i. e. these ten kings are to agree, and to perform one Divine purpose, in giving their kingdom to the beast, that by his protection and assistance, they may be able to make the whore, whom they hate, desolate and naked, and to eat her flesh and burn her with fire ; i. e. entirely to destroy the whore, by whom they have long been oppressed. And, according to the text, the Deity, in his providence, has impressed it upon their minds, to deliver themselves from that tyranny and oppression, under which they had long groaned ; and in order that they complete their deliverance, they put themselves under the protection of the beast, as a superior power, and are to continue under his protection, till the words of God be fulfilled : i. e. until the whore is effectually destroyed. Now, is there any thing criminal, for ten oppressed kings to put themselves under the protection,

protection, and to become the subjects of a very powerful empire, that by these means they may deliver themselves from that power which had long oppressed them? And yet, this is all that can fairly be collected from the passage under consideration. It is true, that both the beast, and the ten kings, are represented as anti-christian powers, who shall make war with the lamb, and shall be overcome by him: But this, I take it, is after they have performed the Divine purpose of destroying the whore. This destruction of the beast, and the kings of the earth is recorded in Rev. 19 chap. from the 11th verse to the end, and immediately precedes the flutting up of Satan in the bottomless pit: and therefore is long after the destruction of the great whore, which is effected by the ten horns. But then, destroying the great whore, is not one of their anti-christian actions; therefore their being stirred up, by divine providence, to this act, is no proof that the Deity moves men to wicked actions, or that he is the positive efficient cause of men's wickedness.

THERE is another text, which is made use of by these gentlemen to establish their notion of Divine decrees, which appears to me to favor the doctrine of permissive decrees, much more than the contrary opinion, and is in Acts 4. 27, 28. "*For, of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand & thy counsel determined before to be done.*" I know that some, by transposing the words, render the text thus--"*For of a truth, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, to do whatsoever thy hand and counsel determined before to be done.*" And I acknowledge, that the Greek will bear this construction: but I incline to our common translation, for the following reasons: first, that the quotation, from the 2d Psalm, upon which this is a comment, only speaks of what the kings of the earth and people determined to

do against the Lord, and against Christ ; and not of what God had anointed Christ to do ; and, 2dly, that the Greek word *proorise*, is a very proper word to signify a permissive decree : for Dr. DODDRIDGE observes, that the Greek word *orizo*, most naturally signifies, exactly to bound and mark out. This will imply, that God had exactly bounded and marked out, by his decree, how far they should proceed ; as if he had said to them, hitherto shall you come, and no further, and here shall your malice and rage be staid. Now it is most certain, that the Deity, as the Governor of the world, must set bounds to all the wicked actions of men and devils : he permits them to proceed thus far, and no farther. Hence it appears to me, that this text does very accurately shew, that the Deity had set bounds to the rage and malice of the enemies of Christ : he had fixed by his decree, their bounds, beyond which they could not pass. There is a parallel passage in Act. 2. 23. “ *Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel & foreknowledge of God, ye have taken; and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*” Christ is here said to be delivered, by the determinate counsel, *Orismenee boule* : i. e. God had in his counsel set bounds to their wickedness, beyond which he would not suffer them to pass ; and this determinate counsel was in conjunction with his foreknowledge ; i. e. he knew how Christ would be treated, if he was delivered into their hands. Foreknowledge is undoubtedly added, to shew, that the Deity, having a perfect foresight of their conduct, had determined how far they should proceed. This appears to me a clear proof of a permissive decree. Christ was delivered into their hands when it was foreknown how they would deal with him, if they were not restrained ; but he had fixed bounds to their malice, beyond which they could not pass. This text, in conjunction with the other passage which we have just examined, does most naturally confirm our sentiment of a permissive decree. I know some render the words thus, “ *Having taken him who had been given them by the determinate counsel*

*counsel, and foreknowledge, ye have crucified, and slain with wicked hands :*" but I see no reason to depart from our common English translation.

THERE are many texts, which in their most plain and obvious sense, appear to me to be utterly repugnant to the idea of God's being the positive efficient cause of sin. To this purpose, see Isa. 5. 4. "*What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*" According to the scheme I am opposing, all that the Deity has done to his vineyard, was to make it bring forth wild grapes; How could he then appeal to the men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, to judge between him and his vineyard? Will it be said, that the means used with them were such, that if they had been rightly improved, would have enabled them to have brought forth good grapes? The answer, according to this hypothesis, is very easy: these means could have no effect, but such as the Deity designed them to have, and must produce either good or bad grapes, according to the agency of Deity upon them: i. e. if the Deity meant they should hate the light, he must afford them the light, that by his agency he might make them hate it; for if they had no light, it could not become the object of their hatred: The light must then be afforded them, as a necessary medium for the Deity to produce an aversion to it in their minds. Nothing then was done by the Deity for their good, but every thing for their destruction. Hence then, I conclude that this text, by any fair criticism, can never be reconciled to the doctrine I am opposing. Again, How could the Apostle say, "*That God had endured with much long suffering, the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?*" What long-suffering is there in the Deity's bearing with his own works? For if these vessels were just what he was pleased to make them, he had not born with them, but born with himself, during the time he was preparing them for destruction. Or how do these men understand the  

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declaration of the Apostle, 2 Peter 3. 9. "*That the Lord is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance?*" For, according to their scheme, he is in the strictest sense willing that those should perish, whom he created purely for destruction : and therefore with respect to them, he could not declare with an oath, That he delighted not in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn and live. Or what does the Apostle mean, when he says, 1. Tim. 2. 4. "*God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth?*" while he, according to this scheme, does, by his positive efficiency, hinder them from coming to the knowledge of the truth, on purpose that they may be damned. Or how could Christ weep over Jerusalem, and say, "*If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thine eyes?*" Luke 19. 42---and Mat. 23. 37. "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !*" Now is it possible, that Jesus Christ could shew all this tenderness and compassion for the wicked Jews, while at the same time, by his Divine power, he was hardening their hearts, and blinding their minds ? This appears to me extremely paradoxical, and represents the Saviour as reprobating his own conduct, by pitying and compassionating them for that very thing, which by his Divine power he was the efficient cause of.--- But upon the supposition, that the Deity permits sin, all these difficulties vanish immediately : the Scriptures become clear and consistent ; while at the same time, that every event is under God's controul, and that he will most infallibly accomplish all his own purposes ; and that he will overrule every sinful event, to his own glory and the general good. So that we have all the pious and practical principles which they themselves contend for, and avoid all the absurd consequences

quences which flow from their system : so that they themselves, if they are candid, must allow, that our principles are safe and very innocent.

THESE sentiments I submit to the judgment of the candid and impartial ; and shall rejoice, if any gentleman, in a spirit of meekness and candor, will shew me wherein I have missed the truth, or misunderstood any text of scripture. If my sentiments cannot bear the rigid test of reason and scripture, upon proper conviction I shall be willing to reject them : But if they are agreeable to the sacred text, they will, and must prevail, in God's own due time.

POSTSCRIPT.



## P O S S I B L E R I P T.

**T**HE reader will doubtless be sensible, that in the foregoing Essay I have studied brevity; and that I might have considered a much larger number of texts: but I judged, that if the observations, I have made upon the texts which I have considered, be just, it will be very easy to apply the same, or similar observations, to all the other texts, that are usually brought to establish the doctrine of the positive efficiency of Deity in the producing of sin. I have ever looked upon it a peculiar instance of the Divine goodness, that the text in Isaiah, 6. 9, 10. which orders the prophet to say to the people, “*Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes,*” and which, in John 12. 40, is rendered, “*He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts,*” is rendered by our Saviour, Mat. 13. 15. “*Their eyes they have closed.*” And the act of Deity, in blinding their eyes, and hardening their hearts, is only taking from them, what he had bestowed upon them, as a just punishment for their sins. v. 12. “*Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*” This declaration of our Saviour, joined with Micaiah’s vision, and his interpretation of it, recorded in 1 Kings 22. 19---23, will afford us a sufficient key to unlock and open the meaning of all those passages, which are usually produced to prove the agency of Deity in the production of sin. For in the vision of Micaiah, we find a certain spirit presenting himself before the Lord, and declaring that he would “*go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all Ahab’s prophets;*” and  
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the answer from the Lord is, "*Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also : go forth and do so.*" Here this spirit appears to be commissioned, and sent to deceive Ahab to his ruin ; and yet Micaiah interprets this commission, to mean only the Deity's *suffering* such an event to take place : for he says, v. 23, "*Now therefore, behold the Lord hath permitted (or suffered) a lying spirit to be in the mouth of all these thy prophets.*"

I HOPE I shall be excused for repeating, what I have already observed in this last Essay ; because I think it a matter of the greatest importance in this dispute, to make the scripture its own interpreter : and where scripture has interpreted its own phrases, it cannot be consistent with a real love to the truth, to set aside such interpretations, and to substitute our own fancies, merely to serve an hypothesis. Now in the instances above-mentioned, the scriptures have interpreted themselves. God's "*hardening the heart and blinding the mind,*" according to our Saviour, is taking from men, that which he had given them. God's raising up, and sending an evil spirit to deceive a man to his ruin, by becoming a lying spirit, is, according to the scriptures themselves, only suffering such an event to take place. Out of reverence then to the Divine Oracles, we are obliged to construe all similar passages, agreeable to the interpretation of our Saviour and the prophet Micaiah, in the instances above mentioned.

WE read in James I. 13--15. "*Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man : But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin ; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*" Here we may observe, that when it is said, "*God cannot be tempted with evil,*" the meaning is, God cannot fall into sin. And this sense of the phrase, Dr. HOPKINS himself plainly allows : consequently "*neither tempteth he any man,*" must mean, neither causeth he any man to sin. This is the only sense, as it appears to me, of which the words

words are capable ; as is plain from the Apostle's own definition, "*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed :*" i. e. a man is tempted, when he consents to the gratification of his own lusts ; i. e. when he commits sin. This proves, that when it is said, "*neither tempteth he any man,*" the sense is, God causeth no man to sin : which is in direct opposition to Dr. HOPKINS' professed sentiment. He grants, that, "*To tempt, means a sinful act, in this passage : and in this sense (says he) God does not tempt any man ; for he is holy in all his works.*" (see vol. I. p. 213.) But this does not come up to the sense of the text ; which not only implies, that God is holy in all his works, but also, that he does nothing to induce or cause men to sin : for the Greek verb *peirazo*, is rendered by LEIGH, in his *Critica Sacra* *Fericulum facio*, "*to make trial.*" Hence then, the text informs us, that God makes no trial, to cause men to sin ; i. e. that he does not cause them to sin : for surely if he makes no trial or attempt to cause men to sin, it is saying, in other words, he does nothing to cause them to sin ; and if he does nothing to cause them to sin, then he is not the cause of their sin. The Apostle having informed us, that God is not the cause of sin, shews us, how sin comes to take place, "*But every man is tempted,*" i. e. falls into sin, "*when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.-- Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin :*" i. e. a voluntary consent to indulge or gratify lust, is sin.

HERE we may observe, that the Apostle makes every sin, to be the effect of a consent to gratify some particular lust ; for every man, when he is tempted ; i. e. when he falleth into sin, is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed ; but a man is never properly enticed, till the consent of his will is gained. "*Lust when it hath conceived bringeth forth sin :*" But how can lust conceive, till the mind voluntarily consents to it ? But lust must exist in the mind, before it can entice or conceive ; i. e. lust must be in the mind, before sin can take place : and this shews, that lust, not consented to, is not sin ; otherwise,

erwise, if every sin is the effect of lust consented to, as the Apostle asserts, it would follow, that there must be a sin before the first sin, which is absurd. Therefore, when our Saviour says, Mar. 5. 28, "*Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart,*" he must mean, that whosoever voluntarily desires an unlawful enjoyment of her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart, even though he is unable to reduce his vicious desire to practice. We may further observe, that the Greek word *Epithumia*, rendered in our text lust, answers to the English word desire; and does not necessarily signify sin, but is used sometimes in a good sense---see Luke 22. 15--Phillip. 1. 23--1 Pet. 1. 12. And sometimes it is used in a bad sense, for unbridled lusts---see Ephes. 2. 3--Coloss. 3. 5--1. Thessal. 4. 5. The meaning, therefore, must be determined from the design of the writer, whether a good or a bad desire be intended, or whether he means a voluntary or an involuntary emotion of the mind.

I HAVE now finished what I had to offer upon this important subject. If I have mistaken the truth, in any thing which I have advanced, I still hope I have secured all the practical points of piety & true religion. I have studiously endeavoured to avoid saying any thing that would tend to irritate or provoke persons, of contrary sentiments to mine; being sensible, "*That the wrath of man, worketh not the righteousness of God.*" I mean not to reject from my christian fellowship, those who are of opposite sentiments to me in this point; provided they witness a christian conversation, and appear to walk worthy of their christian profession. My sentiments appear to me to tend eminently to promote humility and self-abasement, and to hide pride from man. The belief of a particular Providence, is the genuine consequence of self-determination, and seems hardly consistent with the doctrine of necessity. Hence I have known some Necessarians seem to resolve every thing into a general Providence; meaning, that the Deity had fixed every thing by general laws, and left  
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nature very much to itself, without interposing on particular emergencies. Some I have known even to turn into ridicule, the idea of a particular Providence. I am far from supposing, that the Necessarians in general deny a particular Providence, though I think their principles lead to such a denial : but many of them have too much piety and religion to do it ; and I am sure, that all religious worship is founded upon the doctrine of a particular Providence : for it must be very absurd to pray for the bestowment of blessings, or for the removing of judgments, unless we believe the Deity will hear and answer our requests. Now may grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to all the lovers of truth. May the happy time come, when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters do the seas, and love and unity universally prevail.

A M E N.

APPENDIX.

## APPENDIX.

SINCE I wrote the foregoing Essays, I have received, in a letter from a private Gentleman, certain strictures, made upon my printed Essays upon which I shall make a few remarks.

THE Gentleman, after having quoted a passage from my Essays, wherein I partly agree with Mr. EDWARDS, observes upon it, “ *This does not seem to me like looking Mr. EDWARDS full in the face.*” If he means, that I do not fully agree with Mr. EDWARDS, in all things respecting self-determination, it is very true, if he means any thing else, I cannot comprehend his meaning. The Gentleman seems to think, that though I grant, that the mind can’t act without motive, yet it is implied (though he owns I do not assert it) that the mind can act against motive. He puts a case, in which he supposes I must own, that the mind acts contrary to motive. Says he, “ *Let me be obliged, as you will grant I may be, to choose either to rise from my seat, or to remain in it. All the reasons, as they appear to me are in favour of rising from my chair, and leaving the room : but yet, in your opinion, I may choose to remain in the room.*” Hence he concludes, if in this case I choose to remain in the room, I act against all motives. But the Gentleman has greatly mistaken my meaning, as will plainly appear upon properly stating the matter. Suppose, then, I am sitting in a chair, and a question occurs to my mind, Whether it is best for me to sit any longer in my chair, or else to rise and leave the room ? I determine to examine into this matter, and to do that which shall appear to me best on the whole : on examining the matter, it appears to me best

to rise and leave the room ; accordingly I rise and leave the room. The first determination of my mind being to do that which appears best upon the whole, my determining to rise, because it appears best, is only complying with my first determination. To remain in the room, would be, in this case, determining against determination, or choosing against choice. There is, undoubtedly, a fixed connection between my determining to examine the reasons for leaving my chair, if best, and my determining to leave it when I find it to be best : for the last act, is only a determination to put in execution, what was implied in the first determination, viz. to leave my chair, if upon examination it appeared best. But how this proves, that there is a fixed connection between the motives being presented, and my volition to go out, I cannot conceive. While I am sitting in my chair, in a calm tranquil state, and enjoying the present moment, I can conceive of a number of agreeable objects which I could enjoy, were I to rise and leave the room. These may be considered as so many motives, reasons, or inducements for me to leave the room: should I leave the room to enjoy any one of these objects, that object would be the motive or reason why I left the room ; but while I feel happy in my present situation, all these objects may, in their turn, be full in the view of my mind, without ever occasioning me to rise, and leave my seat, or without my ever putting the question to myself, whether it is best to leave the room to enjoy these objects, or to abide where I am. This proves, that there is not an infallible connection between motives and volition: for if there were, the mind would ever be attracted by them, and would attend to them, till it was determined by the strongest: But we know, in a multitude of instances, that this is not the case. Upon the whole, it is plain to me, that the infallible connection between motives and action, cannot take place, till the mind has determined to examine the several motives, or reasons for acting in any particular manner, in order that it may adopt the best: in that case, the mind will certainly choose that which appears to be best.

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THE Gentleman seems very much at a loss, to know what I mean, when I consider liberty to be a power to act or not to act, when all circumstances necessary for acting have taken place. This is professor LIMBORCH's definition of liberty; and it appears to me perfectly agreeable to plain common sense. Suppose a man, confined by government in prison, should receive a liberation from his confinement.---When the officer sets open the prison doors, and tells him, you have now full power to go out of this house, or to tarry longer in it, if you please---would not this be perfectly intelligible to the prisoner? Or, suppose a Gentleman should enter into a contract with a husbandman to take a farm of his, upon the following conditions, that such a piece of ground he must plant, but another piece of ground he must not plant; and that a third piece he shall be at his liberty either to plant it or not plant it: the husbandman, I presume, would be at no loss to know what the gentleman meant. There is certainly no more difficulty to understand what is meant by saying, the mind may act or not act, when the previous circumstances for acting have taken place. How comes it to pass, that this Metaphysician is more ignorant of the meaning of words, than the poor prisoner, or the plain honest husbandman, in the cases above mentioned? Have his metaphysical subtilities erased the first principles of common sense from his mind? If so, then the observation of Dean SWIFT is very just, "*That fine sense, is not half so good as common sense.*" I confess I cannot find what the difficulty is: consequently, cannot remove it, till I knew what it is. I cannot conceive that the mind can act, without being able to omit acting. But although I cannot discover what the difficulty is, that perplexes him, yet I find, that he has really passed a higher compliment upon me, than if he had entirely fallen in with my sentiment: for in that case, one might suppose, that he was imposed upon by my arguments; but now, when he sits himself down to find as many inconsistencies as possible, and neglects the main point, on which the hinge

of the whole controversy turns, it plainly proves, that in his opinion, the main point is consistent, and cannot be reduced to an absurdity. Now such a concession from an opponent, is the strongest confirmation imaginable of the truth of the sentiment which he is opposing; and that this is true in the present case, I can easily make appear. He says, "*He cannot understand what I mean, by a power to act or not to act.*" The phrase may appear to him to be very inaccurate; it may not agree with his definition of the word power, or with his idea of the word action: but when I had given my definition of the phrase, and had shewn in what sense I had used the phrase, a power to act or not to act, he ought to have taken notice of the definition, and reduced it to an inconsistency if he could: but this he has not done, nor attempted to do, that I can find, and therefore he appears to me to have given up the whole point in debate. My definition of a power to act or not to act, he may find in *Essays*, 1st Pt. 16 --- 17 p. --- "*But we say, that when these previous circumstances have taken place, i. e. in Mr. EDWARDS's style, when motives have done all they can do, the mind may act or not act; i. e. that there is no infallible connection between motive & action.*" This is my definition of a power to act or not to act. Upon this single point, the whole controversy between Mr. EDWARDS and me turns: for if there is an infallible connection between motive and action, so that the mind is as inevitably determined by motives, as the balance is by weights, then the doctrine of necessity is unanswerably established; if, on the other hand, it appears, that there is no infallible connection between motive and action, then the doctrine of self-determination is undeniably established. Why has not this Gentleman endeavored to shew the absurdity of my supposing, that there is no infallible connection between motive and action? Here he ought to have placed his heaviest artillery, if he meant to do execution. Suppose he had found a hundred expressions, that to him were unintelligible, or inaccurate, that would only prove, that the

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Author had not a happy way of communicating his ideas, or that he was not a master of Language ; but it could avail nothing, as I conceive to shew that the cause he espoused was wrong, but this writer has said nothing, that I can find, to shew, that my definition implied any absurdity. Instead of this, he has only shewn himself puzzled with the phrase, a power to act or not to act ; and after racking his brain, to state it in all the ways he could think of, he asks me the following question.---“ You see, sir, the condition I am in, with respect to your meaning. You will not, therefore, be offended, at my asking that most crabbed, puzzling, and perplexing question, *What do you mean sir ?*” He was so perplexed with the peculiarity of the phrase, though used by the most celebrated writers on this controversy, that he had entirely forgotten, that I had given a full and plain answer to the question, before he started it, by my defining this power to imply that there is no infallible connection between motive and action. This I take to be the true sense of the phrase, as used by the writers on this subject. Words are used in different senses, by writers on controversy. If an Author adopts a phrase used by controversial writers and defines it according to the sense in which it has been commonly used, he will be acquitted by impartial judges, as having expressed himself clearly and intelligibly.

BUT what increases the surprise in my own mind is, that the Gentleman should be so puzzled about the phrase, a power to act or not to act, when he had taken notice of the definition of the phrase, and seems to find no difficulty in understanding it : nay further, observes, that according to me, the controversy turns upon it.---For he says, “ *It appears to me the very radical subject on which you seem to oppose Mr. EDWARDS, is, whether there be any certain infallible connection between the acts of the will, and some antecedent reason ; not whether there be any antecedent reason for not acting. You seem to me fully to agree as to the first, (viz. whether there be any certain infallible connection*

connection between the acts of the will, and some antecedent reason) *and do not disagree as to the last, (viz. whether there be any antecedent reason for not acting.) Where then do you differ?*" He feels no difficulty in understanding my definition, and seems to think that Mr. EDWARDS and I are fully agreed in it, i. e. that according to Mr. EDWARDS, there is no infallible connection between motive and action; and yet the Gentleman cannot tell, whether Mr. EDWARDS agrees with me, in holding that the mind has a power to act, or not to act, till he is satisfied what I mean by that expression. What! can he understand my definition of the expression, and not understand the expression? Can he know that Mr. EDWARDS and I fully agree, that there is no infallible connection between motive and action, and yet not understand the expression of which this is the definition? This is very paradoxical indeed. If he knew that Mr. EDWARDS held, that there was no infallible connection between motive and action, he certainly knew that Mr. EDWARDS held, that the mind had a power to act, or not to act: and this writer himself must certainly know what I mean by the expression, a power to act or not to act. And what appears to me very astonishing, is, another saying of his, where he says, "*Mr. EDWARDS will agree with you, that the mind has, so far as it is accountable, a power to act, when all things necessary for acting are ready; and that, whether it acts or does not act.*" Observe, that the mind has a power to act when it does not act; and that when all things necessary for acting are ready, the mind sometimes does not act. Now if the mind does not act, when it has a power to act, this implies, that the mind has a power of not acting even when all things necessary for acting are ready: i. e. it has the power of inaction, when all the motives or requisites for action are present to the mind. And that this inaction is a power, he has warranted me to say; for he speaks both of a power of falling in a heavy body, and a power of rising in the same body. Now we know, that body is an inactive being: it has no action of its own, either  
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in falling or rising. Hence it is plain, that he holds to a power of inaction in body; and, according to him, Mr. EDWARDS held to the inaction of the mind, when it had the power of acting and did not act. But if inaction in body, may be called a power, I am sure that it may, with as much propriety, be called a power in the mind. And thus, according to him, Mr. EDWARDS held that the mind has a power to act, and not to act, when all circumstances necessary for action had taken place. And this power of not acting, is according to the common use of words: as a pillar may be said to have a power to sustain a certain weight, without its producing any sensible alteration in it, so the mind may sustain the force of motives, without having any effect produced in it, except its perceiving the motive; but as a pillar may be overpowered, and broken down by a vast weight, superior to its strength, so the mind may be overpowered by the superior force of motives, as when a man runs in a sudden fright. But in that case the mind is not free, nor accountable for what takes place. This power of not acting is as essential to moral agency, as a power of acting; for if the mind were always determined by motive as the balance is by weight, then the mind would always be in the situation of the man, who runs in a sudden fright; of whom we say, he was not himself, he was frightened out of the possession of his reason. Moral action therefore cannot take place in the mind, when it is deprived of the power of not acting. Mr. EDWARDS says, p. 263, "*I suppose none will deny, that it is possible for motives to be set before the mind so powerful, and exhibited in so strong a light, and under so advantageous circumstances, as to be invincible; and such as the mind cannot but yield to.*" If he means, that arguments may be placed before the understanding in so strong a light as to become invincible, and such as the mind cannot but yield to, it is readily granted, and is nothing to the purpose: for the understanding is not the active but the perceptive faculty of the mind; and liberty is to be placed in the will,

which is the only active faculty of the mind. But if the meaning is, that motives may be so strong, as necessarily to determine the will, this is denied to be possible while the mind has the free exercise of reason ; but when the mind is so violently agitated, as to lose the free exercise of reason, as in the case abovementioned of running in a fright, in this case we say, and I believe Mr. EDWARDS would doubtless have said, Liberty is destroyed ; for this is agreeable to the common sense of mankind. Things, that are not eligible in themselves, nor in their consequences, cannot become objects of choice : which is to say, there can be no motive to choose them ; but things to which we have the greatest aversion, when once we become convinced, that they are for our greatest good, we can easily choose them, though we may find it very difficult, and in some cases impracticable, to bring our propensities to submit to our choice. When one is convinced that he has contracted a wrong habit, he finds no difficulty in choosing to overcome that habit ; but he will have a vast deal of difficulty in his endeavors to overcome it, because in every unguarded hour, he will be liable to be seduced and led astray by his evil habit. And therefore such a person may say with the Apostle, “ *To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good, I find not ; for the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that do I.*” Here we see, that we may have a power to choose, when we find it extremely difficult, and in some cases impossible to do the things which we have chosen. This shews the absolute necessity of Divine grace, to strengthen us to do our duty.

BUT this writer seems to think that Mr. EDWARDS agrees with me, that there is no antecedent reason for not acting : but I think he labors under a mistake.--For though Mr. EDWARDS no where says, that there must always be a reason for not acting, yet I think his sentiments imply, that there always must be a reason for not acting, as well as for acting : for if the mind is always determined by the strongest motive, it will follow, that when of two objects the mind has chosen one, and it

be asked, Why the other was not chosen? the answer must be, because the motive was not strong enough. Here then is properly a reason for not acting. Even the spots on a chess board, according to Mr. EDWARDS, when a man determines to touch the spot A, if he is asked why he did not touch the spot B, he will answer, because it was not so much in my eye or mind, as the spot A. Hence then I conclude, according to Mr. EDWARDS, there is always as much of a reason to be assigned for not acting, as there is for acting. And this writer agrees with Mr. EDWARDS in this point, for he thinks, that if of two eggs I determine to take one, I have a particular reason for that determination, which will not apply to the other. But in order to bring this matter to a fair trial, let the writer make four black marks; and for distinction sake, let him name them A, B, C, D: Then let him shut his eyes, that they need not fix on one mark rather than on another---then let him ask himself, Which of these marks shall I touch, A, B, C, or D? Suppose he should determine to touch C, then let him ask himself, Why he determined to touch C rather than A, B, or D? He cannot say, because C was most in his eye, because his eyes were shut; he cannot say, because it was most in his mind, because he will find, that when he named them over, each of the other three were as much in his mind as C was. If he asks himself the reason, why he did not determine to touch one of the other three, I presume he will find none. This shews, that in many instances there is no reason for our not acting; but then there is always a reason for acting: thus, in the present example, there is a sufficient reason for trying this experiment, viz. to determine whether the mind must always have a particular reason, why it acts in this particular manner, or on this particular object, rather than on another. In this example it cannot be said, that there was any particular reason for determining to touch C, rather than A, B, or D. All that can be said is, that C would answer the purpose of determining the question, as well as A, B, or D. Here we learn, that the mind determines upon motives,

motives, and that it is not properly determined by motives; and that motive & action are essentially different.

THIS Gentleman thinks, that Mr. EDWARDS did not consider motives to be efficient causes: I, on the contrary, think he did; otherwise I cannot possibly understand him. Mr. EDWARDS considered volitions as effects; he would not say, they were produced by blind fate or chance: he would not say, man had a self-determining power; and his piety would not let him say, that sinful volitions were produced by the agency of the Deity: for that, he plainly disclaims, p. 364. Lond. Ed. "*So inasmuch as sin is not the fruit of any positive agency or influence of the Most High, but on the contrary, arises from the withholding of his action or energy:*" for this reason he was obliged to substitute motives, as a sort of middle beings between the Deity and the human mind; and that these motives were the proper, efficient causes of human volition.--- Thus I have always understood him, and supposed every body did, till now; and though I think this to be a gross absurdity, yet I think his friends will find very hard work to clear him from this charge. And besides, Mr. EDWARDS says, p. 261, "*If the acts of the will are excited by motives, those motives are the causes of those acts of the will: which make the acts of the will necessary, as effects necessarily follow the efficiency of their cause.*" This is decisive: for if motives are such causes as have efficiency, they are efficient causes. I have then treated Mr. EDWARDS fairly, by representing him as making motives the efficient causes of volition. Hence it plainly appears, that to say, that by motives being the cause of volition, Mr. EDWARDS only means, that they are the occasions of volition, and not that they are the efficient or producers of volition, is not giving a just representation of Mr. EDWARDS' sentiment.--- For if by motives being the cause of volition, he only meant, that they were the occasion of volition, and not the efficient cause, it will follow, that there is no efficient cause of volition, according to him: which is to say, that volitions are not properly effects, but are events,

vents, that start into being without any cause ; or else he must own with me, that volition is only the mind considered as acting.

THIS writer thinks, that after my "*considering volition to be a property of a mind, I should define it to be the mind acting, must be owing to inadvertence.*" If by property be understood, a mere faculty, or power unexercised, then, in this sense of the term, volition is not a property ; because, volition always means the mind in the exercise of acting or willing : but if by property is meant, that which belongs to the mind, and is peculiar to it, then, in this sense, volition is a property ; for surely it will be granted, that it belongs to the mind to be in the exercise of willing & acting ; i. e. that volition is peculiar to the mind. But perhaps, as property may be understood to mean a mere quality or unexercised faculty, and so the reader may be misled, I wish that the following clause, in the beginning of Essay 2d, First Part, viz. "*Now volition is an abstract term, and is the name of a certain property,*" may be read thus, "*Now volition is an abstract term, and is the name of the exercise of a certain property,*" &c. Or if there is any other place in these Essays, where volition is called a property, that it may be read the exercise of a property, or a property in exercise. But what inadvertence is there, after considering volition as a property, or rather as the exercise of a property of a mind, to define it to be the mind acting ? I wish to know what this Gentleman means, by a property of a mind. Does he believe, that the mind may actually be divided into separate parts--that each part may exist by itself, independently of the other parts, as we find to be the case in bodies ? If he has such an idea, I am sure I have not. I think it impossible to conceive of a property, or to have the least idea of it, without reducing it to the subject of which it is a property. Thus, when we speak of the decrees of God, we mean to speak of Deity, considered as decreeing : and by the knowledge of God, we mean God considered as knowing. So when I consider volition as the exercise of a property of a mind, I mean by

by it, the mind considered as acting or willing. Properties, are the ways by which the existence of any being is made manifest to us. One way by which we are convinced, that the mind exists, is, because we are conscious that it acts; therefore, when we speak of volition, we consider the mind in a partial view, i. e. only with respect to its acting. I am at a loss how to understand this writer.--- Will he say, it belongs not to the mind to act? Or will he say, that volition is not action? Or will he say, that properties are certain beings, that may be conceived to have a separate existence from the mind? I suspect from this, and some other passages, that this letter was a hasty, indigested performance; and that the passage I am now considering, was owing to great inadvertence, and inattention in his own mind.

He cannot understand what I mean, when I say, "*That if volition be only the mind, considered as operating or acting, it can, with no propriety, be considered as an effect.*" I would ask this writer, Whether cause and effect are synonymous terms? If they are not, then, in whatever sense any thing is a cause, in that sense, it is not proper to call it an effect; for this reason, that causes, considered as causes, are not effects. The mind acting, is the mind causing; for I conceive, whenever the mind acts, it produces some effect. If this be true, there is a manifest impropriety, which will introduce the greatest confusion in language, to speak of the mind, considered as causing, as being an effect: though it is readily granted, that the human mind is an effect, considered as being God's creature; but it is such an effect, as is capable of being a cause. Mr. EDWARDS, as I take it, considers every act of the human mind, as being an effect produced by some extrinsic cause. The question is not whether the Deity created the human mind, with the power of willing and choosing, but whether every act of will is a new effect, produced immediately by the Deity, or by some other extrinsic cause. I thought my meaning was clear enough, as expressed in my Essays: I confess, therefore,

fore, it appears to me very strange, that this writer should misunderstand me; unless he thinks, that causes, as causes, are effects, which will confound the use of language.

THIS writer asks a question---“*But what are the possible effects of this power?*” To which he answers---“*Why, according to you, he who has it, could, at a certain time, have acted what it was eternally true and foreknown (or if you choose, absolutely known) to be true, would never be acted: i. e. it is a power to change unchangeable truth into falsehood. This is so strange a kind of power, that a man but moderately sceptical, would certainly doubt of its existence. Have you, or any other Philosopher, ever known, or even heard of one instance, in which this power has been exerted, and the effect followed? If not, How came we by the knowledge of such a power? We know the power of things only by their effects: What effects have been produced by this power to lead us to the knowledge of it?*” Here is an instance of a very hasty & indigested performance. He sat himself down to start objections against my book, before he had given himself time to understand it, notwithstanding he says he had read it over several times: but it seems he must have read in great haste, and with vast inattention; otherwise he must have known, that I not only deny, but have endeavored to prove, that no such consequence flows, or can be drawn from my principles. This he ought to have noticed; and attempted to refute my arguments on this point, before he started the objection: otherwise he knows he is guilty of begging the question. I wish the Gentleman would read attentively, what I have said relating to this point, in *Essays*, Pt. First, p. 45, to the end, and then tell me, what the truth or falsehood of a proposition has to do with the power of an agent? Or how my seeing a man sit, proves that he has not power to stand? Or in what page of the book of fate he finds it recorded, that the person must sit at the instant when I see him sit: for I am sure, that my seeing him sit, will not prove that his posture might not have been standing at that time; and  
that

that my seeing him stand, would not prove my eyesight to be very deceitful and fallible. There is nothing in the nature of things, to prevent this supposition from being true: his proof then, if he has any, must be taken from the book of fate; for I would seriously ask him, by what medium he can prove, that when it is known that a man has done a thing, that barely that knowledge of the fact will prove, that he could not have omitted doing that thing at that time, or have acted otherwise, or must we take his assertion without proof. Mr. EDWARDS had raised a spectre which he could not lay. With him necessity was necessity; and with him it was all one, whether the necessity was previous to the thing in question, or a consequence drawn from the supposition of its having taken place. For either way, according to him, it would prove, that the fact took place necessarily; and this Gentleman seems perfectly enchanted with this spectre.

AGAIN he says, "*I believe you will say with me, that a power of acting, is a power of exerting, an action, or volition: for you consider these as the same: but volition, is a mind acting. Now then, the power of acting, is a power of exerting a mind acting.*" But the power of acting, being an abstract term, must be referred to its subject, in order to have a meaning. Now the subject of a power of acting, is an active mind, or an agent; & the power of exerting, is also an active mind or agent. Now, then, when the Gentleman says, "*The power of acting, is a power of exerting a mind acting,*" the meaning must be this, the active mind or agent, is an active mind or agent a mind acting: but as this is beyond my capacity, to understand the force of it, I must be excused from remarking upon any conclusions that he has drawn from this extraordinary position.

ANOTHER passage, which I would remark upon, is p. 23, "*I conclude there cannot be a man without volition; or rather, that man cannot be an intelligent being, without volition. How then was it possible for God to make man an intelligent being, unless he made him not only with the power of volition, but with volition itself, which with you is the same as action? But if God made man with action, did he not make him acting? But you tell us, volition*

*is the mind acting. Now, then, God made this mind acting."* Which is to say, that God cannot make a man with the faculty of smell, but he must make him actually smelling; i. e. with effluvia striking the olfactory nerves from odoriferous bodies, in the very instant of his being created. Nor could he make him with the faculty of seeing, but actually seeing: i. e. light must strike the eye, while it was forming. May he not as well say, that the Deity could not make man with a generative faculty, but he must make him actually generating? If the Deity could not make man with an active faculty, but he must make him really acting, then it follows, that the Deity cannot bestow a faculty, without the immediate exercise of it. Action cannot take place without some object, reason, or motive, about which the mind is conversant; and this object must be prior to the exercise of the mind: but if the mind was acting in the very instant in which the Deity made it, the object, motive, or reason for acting, must be prior to the action of the mind, and be perceived by it, before it could act; and the action of the mind, must be in succession to the perception of the object. But the acting of the mind, was in the instant of its creation, and consequently it must perceive the object, on which it acted, before its creation. The mind then, was in the actual perception of objects, before the Deity made it. Nay further, if I mistake not, the mind was an agent, and exerted its volition antecedent to its creation: for he says, "*How then was it possible for God to make man an intelligent being, unless he made him not only with the power of volition, but with volition itself? --- But if God made man with a tion, did he not make him acting? (and again) Now then God made this mind acting:*" i. e. the Deity created the mind exercising volition, and exerting its activity; which, I think, must mean while exercising volition, and while exerting its activity; which will imply, that the volition and exertion of its activity, were before its creation: i. e. that the human mind was an agent before God created it; that it was active

in its creation, and assisted the Deity in bringing itself into being : that though the Deity brought some part of the human mind into being, yet the Deity had no hand in creating the volitions and actions of the human mind ; and consequently, that the human mind has some faculties which it has derived from itself, and not from the Deity, and therefore it is but only in part his creature. But perhaps the writer means (though I think it not the obvious sense of his words) I say, perhaps he means, that the Deity created the very exertion of the active faculty, in the same instant that he created the human mind ; i. e. the action or volition of the human mind, is the immediate effect of the creative power of the Deity : i. e. he creates human volition and action. But an effect, is most certainly passive in coming into being : for no effect contributes any thing towards bringing itself into existence ; but this will imply, passive action or inactive action, which is absurd. If he holds, that while the Deity is creating the mind, the mind itself is acting, he must hold, that this action is not an effect of Deity, but must be the mind itself assisting the Deity in its own creation. Or does he mean, that there is no action but the action of Deity ? If so, then there is no mind distinct from Deity ; for action is the proof of mental life. Wherever there is a living mind, there will be action : but if there be no action, but the action of the Deity, then there is no mind that has life but the Deity. If the human mind has an action of its own, distinct from the Deity, then it is a living substance, and action is the consequence of its life ; but if action be the consequence of its life, then the mind must exist before its action commences ; for action cannot take place, till ideas are impressed upon the mind : for as the eye when perfectly formed, cannot see till the rays of light affect the organ of sight, so the mind cannot act, before ideas are impressed upon it ; for ideas are as necessary to enable the mind to act, as light is to enable the eye to see ; and as the eye must be perfectly formed, before it is susceptible of light, so must the mind be perfectly formed, before it is susceptible of ideas. As light is necessary to enable the eye to distinguish objects, so are ideas equally necessary to be the subject of motives or reasons for acting. This shews, that it implies a contradiction to suppose, that the Deity should create the action of the mind, in the very instant of creating the mind : for if the mind must be first created, and then must receive ideas before it can act, then the action of the mind must succeed to its reception of ideas ; but if action must be in consequence of its first receiving ideas, it cannot take place in the instant of its creation : for two things that are in succes-

tion, cannot be in the same instant.—Therefore, there seems to be no sense in which it can be true, that God created the mind acting.

THIS Gentleman seems to wonder wherein I differ from Mr. EDWARDS, seeing I hold, there is no action without some motive. I will tell him—Mr. EDWARDS holds, that the mind must not only have some motive, end, or design in acting, but that there must always be a particular reason why it acts in this manner, rather than another: this I have denied; and though I always find that I have some end or design in view when I act, yet, in innumerable instances, I can assign no reason why I did not act differently. In such cases, I can only say, that the mode of conduct which I adopted, appeared as eligible as any other, though not more so. The mind seems to be always acting while we are awake; and yet there is no sensible alteration in the activeness of the mind. The objects on which the mind acts, are various, and the effects produced are various; but the activeness is the same, just as the same rays of the sun soften wax & harden clay. If the mind had not the power of not acting, it must always be impelled, and driven by motive, as the ball is by the projectile force of the cannon. The motive would be the only agent, and the mind would be as passive in volition, as the ball is when it is discharged from the cannon. Whatever is chosen, is chosen upon the account of its eligibility: i. e. nothing can become an object of choice, except it appears to be eligible in itself, or eligible upon the account of some good it will be the means of procuring him. Thus, a man may chuse to have his leg cut off, not because it is eligible in itself, but he chuses it in order to save his life. Sometimes the eligibility of an object appears, upon examination, to be strictly rational; sometimes the object appears to be suited to gratify some particular inclination or passion. In the former case, the choice is rational; in the latter, it is irrational: but in both cases, there must appear some fitness, or pleasingness to the mind, antecedent to its choice. But this fitness or pleasingness to the mind is the motive or reason on which the mind acts; but is by no means the act itself: for in mere perception, or in mere inclination, the mind is properly passive; for no act of the mind can make black appear to be white, and no act of the will, can make a painful sensation to be a pleasing one, or a disagreeable propensity to be an agreeable one: e. g. Fear is a disagreeable propensity, and no act of the will can render it agreeable. The most the mind can do, is, by reasoning, to convince itself that its fear is irrational, and by that means endeavor to remove it, but while the fear remains, the mind will be

in a disagreeable situation, notwithstanding any acts of the will to the contrary. If the fitness or pleasure of mind, is only the motive on which it acts, and by no means the act of the mind itself, then when we say, I can choose such an object, if I please, or if I have a mind to, the meaning is not, that I can choose it, if I choose it; but the meaning is, I can choose it, if it is eligible enough to become an object of choice. The confounding the pleasure of the mind, with volition or an act of mind, which are extremely different things, is all that has rendered this mode of expression unintelligible: for it is only saying, the thing spoken of is eligible enough to become an object of choice; therefore the mind can either choose it, or omit the choice of it: i. e. that there is no infallible connection between motive and action.

Mr. EDWARDS, in his remarks on Lord Kaims, says, p. 7. "*Nothing that I maintain, supposes, that men are at all hindered, by any fatal necessity, from being, and even willing, and choosing as they please, with full freedom; yea, with the highest degree of liberty that ever was thought of, or that ever could possibly enter into the heart of man to conceive.*" This concession of Mr. EDWARDS, that men are not at all hindered by any fatal necessity from doing, and even willing, and choosing as they please, appears to me very unaccountable, when his remarks upon Mr. CRUICKSHANK'S assertion, that "*The will is at liberty to choose what kind of good it pleases*" is this, "*If there be any meaning in these last words, the meaning must be this, that the will is at liberty to choose what kind of good it chooses to choose,*" and in these very remarks on Lord Kaims, p. 3. he observes, "*That if any one should say, man has a liberty of choosing as he pleases, such an one would either blush or laugh at his own instance;*" and yet we see, in p. 7, of these same remarks, he fairly grants man has such a liberty; and he has granted nothing but the truth, confirmed by every days experience: for when one says, I can choose such a thing if I please, the meaning is, the thing spoken of is eligible, either in itself, or in its consequences; for nothing can be chosen, but what is either eligible in itself or in its consequences. A thing that is disagreeable in every point of view, cannot be chosen: for this would imply, a choice without a choice—a choice, not only without, but against all motive, which is absurd. It is upon this principle that we say, that the Deity cannot commit iniquity, because there is nothing in sin, that can render it eligible, or an object of choice to the Divine mind.

T H E E N D.