

Moral Agency and Accountability*

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By what has been said on the theory of Calvinistic predestination, it will be seen, I think, that this system involves such necessity of moral action as is incompatible with free agency. It is possible, I grant, to give to the terms will, liberty, free agency, such a definition as will make these terms, thus defined, compatible with the other peculiarities of the Calvinistic system. Both parties agree that man is a free moral agent and both maintain that he is responsible; but we maintain that what the Calvinists call free moral agency is not such in fact as is commonly understood by the term, nor such as is requisite to make man accountable. Here, therefore, we are again thrown back upon our definitions, as the starting point of argument. What is that power, or property or faculty of the mind, which constitutes man a free moral agent? It is the power of choice, connected with liberty to choose either good or evil. Both the power and liberty to choose either good or evil are requisite to constitute the free agency of a probationer. It has been contended that choice, though from the condition of the moral agent it must of necessity be exclusively on one side, is nevertheless free; since it implies a voluntary preference of the mind. Hence it is contended that the fallen and the holy angels, glorified and lost human spirits, though some of these are confined in an impeccable state, and the others have a perpetual and invincible enmity to good, are nevertheless free agents. With respect to the free agency of these beings, a question might be started, whether it is such as renders them responsible for their present acts, the decision of which might have some bearing on the subject under investigation; but not such bearing as would make it important to discuss it here. If they are responsible for their present acts, it must be on account of a former probation, which by sin they have judicially forfeited. Or if any one thinks otherwise, and is disposed to maintain that a being who is not, and never was so circumstanced as to render the choice of good possible to him, is nevertheless a free moral agent, in any such sense as renders him accountable, with such a sentiment at present I have no controversy. Indeed, such an opinion is so violent an outrage upon all the acknowledged principles of justice, that to controvert it would be a work of little profit.

It is certain that the moral standing of those angels and men whose states are now unalterably fixed, differs materially from their probationary state; and this difference renders their moral agency unsuited to illustrate the agency of beings who are on probation. Man, in this life, is in a state of trial; good and evil are presented before him as objects of choice; and upon this choice are suspended eternal consequences of happiness or misery. Of a being thus circumstanced, it is not enough to say he is free to choose as he does, unless you can say, also, he is equally free to make an opposite choice. Hence, in defining the free agency of man, as a probationer, we say, as above, that it implies a power of choice, with full liberty to choose either good or evil.

The foregoing definition, at first view, seems sufficient for all practical purposes, and so indeed it would have been, if a speculative philosophy had not thrown it into the alembic

of metaphysics for decomposition and analysis. It is doubtful whether this process as subserved the cause of truth; nay, it is certain, I think, that it has produced many perplexing refinements and speculations that have greatly aided the cause of error. Into these abstrusities, therefore, it seems necessary to follow this question, to try, if possible, to draw out and combine the elements of truth.

Having defined free agency to mean the power of choice, &tc., it is asked again, What is this power of choice? It is probable that the different answers given to this question constitute the fundamental differences between Calvinists and Arminians. To the above question some, like the reply of the Jews to Christ, have said, "We cannot tell." And they give this evasive reply perhaps for a reason similar to that which influenced the Jews; they fear that a definite answer will involve themselves or their theory in difficulty. This is a very convenient way to avoid responsibility, but not indicative of much fairness, or confidence in their cause. When men have involved their system in apparent contradictions, it will hardly satisfy the candid inquirer after truth to see them start aside from the very point that is to give character to their whole system. We are told by men who reason upon foreknowledge, &c., that "God hath decreed whatsoever comes to pass;" and then we are told that all men are free, and they enter into a great deal of metaphysical speculation about foreknowledge, the nature of voluntary action, &c., to prove these positions; but when they are pressed upon this point, "How can you reconcile with free agency that kind of divine efficiency necessary to secure the execution of the decrees, and that kind of dependance of moral agents which this efficiency implies?" the reply is, "We cannot tell—the now—in the case we cannot explain"? This evasion might be allowable, perhaps, in either of the two following cases;—1. If the apparent discrepancy of the two positions grew out of what is mysterious, and not of what is palpably contradictory; or, 2. If both propositions were so clearly proved, that it would do greater violence to our reasons, and be a greater outrage upon all acknowledged principles of belief, to disbelieve either of them, than it would to believe them with all their apparent contradictions. With respect to the first alternative, it appears to me, and doubtless it would so appear to all whose prejudices did not mislead the mind, that the want of apparent agreement between the two is not for lack of light in the case, but from the natural incongruity of the things compared. When you say, "God executes his decrees by efficiently controlling the will of man," and say also, "The mind of man is free," both these propositions are clear; there is nothing mysterious about them. But you say, perhaps, "The mystery is in the want of light to see the agreement of the two; we cannot see their agreement, but we should not therefore infer that they do not agree." I answer, What is light, in this case, but a clear conception of the propositions? This we have, and we see that they are, in their nature, incompatible; and the more light you can pour upon this subject, the more clearly must this incompatibility appear. If you say that "perhaps neither you nor I fully understand the meaning of these propositions;" then I reply, We have no business to use them. "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" And this is what I have already complained of; men will reason themselves into propositions which they call doctrinal facts, but which seem to the eye of common sense to have all the characteristics of contradictions; and when we urge these contradictions in objection, the objection is not allowed to have any weight, because we do not fully understand the propositions. So then the propositions must be received,

though we do not understand them! and though, as far as we do understand them, they are obviously incompatible!! Is this the way to gain knowledge, and to make truth triumphant? How much more consistent to say, Since it is evident the mind is free, and since the doctrine of predestination is apparently incompatible with that freedom, therefore this doctrine should be exploded!

Or will this second alternative be resorted to? Will it be said that both of these propositions are so clearly proved, that to deny them would do greater violence to our reasons and the principles of belief, than to acknowledge them, notwithstanding their apparent incongruity? Let us examine them. Of one of them we cannot doubt, unless we doubt all primary truths, viz., That the human mind is free. It is presumed, if the question come to this, that they must either give up human liberty or the dogma of predestination, candid Calvinists themselves would not hesitate; they would say the former must stand, whatever becomes of the latter. If I am correct here, it follows that, predestinarians themselves being judges, the doctrine of predestination is not so clear as some other moral truths. But is there any thing clearer than that man ought not to be held accountable for what is unavoidable? that he ought not to be held to answer for volitions that are efficiently controlled by a superior? To me this is as clear as consciousness itself can make it, and I think it must be to mankind in general. If I am correct, then we come to the conclusion at once, that to believe in the compatibility of predestination with human liberty and accountability does more violence to the laws of belief than it would to discard predestination. Whatever, therefore, may seem, to be favourable to this doctrine should be sacrificed to a stronger claim upon our belief in another direction.

But, that the argument may be set in as strong light as possible, let the evidence of predestination be adduced. What is it? It is not consciousness, certainly, and it is almost as clear that it is not moral demonstration by a course of reasoning. The most, I believe, that has ever been said, in the way of moral demonstration, has been in an argument founded on foreknowledge, which argument, it is supposed by the author, is fairly disposed of in the sermon on predestination, by reasoning which has not, to his knowledge, ever been refuted. A refutation has been attempted, I grant, by some of the reviewers of the sermon but the only apparent success that attended those attempts was, as we have already seen, in consequence of their taking the very ground of the sermon, and building the decrees of God upon a prior view and knowledge of all possible contingencies. If consciousness and reasoning are taken away from this doctrine, it has nothing left to stand upon but testimony. And no testimony but divine will here be of any authority; and does revelation prove this doctrine? In the sermon on predestination it was stated that "there was not a single passage in the Bible which teaches directly that God hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass;" and it is not known to the writer that among the different reviews of the sermon it has even been attempted to show that the statement was incorrect. But if a solitary passage could have been adduced, should we not have heard of it? The evidence from Scripture, then, if there is any, is indirect, and merely by inference. And even this indirect testimony is far from being the best of its kind; so, at least, a great portion of believers in revelation think.

Now, candid reader, if you have carefully followed the chain of thought thus far, let me ask you to pause and propound for yourself, and honestly answer the following question: "Is there so much evidence in favour of predestination, that I should do more violence to my own reason, and the laws of belief, by rejecting it, than I should by believing that this doctrine is compatible with free agency and accountability?" Indeed, Calvinists themselves have so felt the force of these difficulties, when the terms predestination and free will have been understood in their common and obvious sense, that they have attempted a variety of explanations of these terms, to do away, if possible, the apparent discrepancy. These attempts have been the principal cause of those changes and modifications in the Calvinistic system alluded to in a former number. The various explanations and definitions that have been given to foreordination have already been noticed. We have seen how every effort failed of affording any relief to the system, until we came down to the last; I mean that of the New Haven divines. This new theory does indeed avoid the difficulty, but avoids it only by giving up the doctrine! Any thing short of this amounts to nothing; it stands forth still the "absolute decree," fixed as fate, and fixing, strong as fate, all the acts of subordinate intelligences. Any real modification of it is a virtual renunciation, and a substitution in its stead of the public and consistent decree of Heaven, "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned."

Not succeeding, as was hoped, in such a definition of predestination as would harmonize the opposing propositions, repeated trials have been made to define and explain human liberty and the power of choice, so as to bend these into a coincidence with the inflexible decree. This brings us back to the inquiry started above: "What is this power of choice?" Now as this is a point more metaphysical in its nature than the proposition embracing the decrees, so there is more ground for laboured argument and refined speculation. Only one theory, however, needs to be particularly noticed: 1. Because it is the most plausible of any other, so that, if this will not bear the test, it is probable no other will; and, 2. Because this is the theory which is now pretty generally, and perhaps almost universally, adopted by the Calvinists; I mean the Calvinistic doctrine of motives. It is in substance this: the power of choice is that power which the mind has of acting in view of motives, and of deciding according to the strongest motive. The strength and direction of volition are always in accordance with the motive. And this relation between mind and motives is fixed by the very constitution of our natures, so that it may be said there is a constitutional necessity that the mind should be controlled by motives. These motives are multitudinous and various. All conceptions and perceptions of the mind, from whatever cause, productive of pleasure or pain, exciting emotions of love or aversion, are motives; or, more properly, perhaps, the causes of these mental states are motives. Between these motives and the mind there is such a connection, that the former not only excite, but control the latter, in all its volitions. The nature of this relation is of course beyond the limits of human investigation: all we can say is, such is the nature of motives and of mind. Such is the theory. The arguments by which it is defended are in stance the following experience and observation. We are conscious, it is said, of acting from motives, and it is universally understood that others also act from motives. It is on this principle that we govern ourselves in our intercourse with men; by this we calculate with moral certainty, in many instances, what will be the conduct of a man in a given case; and upon such calculations we form most of our maxims and rules of conduct in social life:

may, it is said a man that will act without a reason must be insane—that, on this ground, whenever a man acts it is common to inquire what induced him? what motive had he? that even children, at a very early age, so readily recognise this principle, that they are constantly inquiring, Why do you this or that? Such are the strongest arguments by which this theory is sustained—arguments too strong, it is supposed, to be overthrown.

I object to the sovereign control of the mind by motives. But, in offering my objections, it should first be observed that no man, in his senses, it is presumed, will deny that motives have an important influence in determining our volitions. Nor is it necessary, in order to oppose the doctrine of the controlling power of motives, to deny that the power of volition may have been waked up to action, in the first instance, by motive influence, or that the mind ever after may, in all its volitions, be more or less under this influence. As these are points which do not materially affect the question at issue between us and the Calvinists, they may be left out of the discussion for the present. The question is this—has the mind a self-determining power, by which it can spontaneously decide, independent of the control of motives, or is the mind absolutely controlled by motives? We maintain the former—our opponents the latter. By establishing our position, we disprove theirs—by disproving theirs we establish ours—and it is believed that theirs can be directly disproved, and ours directly established; at least so far as we can hope to arrive at demonstration on these extremely difficult points.

1. My first objection to this doctrine of motive influence is, that most of the arguments by which it is defended as directly and certainly prove that the divine mind is subject to the absolute control of motives as that human minds are. It is argued, that to maintain the doctrine of spontaneous volition, independent of the control of motives, involves the absurdity, that "our volitions are excited without any intelligent reasons whatever, and as the effect, consequently of nothing better than a mere brute or senseless mechanism." (Views in Theology, p. 163.) Now if this has any bearing on the question, it relates not to human mind and human volition merely, but to mind in general, and must apply to the divine mind. The same may be said, in fact, of most of the arguments that are brought in favour of this doctrine. Calvinists are convinced of this—and hence this also is a part of their creed. It was defended by Dr. Edwards, and is thus avowed by Professor Upham, in his System of Mental Philosophy. Speaking of the control of motives, he says, "Our condition, in this respect, seems to be essentially the same with that of the supreme Being himself—he is inevitably governed in all his doings by what, in the great range of events, is wisest and best." (Vol. ii, p. 381.) Thus the divine Being is, according to this theory, and by the express showing of the leading advocates of the theory, "inevitably " made a subordinate to a superior. It is believed there is no avoiding this conclusion; and what then? Why then the doctrine makes God a necessary agent, and leads to atheism! It is nearly, if not exactly, the same as the old heathen doctrine of fate. The ancient heathens supposed that Jupiter himself, the omnipotent father of the gods and men, must yield to fate. Modern Christians teach that there is a certain fitness of things, certain constitutional relations, existing independent of the divine Will, which God himself cannot supersede, but to which he must yield. How does this sink, at once, both the natural and moral perfections of God! The exercises of his wisdom and goodness are nothing more than the result of certain fixed and irresistible influences. Fixed not by God himself, for that

would be to give up the doctrine; for in that case, in the order of cause and effect, the divine mind must have acted without control of motive, if this law of motive influence did not exist until the divine volition willed it into being: and if he could once act independent of this control, he might so act for ever; and the argument built on the absurdity of volition, without an intelligent reason, would be contradicted. But if that argument has any weight, it fixes, in the order of cause and effect, a paramount influence eternally antecedent to the exercise of the divine mind and controlling that mind with irresistible sway. This is fate! This is atheism! Once set up an influence that controls the divine mind, call that influence what you will, fitness of things—fate—energy of nature—or necessary relation, and that moment YOU make God a subordinate; you hurl him from his throne of sovereignty, and make him the instrument of a superior. Of what use is such a Deity? Might we not as well have none? Nay, better, as it seems to me, if under the control of his own motive influence he is led to create beings susceptible of suffering, and fix the relations of those beings to the motives around them such that by a law of their nature they are "inevitably" called to sin and endless woe! Is it to be wondered at that many Calvinists have become infidels? This doctrine of motives is the very essence of the system of Spinoza, whose deity was the energy of nature ! The supreme controlling power of Dr. Edwards and his followers is the energy of motives, which exists in the nature of things, anterior to the will of God. Can any one point out any essential difference between the two systems?

Such are the objections to any arguments in favour of the doctrine that motives "inevitably" control the volitions of intelligent beings in, general, involving, of course, the highest intelligence. But if any are disposed to give up this doctrine, as essential to intelligent volition in general, and choose to maintain it only in respect to the volitions of some particular intelligent beings; then they must give up all the strongest of their arguments. If God is free from this control, they must acknowledge also, or give some reason for their dissent, that he may, if he chooses, make and sustain subordinate intelligences having the same freedom from this control; and if they acknowledge that there is nothing in the nature of the case that renders this an impossibility, then they must show, if they can, that, though God might constitute beings otherwise, he has so constituted man, as to render him incapable of choice, except when and as motives direct, by an inevitable influence. But in attempting this they must meet other difficulties in their course, which, it is believed, will greatly embarrass the system. These difficulties, however, together with the arguments which I design to advance directly in favour of the opposite view must be reserved for another number.

ANOTHER argument against the Calvinistic doctrine of motives is, that it leads to materialism. The doctrine, it will be recollected, is this: When the mind is brought into connection with objects of choice it is inevitably led, by a law of its nature, to the selection of one rather than of the other, unless there is a perfect equality between them; in which case I suppose, of course, the mind must remain in equilibrium; for if it moves only by the influence of motives, and to the same degree and in the same direction with motive influence, of course when it is equally attracted in opposite directions it must be at rest! It is on this ground that Leibnitz maintained that God could not make two particles of matter in all respects alike; because, in that case, being "inevitably" governed by

motives in his decisions, he could not determine where to place them, both having the same influence on his mind for a location in the same place! The same writer represents this motive influence, also, as frequently imperceptible, but not the less effectual, and not the less voluntary! and to illustrate it makes the following comparison—"It is as if a needle, touched with a loadstone, were sensible of and pleased with its turning to the north, for it would believe that it turned itself independent of any other cause, not perceiving the insensible motions of the magnetic power." This statement of Leibnitz, who had paid great attention to this philosophical theory, is important in several respects. It is, in the first place, an acknowledgment that consciousness is against the doctrine; and it is also a concession that the mind is imposed upon, in this matter, by the Creator. But with respect to the argument, that this doctrine leads to materialism, this quotation is important, because it shows that one of the most philosophical, if not one of the most evangelical of the defenders of this doctrine, considered the law of motive influence similar to the law of magnetic attraction, differing only in being accompanied by sensation and a deceptive consciousness. And what says its great evangelical champion in this country, Dr. Edwards? He compares our volitions to the vibrations of a scale beam, the different ends of which are respectively elevated or depressed as the opposite weights may chance to vary. What is this but teaching that motions of mind are governed by the same fixed laws as those of matter, and that volitions are perfectly mechanical states of mind? What the advocates of this doctrine charge on the opposite theory belongs, by their own showing, to their own system. They, not we, make choices the result of animal instinct, or senseless mechanism. I know Professor Stuart, in his late exposition of the Romans, seems to reprobate these comparisons; and while he contends, as I should think, as strenuously as Dr. Edwards, for a complete and efficient control of the divine Being over all our volitions, he appears to think that there is a great difference between the laws of intellectual and material action. So, indeed, do we think. But we think that difference consists in the mind's being free from that control for which the professor contends; and we believe when he contends for that control in the volitions of the mind, he contends for that which, from the nature of the case, entirely destroys the other part of his hypothesis, viz., that the operations of the mind are free, and essentially different from mechanical motion or the laws of attractive influence in the material world. If the attractive power of motives over the mind is any thing different from the law of gravitation or magnetic attraction, what is that difference? Should any one say, I cannot tell; I ask then, How does he know but it is that very power for which Arminians contend? Most probably it is that power. Or will it be said the difference between motive influence and gravity is consciousness? I reply, Consciousness is no part of the relation between motives and the power of choice. I see not indeed how it affects that relation at all. And this the comparison of Leibnitz, already alluded to, clearly illustrates. Look at that flowing stream; it hastens on most freely, and by the law of its own nature, down the gentle declivities or more precipitous slopes of its meandering channel. Suppose now that Omnipotence should impart consciousness to the particles of the continuous current: it would then wake up to perceive the action and feel the pleasure of its own delightful motions. It would roll on still by the law of its own nature, and would feel that it was free to move according to its own inclination and voluntary tendency, for its will would of course be in the direction of its motive, or, in other phrase, its gravitating influence. But could it turn its course and roll back its waters to their fountains. It could if it was so

inclined. But its present inclination is toward the bottom of the valley or the bosom of the ocean, and thither, by the relation that exists between its particles and the gravitating influence of the earth, it rolls on with the utmost freedom, though with the utter impossibility of changing its own course, without an inversion of the gravitating power. Let the hand of Omnipotence invert the slope of the mountain, and lo! with the same freedom these very waters roll back again to their original fountains! Thus it is with the human mind. It is conscious of being free to move in the direction of its inclinations, but require it to turn its course and move in the current of its volitions, in an opposite direction, and it would be utterly impossible, until Omnipotence himself should change the motive influence. "God is the determiner of perceptions, and perceptions are the determiners of choices."

We see, therefore, that this doctrine of motive influence leads to materialism, for it makes the analogy between mental and material action so complete that it destroys all idea of intellectual power. Philosophically speaking, there is no power in the laws of nature. What we express by the power of attraction, or repulsion, or decomposition, is nothing more than the uniformity of the divine agency. Does the earth attract elevated bodies to its surface? This is not an energy inherent in nature; it is the God of nature acting by a uniform law. This is all that any intelligent man can mean by the power of nature. We, however, use the word power in an accommodated sense in these cases, but always, I think, in connection with that portion of matter that appears to act, and not that which is acted upon. The magnet, we say, has power to attract iron, because iron is attracted toward the magnet, and not the magnet toward the iron. The antecedent, or that which takes the lead in the motion, is more properly said to have the power, or is the efficient cause. If then we allow of the use of the term power at all, to express the relation of cause and effect, growing out of a philosophical constitution of things, the term should be applied to the antecedent, and not to the consequent. In the case before us, mental action is not the cause of the motive, but the motive is the cause of the mental action: therefore we should say motives have power to act upon the mind, and the mind has a susceptibility of being acted upon. Dr. Reid has well observed, that a power to be acted upon is no power, or "it is a powerless power," which is philosophically absurd. Therefore we come to the conclusion that the mind has no power of choice, but has a susceptibility of being drawn into a state called volition by the power of motives. It will avail nothing, as I conceive, to say that there is evidently a difference between the susceptibility of the mind in this case, and the susceptibility of matter in other cases, unless it be shown what that difference is: for when that difference is pointed out, it will doubtless be found to be what is in direct opposition to the motive theory. It is the misfortune of the Calvinistic system that it often has to assume positions to keep itself in countenance, which positions themselves are a virtual abandonment of the system. So the New Haven divines have done to support predestination, and to this all Calvinists are driven in their attempts to reconcile free will, or the power of choice, with their doctrine of motives, dependance, &c.

We may be told in the case before us, that "when the mind is acted upon it is then excited to action." But how excited to action? Is the action, any stronger than the motive influence? Is it carried beyond this influence? or in a different direction? To answer any

one of these questions in the affirmative is to give up the theory; but to answer them in the negative is to attribute to the mind nothing more than the inertia of matter. The motives are (under God) the agent, the mind is the passive object, and the volition is the effect. Can any one say then, on this theory, that the mind has the power of choice? It has no power, in the first place, because its volitions are the result of philosophical necessity; and it has no power, secondly, because it is not the cause of its own volitions, but in these volitions it is the passive subject of foreign influences. Now, so far as moral action is concerned, how does this differ from materialism? It is true mental action differs from material action in some associated circumstances, it is accompanied by consciousness; but as consciousness of itself cannot give accountability, and as it gains nothing in this respect by being associated with such kind of mental action as results from philosophical necessity, it appears plain that man is not accountable; and, if not accountable, it is more than probable that he has no future existence, and thus again we are driven to materialism and to deism, if not to atheism.

I That man is not accountable upon the principle we are opposing, might have been made a distinct argument; but I have connected it with the argument that this doctrine leads to materialism, because they imply each other. If materialism is true we are not accountable, and if we are not accountable materialism is probably true; and both are true, as I conceive, if the Calvinistic doctrine of motives is true.

It may, however, be urged by the advocates of this theory, that the mind is not wholly passive, because we are conscious of putting forth a mental energy and making a responsible volition; that I am ready to grant, but then our consciousness is a fallacy if this system be true; and on the contrary, if consciousness be true, this system is false. I believe no one who pays attention to his own mind will doubt of having this consciousness. But does that prove the truth of this theory? It is one thing to be conscious of having this energy of mind and responsible volition, and another to be conscious that the theory in question is true; indeed, this consciousness destroys the theory.

Should it be urged, in opposition to the alleged tendency of this system to materialism, that different minds are not uniformly influenced by the same motives, nor the same minds at different times, and therefore in this respect, it is evident that the laws of mind and of matter differ; I reply, It is precisely so with matter; for that attracts or repels according to its different magnetic or electrical states: or should it be urged that mind differs from matter, and shows itself to be possessed of a peculiar energy, because it has power to suspend its decisions, to review the subject, to investigate, &c.; I answer, this it cannot do without a motive; and this it must do if the motive preponderate in that direction, but not otherwise. To have a proper view of this subject, let us go back to the first perception. Could the mind, according to this doctrine, act otherwise than in coincidence with the motive influence of this perception; or could it even suspend the volition this influence was calculated to produce, until a second and more powerful motive was introduced? If it could, then this doctrine is false; if it could not, then the mind, like matter put in motion, must move on invariably in the same direction, and with the same velocity of thought for ever, or until a new motive should counteract the

influence of the former! This is emphatically the vis inertim of matter, the bare statement of which seems sufficient to overthrow the theory.

Another objection to this doctrine of motives is, it leads to the notion of regeneration by moral suasion merely. There has been much said of late by the various writers in the old and the new school on this point. The new school are charged with holding that the truth alone, without any immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, converts the sinner. This is considered by the old school Calvinists as a fatal error. But why so? If motives govern the mind with absolute sway, all you need to convert a sinner is to bring a motive strong enough to induce him to choose God as his chief good, and he is converted. Until you do this there is no conversion. It is impossible for the Holy Ghost to convert a sinner in any other way than by motives, for choice of good, we are told, is conversion; there is no choice without a motive, and the strongest motive governs choice absolutely; therefore motive is the omnipotent power that changes the sinner's heart. This is the legitimate result of the Calvinistic premises. We have more than once had occasion to wonder that Calvinists should revolt at the result of their own doctrines; here we have another instance of it; here too we have the enigma of "natural ability" unriddled. The human mind, by the constitution of its nature, has the power of choosing according to the influence of the strongest motive; and therefore, so far as this can be called a power, it has the natural power to convert itself; and this is the reason why "make you a new heart" is the burden of almost every sermon and exhortation in modern preaching; all the sinner has to do is to choose, in view of motives, and he is converted. And here, too, is unraveled that other mystery which we have been so puzzled to understand, viz., that although all possess the natural power to convert themselves, yet no man ever did convert himself without the special interposition of the divine agency; for, observe, God keeps the motives in his own hands; "God is the determiner of perceptions, and perceptions are the determiners of choices;" that is, of conversions; for to choose in a particular way, is to be converted. Whenever, therefore, he is disposed to let the sinner convert himself, according to his natural power; that is, when he is disposed to overpower the mind by an irresistible motive, he brings the motive and mind in contact, and it is done. Thus the sinner has as much power to convert himself as he has to resolve to eat when he is hungry; for all the power he has to do either is a susceptibility of being operated upon and controlled by the strongest motive; and thus you see, also, that God converts the sinner, because he supplies the motive that influences the choice; and here, too, is seen the occasion for misquoting so frequently and misapplying so universally, that passage in the Psalms: "[My] people shall be [made] willing in the day of [my] power." That is, when God applies the controlling motive to influence to a right choice, then shall the sinner, by a law of his nature, become willing to be converted. Such are the wonderful philosophical discoveries of modern theology! This is the way for man to convert himself by natural power, and this is the way for God to convert him without the aid of super-natural power! Well might a divine of this cast, whom I heard preach not long since, say of regeneration, "There is nothing supernatural or miraculous in it," For surely it is one of the most natural things in the world, according to this theory, to be converted. It is only to be operated upon by a motive, according to the law of his natural constitution, and the man is converted.

This Philosophy of Christian experience has led modern orthodoxy to the very borders of natural religion. Another step, and we can do without a Holy Ghost or a divine Saviour. We will sit down with the philosopher in his study and work out a religious experience, as philosophically as a skilful casuist can solve a question of morals; we will show the rationale of the whole process, and demonstrate it so clearly that infidels shall lose all their objections to the gospel, and be induced to "submit" to God with scarcely a change of theory. Hereafter let no man say that the work of regeneration is a mystery—that in this work we cannot tell whence the regenerating influence comes, or whither it goes; for it comes through the philosophical channel of motive influence, by which it introduces a "governing purpose" into the mind, and the work is done. Let no man hereafter say that his "faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God;" or "if any man would be wise let him become a fool that he may be wise;" or "the wisdom of man is foolishness with God;" for lo, the philosophy of regeneration is at length explained! and the whole secret is found to consist in the philosophical relation between motives and mind!! Can any one wonder, after this, that in Geneva, in Germany, and in New England, Calvinism has finally resulted in Socinianism? And can any one help trembling for a large portion of the orthodox churches among us at the present day? Grant that there is an increase of zeal, a greater stir among the people, more revivals, &c.; all these, with a good foundation, would promise all for the church; but we fear there is a worm at the root. By this it is not intended to insinuate that the work is always spurious and the professed conversions unsound: in many instances it is undoubtedly the reverse of this. It might be expected, after the people had been lulled for a long time under the paralyzing opiates of old-fashioned Calvinism, that this new and apparently opposite theory should rouse many to action. "I had been taught," said a man not far from this, "that I must wait God's time to be converted, and I waited many years in vain; but more recently I have been instructed that I might convert myself; I set about the work, and I believe it is done!" Now this, which in the relation borders upon the ludicrous, might have been a genuine conversion. His new views might only have been sufficient to arouse him to a co-operation with the Holy Spirit in his conversion; and this may have been the case with thousands. In their practical effects two opposite errors may, in individual cases, neutralize each other. But is either therefore safe? Will the general effect be salutary? Let the history of the church speak; and in view of that record I confess I fear for our common Zion. But let not the old Calvinists lay this blame and charge this danger upon the new school; the new school doctrine is a legitimate scion from that root which they have cultivated with such assiduity and care. It grows out of the doctrine of motives, it springs from the idea of the entire dependance of the human mind, for each and all its volitions upon the directing influence of Omnipotence, whatever may be the theory by which that influence is explained.

Another argument in opposition to this doctrine is found in the consideration, that we are constantly liable to disappointment in most of our calculations respecting human agents. Though we may judge something of what will be the conduct of men in given circumstances, yet our calculations are very far from coming up to mechanical exactness. Motives have some influence, but that influence is very variable and uncertain. Why is this? It is not so in matter; the same causes will produce the same effects to the end of time. But we see many choose, without being able to give what, in their own estimation,

is a valid reason; they did thus because they chose to do so; they act in defiance of the strongest motives, drawn from whatever source. We see the greatest possible caprice in the volitions of men; we see their minds starting aside, and putting on the greatest possible and unaccountable mental states, in a way and form that baffles all human calculation, and will for ever baffle it. A man may spend all his life in trying to reduce to uniformity the phenomena of human volitions, and thereby to fix, in an unerring code, the laws that govern them, and he may hand his labours to his successor, and so on to the end of time and, after all, that living, spontaneous, thought-producing essence which we call the human soul, will slide from our grasp and elude all our calculations. If this consideration should have no direct weight in opposition to the theory I am opposing, it will at least show the absurdity of defending this system by what is called the known regularity and uniform phenomena of human volitions. To talk of uniformity here, is to talk of, to say the least, what does not exist.

In the examination of this subject, we find that the arguments in favour of the motive theory are generally of the negative kind; they are not so much direct proofs of the truth of the theory, as they are attempts to show the absurdity of denying it. But when statements of this kind are accompanied by no arguments, they need only be met by a denial, "We are conscious," say the theorists, "of being controlled by motives." I reply, we are not conscious of this control, but we are conscious of the contrary fact. We know, indeed, that motives have their influence; but we know also that the mind has an influence over motives, and probably a greater influence than motives have over it. The mind is conscious, too, of having an influence over itself, and of possessing a self-directing energy, a spontaneous power, and its consciousness of responsibility is predicated on this power of spontaneity. Only let the mind become clearly conscious that motives beyond its power and influence have an irresistible power in controlling its decisions, and you would as certainly remove from man all sense of responsibility, as in those cases now, where the spasmodic motion of the muscle is not the result of the will.

It is said again, that to deny this control "involves the absurdity that our volitions are exerted without any intelligent reasons, and are the result of a brute or senseless mechanism." It appears to me, however, that a system which represents the will as mechanically governed by motives, as weights turn the scalebeam, makes man a machine; while the theory that gives the mind a spontaneous power and energy of its own, makes him what he is, an intelligent, responsible agent.

Since, then, these negative arguments in favour of the theory that motives control the mind, are assertions and not proofs; and since the theory itself leads to fate, to atheism, to materialism, to conversion by mere moral suasion, to the subversion of human liberty and moral responsibility, we must believe the theory false. But against the theory of the spontaneous power of the mind, none of these objections lie. It accords too with consciousness; and is, in fact, the only theory on which the responsibility of a moral agent can be predicated. The opposite view claims our assent to two incongruous and apparently contradictory propositions, between which there is not only no agreement, but an evident repugnancy. This is the embarrassment in the one case, and it is fatal to the theory.

If there are embarrassments in the other case, and what theory of mind or matter has not its inexplicables?—these embarrassments are evidently of another kind; it is not the want of light to see how two antagonist principles can agree, the repugnancy of which must be the more apparent as light increases, but it is from the known limits to human knowledge. The principal embarrassment to the theory we defend is, we cannot understand the manner in which this faculty of the mind operates. But this is no more difficult than to understand the manner in which other faculties of the mind operate. To make this last statement clear, the reader is desired to recollect that the mind is not divided into parts and members like the body. When we talk of the faculties of the mind, we should understand the power that the entire mind has to act in this or that way. Thus we say the mind has the faculties of will and of memory, that is, the mind, as a whole has the powers of choosing, and of calling up its past impressions. Now if any one will tell me how the mind remembers, I will tell him how it wills; and I have the same right to ask him what causes the memory to remember, as he has to ask me what causes the will to will. In both cases it may be said the mind remembers and wills because this is its nature—God made it so. When you analyze until you come to the original elements, or when you trace back effects until you come to first principles, you must stop. And if you will not receive these first principles because you cannot explain them farther then indeed you must turn universal skeptic. I frankly acknowledge I cannot tell how the mind acts in its volitions. And let it be understood that the motive theory, with all its other embarrassments, has this one in common with ours. Can its advocates tell me how motives act upon the mind? True philosophy is an analysis of constituent principles, or of causes and effects, but the origin of these relations and combinations is resolvable only into the will of the Creator. It is so, because God hath made it so,

And the nature of these relations is beyond the reach of the human mind, However impatient we may be at these restrictions, they are limits beyond which we cannot go; and our only duty in the case is submission.

I am aware, however, that what I have now said may, without farther explanation, especially when taken in connection with a principle of philosophy already recognized, be considered as an important concession to my opponents. I have before stated, in substance, that in the material world there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as power; that the efficiency of the laws of nature is, in fact, the divine energy operating in a uniform way. "Let it be granted," a Calvinist might say, "that what we call the operation of second causes is universally the supreme Intelligence operating in a uniform way, and it is all we ask to defend our system. Then it will be granted, that in each volition of the human mind the operation of the will is nothing more than the energy of the divine Mind operating in a uniform way."

To this I reply, Though matter, on account of its inertia, cannot in any proper sense be said to have power, yet the same is not true of mind. If any one thinks it is, then the supreme Mind itself has not power. In other words, as both matter and mind are inert, and cannot act only as acted upon, there is no such thing as power in the universe! and thus we again land in atheism. But if mind has power, as all theists must grant, then the human mind may have power. If any one can prove that it is impossible, in the nature of things,

for the supreme Being to create and sustain subordinate agents with a spontaneous power of thought and moral action to a limited extent, in that case we must give up our theory. But it is presumed no one can prove this, or will even attempt to prove it. We say God has created such agents, and that they act in their responsible volitions uncontrolled by the Creator, either directly or by second causes. We are expressly told, indeed, that God made man "in his own image;" his moral image doubtless. Man, then, in his own subordinate sphere, has the power of originating thought, the power of spontaneous moral action: this, this only, is the ground of his responsibility. Will it be said that this puts man entirely out of the control of his Creator? I answer, By no means. It only puts him out of the control of such direct influences as would destroy his moral liberty. Does the power of moral action, independent of the magistracy and the laws, destroy all the control of the civil government over malefactors? How much less in the other case? God can prevent all the mischief that a vicious agent might attempt, without throwing any restraint upon his responsible volitions. It is thus that he "makes the wrath of man praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains." Let it be understood, then, from this time forward, by all, as indeed it has been understood heretofore by those who have carefully examined the subject, that when the Calvinists talk about "free will," and "human liberty," they mean something essentially different from what we mean by these terms; and, as it is believed, something essentially different from the popular meaning of these terms. They believe in human liberty, they say, and the power of choice, and we are bound to believe them; but we are also bound not to suffer ourselves to be deceived by terms. Theirs is a liberty and power of a moral agent to will as he does, and not otherwise. Ours is an unrestricted liberty, and a spontaneous power in all responsible volitions to choose as we do OR otherwise.

Thus far I have examined the mind in its power of choosing good or evil, according to its original constitution. How far this power has been affected by sin, on the one hand, or by grace, on the other, is a question that will claim attention in my next discussion.

* This essay comes from Chapter 9 of Fisk's book "Calvinistic Controversy: Embracing a Sermon on Predestination and Election; and Several Numbers on the Same Subject"; originally published in 1832