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ANIMADVERSIONS, &c.

PART I.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

Introduction—Statement of the Plan—Rules of conduct in argument—General axioms—Definitions—Observations on the present subject.

TO a lover of truth nothing is more pleasing than to observe its gradual developement; and to mark its progress, not only while emerging from the darkness of ignorance, but also in dispelling the smaller shades of sophistry and misconception. In promoting these important objects, few things have proved more effectual than the collision of studious minds in polemical disquisition; and for this, among other reasons, I have been gratified in observing the attention which of late has been directed to the investigation of the *Origin of Moral Evil*; a subject, indeed, of acknowledged depth and obscurity, but of which a consistent view, as may be expected from its radical nature, would become a most powerful auxiliary to the comfort and holiness of the church of God. This attention has been excited by a pro-

fessed Demonstration lately submitted to the world, in various publications, by the Rev. Dr. WILLIAMS; and by the discussion which that Demonstration has received from men of ingenuity and learning. Among others, the Rev. WILLIAM PARRY has favoured the public with the result of his inquiries; and it is my design, in the ensuing pages, to unfold some of those objections which an attentive examination of his "Strictures" has produced. A persuasion of having truth in my favour, and a desire to display its evidence, form my only apology for this undertaking; which I have been the more induced to prosecute on learning that Dr. W. did not design to reply to Mr. PARRY, in a separate publication; partly on account of the uncertain state of his health, and partly because he was engaged in preparing for the press a larger work, containing a connected view of Equity and Sovereignty, and of such theological truths as stand most closely connected with these divine perfections. It is, I hope, unnecessary to assure my opponent, that notwithstanding the freedom with which I shall examine the objections and arguments which, in his Strictures, he has adduced, I entertain the sincerest respect for his learning, his talents, and his personal character. The cause of truth, however, I cannot commit, by allowing my respect for Mr. P. to interfere with what I conceive to be a just exposure and refutation of some principles contained in his work.

In executing my intention, I shall, in the first place, make some *Preliminary Observations*; and then proceed to answer the *Objections* which Mr. P. has advanced against Dr. W. and conclude with *Remarks* on the PRACTICAL USES arising from a just apprehension of the subject.—In the preliminary observations, on which we are now entering, our attention will be confined to rules of conduct in discussing the subject; axioms which shew the importance of truth in general, and of the difference between truth and error; definitions of the principal terms in the controversy; and an estimate of the comparatively interesting nature of the points in dispute.

I. It may be of advantage to specify some rules of conduct which cannot be violated without essential injury to the argument.

A strict attention to the nature of the subject, always important, is evidently of the first moment in moral and metaphysical investigations. If this be disregarded, the mind will be left to fluctuate in uncertainty; and the argument, uncontrolled by its proper principles and undefined by its proper boundaries, will neither be satisfactorily decided nor distinctly understood.

Intimately connected, and equally necessary, with an attention to the nature of the subject is *accuracy in the use of terms*. The arts and sciences have all their peculiar assemblage of technical language;

the misconception of a single term will frequently invalidate the whole discussion; and by a dexterous intermixture of the different senses of the same word, the strongest weight of argument will fall without effect. Thus, in the present controversy, a misapprehension, or a gratuitous definition of the phrase "PASSIVE POWER," adopted by the author of the "Hypothesis" to express one of the fundamental principles of his argument, has proved a fatal stumbling-block to his opponents, and rendered their conclusions invalid.

It must, however, be confessed that on any subject, and especially on subjects of moral science, it is difficult, if not impossible, to select, or even to invent by language, the exact images of ideas. A mind accustomed to metaphysical inquiry will, in all its researches, recognise the truth of this position. The penetrating LUCRETIVUS felt and confessed it at the very opening of his poem:

"Nec me animi fallit, Graiorum obscura reperta
Dificile inlustrare Latinis versibus esse;
Multa novis verbis præsertim quom sit agundum
Propter egestatem linguæ, et rerum novitatem."*

* Thus rendered by Mr. GOOD, in his admirable translation of this author, a work which has both merited and obtained the approbation of the age:

"Yet not unknown to me how hard the task
Such deep obscurities of GREECE t'unfold
In LATIN numbers; to combine new terms,
And strive with all our poverty of tongue."

Eminently such is the case with the subject of *moral evil*; where peculiar difficulties arise, both from the poverty of language and the inadequate analogy between the objects of nature and the ideas to be represented.

II. There is an important difference between *truth* and *error*; and I would propose the following positions as so many axioms in reference to the present controversy.

1. *Truth is eternal*: the *contrast*, indeed, but of necessity *antecedent* to error. Truth, because essential to the divine nature, must always have existed; error is merely relative, and implies the existence of creatures. Among the elements of things, truth must be resolved into the nature of God, who is the GOD of TRUTH.

2. *Truth is immutably consistent*. What was originally true can never become false. To change the nature of truth is neither an effect of will nor an object of power. This denied, all certainty of its existence would be destroyed; and it would then require only an adequate exertion of power to produce its extermination.

3. *Truth is independent*: standing in its own nature, the nature of God, and unconnected with foreign support. We can never think too highly of divine revelation as the standard of decision with regard to the claims of theological opinions; for all it contains is true, and whatever contra-

dicts it is untrue ; but the source of truth is eternal and infinite ; and therefore truth itself must be independent. Hence demonstration is not to be overturned by erroneous interpretations of scripture.

4. *Some truths must be self-evident*—Some principles intuitively certain ; which, however obscured by the false refinements of philosophy or the ambiguities of language, require only to be understood in order to enforce conviction and challenge assent. They cannot, indeed, be proved by any thing plainer than themselves, but the denial of them is attended with absurdity ; and it is the part of reasoning to deduce from them, by successive links of argument, truths less obvious to apprehension.

5. *The evidence of truth is relative.* It is not, indeed, supposed that we can always discover its evidence : but as nothing contradictory can be true, so nothing is mysterious to infinite knowledge. The degrees of perspicuity and mystery coincide with the degrees of mental attainment. What was clear to NEWTON was mysterious to his precursors in philosophy.

6. *Truth is important.* This position is universal ; it is of easy application to every part of science ; and even in the common concerns of life is readily acknowledged. But the importance of moral and religious truth, as being intimately connected with moral goodness, must be pre-eminently

great. Erroneous principles have a correspondent effect on practice ; and in proportion to the evils of error are the benefits of truth.

III. Clearly to understand the *principal terms* of an argument is obviously of the first importance. I wish it, therefore, to be understood, that the following terms, whenever introduced in these Animadversions, are used by me, and I believe by Dr. W. through the whole of his arguments, in the sense of the subjoined DEFINITIONS.

1. EQUITY is that perfection of the divine nature which *gives to every one his due*, and MERE EQUITY allows *neither more nor less* than is due. Every moral agent claims, by the principle of Equity, the grounds of moral accountability.

2. SOVEREIGNTY is the authority of God over his creatures to do whatever is not *inconsistent* with equity. Sovereignty has always good for its object, and cannot be concerned, either in effecting or approving what is sinful. The *Sovereign Decrees* of God, therefore, embrace good only : and to place moral evil among the objects of Divine decree would be to convert sovereignty into the essence of *injustice*.

3. TENDENCY, a word so amply discussed in this controversy, implies, in general, the idea of *causation*. But in order to understand its precise import, the different species of tendency or causation must be considered. *Causes* or *tendencies* are either *posi-*

tive and *physical*, or *negative* and *metaphysical*: the former belong exclusively to God and produce all the good in the universe, the latter attach only to his creatures and are the source of all evil. *Tendency* to evil, in Dr. W's acceptance of the term, is *the negative or metaphysical cause of evil*; and *excludes every idea of what is physical and positive*. If, instead of consulting the different acceptations of the term without regarding the nature of the subject to which it is applied, this distinction between the different natures or species of *Tendency* had been carefully observed by objectors, much confusion and needless controversy might have been avoided.

4. NECESSITY may be considered either as *absolute* or *hypothetical*. In the former acceptance it belongs only to the divine nature, which could not but exist absolutely, and irrespectively of antecedent positions. *Hypothetical* necessity, which relates to all contingent being and actions, supposes the existence of something as its ground; though, with respect to the event, it implies infallible certainty. The considerations or positions which form the ground of necessity are varied, according to the nature of the actions to which they relate. In all virtuous actions, whether of God or of his creatures, the ground of necessity is *positive influence*; in all sinful actions the ground is negative, being the *creature's defectibility*. When, therefore, the term NECESSITY is applied by Dr. W, to the sub-

ject of moral evil, it is designed to express *the infallible connexion between the creature's being left under the influence of his NEGATIVE TENDENCIES and the existence of sin.*

5. POWER expresses, in the abstract, *force, influence or cause*, as adapted to produce *effects*. But it is denominated from the kind of effect to which it belongs. As effects are *positive* and *privative*, so power must be either *active* or *passive*. God is the source of all *active power*: In him "we live and move;" and "by him all things consist."

6. PASSIVE POWER, called by Latin authors "*ma-lum metaphysicum*," is "*the want of ulterior perfection*," contrasted with self-existence, independence and all-sufficiency; which coincides with other definitions which have been given of it. Hence it may be described, in reference to its effects, *The metaphysical cause of evil, both natural and moral.* It is the contrast of active power, and so belongs exclusively to the creature. As *power*, in general, refers to *causation*, or the connexion between an antecedent and a consequent, so the term *passive* confines its application to what is *negative* or *deficient*, in opposition to *active* power which springs from God.

7. A MOTIVE is *that which excites or determines the will.* It consists of two parts, the *external representation* and the *internal state of the mind*, each of which is essential to its formation. This distinction must be carefully observed; or the

merits of the present controversy can never be ascertained.

8. MORALITY is *the MANNER of an action, with respect to the rule of rectitude*. It includes, radically, both virtue and vice; though it is commonly applied to virtue, and placed as the contrast of immorality or vice. To distinguish between the natural act and its sinfulness is of essential importance. Every sinful act, considered as an effect of providential energy, is good: its *defectiveness, obliquity, or deviation from the line of rectitude*, constitutes the whole of its sinfulness. This must be evident, because the very same act, considered naturally, may be morally *good, evil, or indifferent*, according to the manner of it, or the ends proposed by the moral agent. The act of raising our arm, for example, to relieve our brother—to murder him—or out of mere spontaneity, if naturally considered, is equally good, because equally the effect of divine energy: but, viewed in a moral sense, it is, in the first instance *good*, in the second *evil*, and in the last perfectly *indifferent*.

9. MORAL OBLIGATION, or to be MORALLY OBLIGED, is to be *equitably bound*, by appropriate consequences of reward or punishment, *to observe the will of the Creator*, or, *to act according to the rule of rectitude*. Hence it is obvious that moral obligation is purely *hypothetical*. The moral agent is not influenced in his choice by any external compulsion. It is his province to fix his

own *ends*, which stand immutably connected with their proper *consequences*. IF his actions be *good*, they are, consequently, *rewarded*; IF *evil* they are *punished*. The only binding force in moral obligation springs from rewards and punishments.

10. The phrase MORAL POWER, though frequently used by writers on morals, is not strictly correct. *Morality*, by the preceding definition, is the *manner* of acting, and results from the exercise of *natural* powers. The powers by which morality is produced cannot, themselves, possess a *moral* character, because this would suppose the agent *virtuous* or *sinful* antecedently to the exercise of FREEDOM. If at any time, therefore, it is used by me, it is in a lax sense, to represent *the natural powers of the moral agent employed in producing moral effects*.

11. MORAL MEANS are *the objects placed before the view of the mind, which constitute the external part of motives*. Every thing around us, whether good or evil, may be employed as a *moral mean*; because every thing may be used in exciting virtuous or sinful feelings. An upright mind, for example, elicits good from evil : but to a defective mind, the greatest good is the mean of sin. To contemplate the character of Devils engages the devout affections of the Christian ; while the infinitely excellent Jehovah is the object of the sinner's hatred.

12. LIBERTY, in its most radical acceptation, signifies *freedom from external impulse*. Thus the mo-

ral agent is always *free, at liberty, or unconstrained* in his choice, by any outward agency. But *Liberty* is frequently used for *the free act of the will*.—So

13. LIBERTY TERMINATING UPON—*is the free act of the will forming a junction with the state of the mind*.—The allusion is mathematical, and represents the free act of the will connecting itself with the state of the mind, so as to form a union ; as one line *terminating upon* another forms an angle.

IV. The question, “Whence cometh moral evil?” appears, from several considerations, to involve a discussion of great importance : a satisfactory solution of it must be regarded as highly conducive to the comfort of inquiring minds, and greatly advantageous to the cause of practical religion. Some, indeed, have attempted to undervalue the inquiry, by decrying it as speculative and metaphysical ; and have exploded subjects of abstract investigation altogether, from an unfounded prejudice that they are not only useless and unintelligible, but chilling and injurious to the feelings of piety. That they are comparatively difficult and obscure cannot be denied ; but let it be also recollected, that nothing is more easy than for an inattentive or prejudiced mind to pronounce that unintelligible which it cannot or will not understand.

Nor is the supposition, that this inquiry is injuri-

ous to the humble exercise of faith, less assuming and unfounded. Faith has for its object the testimony and the authority of God ; but it cannot surely be supposed that faith is injured by *evidence*. Nor can we justly be censured for adding *proof* to faith, and “justifying the ways of God to man.” Very different is the presumption of a boasted rationalist who will believe nothing which he cannot comprehend.

The practical advantages of investigation, conducted on the principles of Dr. WILLIAMS’S “Hypothesis,” are great and extensive. In general, as it embraces the relations subsisting between the Creator and his Creatures, it is eminently connected with self-knowledge and the knowledge of God : as it displays by argumentation the evidence of its conclusions, it is applicable, and may prove beneficial to those who deny the testimony of Revelation ; and it will be found, on a just review, to be highly conducive to the best purposes of practical devotion.

A consistent view of the MORAL SYSTEM is essential to a correct estimate of this subject. The *Governor* and the *Laws*, it is obvious, must be equitable ; and the *Subjects*, though peccable, must be free from external, impulsive necessity in their actions, and furnished with intelligence, will, and suitable objects of choice, as the means of morality.

PART II.

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

SECTION I.

Incidental principles—Adequate *data*—Aid of metaphysics—Divine revelation—Arcana of heaven—Dr. Watts's opinion—FIRST OBJECTION, against passive power, answered—The terms *physical* and *moral* when applied to existence—and to tendency, examined—The original state of moral agents, and other positions connected with it.

BEFORE I proceed to examine the arguments advanced directly against Dr. WILLIAMS's "Hypothesis," I shall briefly notice some incidental principles which stand closely connected with the subject in debate.

1. That adequate "*DATA*" are essential to every argument is readily admitted: and with respect to the data in question, it must be observed, that they are, according to the *Definitions*, professedly derived from Divine Revelation, and supported by the first principles of common sense. On the strength of these data the whole argument is rested; and it behoves the opponent to shew, either that they are falsely assumed, or that they are too weak to support the conclusions. Until this has been effected, all insinuations or assertions to

the contrary are mere assumptions : and to plead—that “limitations are placed to our knowledge of the divine conduct”—that on some subjects the word of God is “wisely silent”—that the origin of moral evil is “justly considered” among the subjects on which the world has been amused with “unprofitable speculations, and which the word of revelation has left undecided and unexplained”—is altogether inapplicable.

2. That “it is not by the aid of metaphysics, *in any sense*, that we can hope to determine those questions of a moral and religious nature on which the word of Revelation is wisely silent,” is an assertion which demands attention. With respect to the present controversy, as before stated, the total silence of Revelation cannot be allowed. Nor, indeed, will it be admitted that metaphysical inquiry is useless, even where Revelation is silent. There are some principles of morality known by intuitive perception : principles which ought to stand as the *data* of Argument, from which the most certain conclusions may be deduced by the exercise of reason. The Heathens who never heard of Revelation may infer the Being of a God from the works of creation ; and their consciences testify to the morality or immorality of their actions.*

3. Divine Revelation, if “not intended to gratify our curiosity on questions of a speculative nature

* Rom. i. 20. ii. 14, 15.

which have no good practical tendency," yet strongly urges and demands an attentive examination of the subjects of Religion. The apostles addressed the understandings as well as the passions of men, and challenged the strictest scrutiny. We are required to "prove all things," and always to be ready to give "a reason of the hope" that is in us. The holy scriptures do not discourage but invite inquiry.

4. To class the *origin of moral evil*, as the author of the Strictures does,* with those subjects which are merely curious and speculative, unprofitable in their practical tendency, and among the *arcana* of Heaven, and thus compendiously to preclude investigation, is easy indeed, but not satisfactory. That the subject is not so inscrutable, nor its tendency so unprofitable as he supposes, will, it is hoped, hereafter appear. Some argument, however, might have been expected on a point so strongly affecting the controversy. But no proof is even attempted; and, therefore, an author has no stronger claims to the credit of the reader when he makes the assertions, than his opponent when he denies them.

Why an investigation of the cause of sin should be discountenanced, it is difficult to conceive; except from the apprehension that religion might suffer, and that scepticism and infidelity would triumph in the discovery. But such apprehension can be fairly

* Vide Strictures, p. 19, 24, 50, 67.

attached only to *false* results and to *wrong* modes of inquiry : a legitimate investigation and a true discovery must prove the confusion of the one and the subversion of the other. And, in my humble opinion, correctly to ascertain this grand and awful truth would do more towards effecting such purposes than any principles which have yet been employed.

That the subject is solemn and difficult cannot be doubted. It behoves us to think and to speak of it with seriousness and modesty. But difficulties, it should be remembered, are *relative* ; the most acute mind is sometimes confounded by what is perfectly simple to another ; every day is pouring new light upon us ; and I apprehend it cannot be soberly concluded that the origin of moral evil, because it has been long obscure, will never be made plain. Nor is this a novel opinion. The justly celebrated Dr. WATTS, when recommending the exercise of free inquiry, has the following appropriate and striking passage : “ Since there are at present many difficulties and darknesses hanging about certain truths of the Christian Religion, and since several of these relate to important doctrines, such as the *Origin of Sin*, the *Fall of Adam &c.* which do still embarrass the minds of honest and inquiring readers, and which make work for noisy controversy : it is certain there are several things in the Bible yet unknown and not sufficiently explained, and it is certain that there is *some way to solve these difficulties*, and to reconcile the seeming contradictions.

And why may not a sincere searcher of truth in the present age, by labour, diligence, study, and prayer, with the best use of his reasoning powers, find out the proper solution of those knots and perplexities which have not hitherto been unfolded, and which have afforded matter for angry quarrelling? Happy is every man who shall be favoured of Heaven to give a helping hand towards the introduction of the blessed age of light and love.”*

Having offered these remarks, I proceed to examine the immediate grounds of the present controversy. The FIRST OBJECTION in these Strictures is advanced against that part of the “Hypothesis” which supposes the existence of PASSIVE POWER, sometimes called the tendency to nihility *physically* considered and to sin *morally* considered, as attaching, by unavoidable necessity, to all created existence.

It is of consequence to observe that, so far as physical existence is concerned, Dr. W. and the author of the Strictures stand agreed: for the latter asserts that “Physical existence has in itself a tendency to nihility,”† and “therefore, on the physical defectibility of created existence, there is no controversy with Dr. WILLIAMS.” The objection is urged entirely against the other branch of the position, which asserts that the tendency to *defection*

* Vide Improvement of the Mind, vol. I. p. 15, 16. Ed. Lond. 8vo. 1782.

† Strictures, p. 14, 15.

morally considered, i. e. to moral defection, is essential to the existence of the moral agent. With respect to *angels* it is maintained, that "The more natural as well as just conclusion would be, that as they were the productions of a holy God, were created pure and holy intelligences, the tendency of their natures, if preserved in existence, would be to a continuance in holiness:* and, that "neither at his creation, nor at his subsequent entrance into paradise, was there, in the mind of *Adam*, any such principle as Dr. WILLIAMS supposes; any tendency, whatever name it be called by, to moral defection."† Thus the moral agent is made dependent on God for his *being*, but not for his *well-being*: for his physical existence, but not for his moral purity:—a position which few christians, it is presumed, would be willing to allow. On the point at issue—Whether such a tendency *really exists* or is only *supposed*—the whole controversy evidently turns, and therefore, it demands the closest attention.

To estimate the force of this objection, it will be proper to examine Mr. PARRY's statement of the tendency itself, the principles he assumes and the arguments he employs in opposing it.

It is asserted that if "inclination, bias, or tendency exists in intelligent minds, previous to the existence of perceptions and ideas, it can only be

* Vide *Strictures*, p. 19.

† Ibid. p. 26.

a physical tendency,"* that "the radical fallacy in this part of Dr. W.'s statement lies in identifying *physical* and *moral* tendency;" and that he has "assigned no reasons to shew why Deity should continue the physical existence, and not continue the moral purity of created intelligences."†

What advantage would be secured towards ascertaining the *origin* of moral evil, by assigning the reasons of the divine conduct in its *permission*, or with what propriety the statement of such reasons could be expected, I am unable to discover. In order to explain the *cause* of moral evil, it cannot surely be necessary to shew why that cause was permitted to operate.—But it may with confidence be asserted, that Dr. W. does not "identify *physical* with *moral* tendency" in the case of moral evil. For the proof of this assertion I might appeal to various passages in his works,‡ and, for convenience, I may also refer to the definition in the first part of these Animadversions, which I have drawn up after a repeated and very close attention to what he has written. It has been uniformly, and is most strenuously maintained, that the tendency to moral evil neither is nor can be a *physical*, but

* Vide Strictures, p. 17. † Ibid. p. 16.

‡ Vide Sermon on *Predestination*. Notes on the same sermon. DODDRIDGE'S Works, vol. V. p. 210. where *tendency to defection* or *passive power* is contrasted with the natural perfections of God, and consequently is not physical but *metaphysical*. EDWARDS' Works, vol. I. p. 398—402. note.

merely a *metaphysical*, a *negative*, *privative*, or *deficient* principle: and therefore, without some convincing arguments, proving it to be implied in the professed demonstration, this “identity,” this supposed “radical fallacy,” cannot be allowed; and consequently, all the conclusions drawn from it must be nugatory. When the principles here assumed, opposing this tendency, have been fully considered, it will probably appear that the charge of confounding and identifying distinct ideas may be applied with far greater propriety to the author of the *Strictures*.

It is also assumed by Mr. P. that there is a difference between *physical* and *moral existence*—and consequently between *physical* and *moral tendency*—that *moral tendency* is *the result of ideas*—and if a tendency exist, previous to the existence of perceptions and ideas, it must be a *physical* tendency.

1. On the first of these points, physical and moral existence, it is observed: “The tendency when applied to physical existence and when applied to moral must stand for two different ideas.”* “To speak of a tendency in intelligences—is to apply the term in a *physical* sense to a *spiritual* or *immaterial* subject.”† “It is readily granted that intelligent and holy beings are ever dependent—both for their physical and moral powers.”‡ Objections to this distinction between physical and

* *Strictures*, p. 16.† *Ibid.* p. 17.‡ *Ibid.* p. 18.

moral existence have been already expressed in the Definitions.* Whatever is created must be *physical*: all the powers of the mind as well as those of the body are, therefore, physical: for mind and body constitute the one "created nature." All morality results from the exercise of natural powers. If this be not allowed, the moral character may be formed antecedently to volition, and the agent may be sinful, independently of his actions. The distinction, therefore, between physical and moral existence is arbitrary and unfounded, calculated to obscure the subject, and of no force in the present debate.

2. From the preceding assumed position is derived the distinction between *physical* and *moral tendency*; a distinction which requires to be carefully examined. It is asserted that the "radical fallacy" of one part of Dr. W.'s "statement lies in identifying *physical* and *moral tendency*,"† and that "the term *tendency*," when applied to *physical* existence and when applied to *moral*, must stand for *two different ideas*."‡ If what has been advanced respecting *physical* and *moral nature* be correct, it will appear that the terms *physical* and *moral*, when applied to *tendency*, do not form an accurate contrast. If all morality arises from the exercise of natural or *physical* powers, the phrase *moral tendency*, as opposed to *physical*, cannot

* Def. 8 & 10. † Strictures, p. 16. ‡ Ibid.

be admitted. A tendency to *moral results*, distinct from physical tendency, is readily allowed ; but this is not a *moral* tendency. It is the opposite of *physical* and *active*, and therefore may be denominated a *metaphysical* and *passive* tendency. It is, in truth, neither *moral* nor *immoral*, but the mere defectiveness of derived existence, which Dr. W. denominates *passive power*. This supposed distinction, therefore, is equally inadmissible with the former, and equally inapplicable to the controversy.

3. Mr. P. makes another advance ; and asserts, that “Moral tendency whether good or bad, in minds, *must be the result of ideas*.* The position of “a moral tendency in intelligent beings, antecedent to the existence of knowledge (he maintains) does not appear to be susceptible of a rational or intelligent explication :”† for “To speak of a tendency in intelligences to moral defection, antecedent to the rise of knowledge or ideas, is to apply the term in a *physical* sense to a spiritual or *immaterial* subject, and consequently is inadmissible.”‡

In these passages, ideas are identified which ought carefully to be distinguished : the *cause*, and the *occasion* of its operation—the *principle*, and *that which calls it into action*. A ball, for example, may be supported at any given distance from the

* Strictures, p. 16. † Ibid. p. 16, 17. ‡ Ibid. p. 17.

earth; yet all allow that "bodies tend to the earth by the principle of gravitation." I do not profess, by this allusion, fully to illustrate a metaphysical tendency; it may shew, however, that as the ball while yet supported tends, *propria natura*, to the earth, so the moral agent may have a tendency to defection, even "antecedent to the rise of knowledge or ideas." If the mind have no tendency, *per se*, irrespective of ideas, it will not, perhaps, be too daring to assert that mind and matter are equally incapable of volition. Mind must have ideas to compare, before volitions can follow; but ideas, without mental power, are not more efficient than instruments without power in the hand which employs them. If, however, it be by the potent influence of ideas only,—“something which the mind apprehends,”—that this *mental tendency* is produced, the *same* “views and motives” would always produce the *same* tendency: and, then the argument will prove more than is designed. It will prove that *moral evil can have no existence*; since Mr. P. maintains, that “it is not supposable that such improper views or motives could dwell in angels, or man, as soon as created; for *at that moment* they could have no ideas or knowledge but what was communicated to them by the Creator, the source of wisdom, purity and truth.” If then the mind tends or is biassed simply by what it *apprehends* or receives *ab extra*, and it cannot be supposed that any improper views should be impressed upon

it by God "at the moment of creation," (and for the same reason, I presume, at any other succeeding moment) the volition would always be virtuous, and sin would be for ever excluded. To allege that Satan offered the temptation, and so our first parent was beguiled, is quite irrelevant; for we are investigating the *origin* of evil, when as yet there was no Satan, no tempter to beguile. If Mr. P. had conceived of *motives* as *complex*, embracing the *state of the mind in union with the object presented*, he might have preserved himself from the absurd consequence which I have attempted to expose.

4. From the preceding unfounded presumptions it is boldly inferred, "If inclination, bias, or tendency exists in intelligent minds previous to the existence of perceptions and ideas, it can only be a *physical* tendency."* The idea of *negative* tendency, which has been shewn to be the proper contrast of *physical*, is entirely overlooked. Why may not such a tendency be *metaphysical*—why not *negative*? The existence of a negative tendency, with respect to physics, is clearly implied in the concession that "physical existence has in itself a tendency to nihility." This tendency to nihility must arise from the absence of positive power to support existence, which can be nothing but the essential defectiveness of created nature. It is this same

* *Strictures*, p. 17.

defectiveness, denominated passive power, and a tendency to defection, which Dr. W. maintains to be the metaphysical cause of moral evil : a tendency which stands directly opposed to the natural perfections of God, and which therefore belongs, by "absolute necessity," to every creature. The existence of such a tendency, when once understood, the Doctor seems with propriety to have supposed, that no reasonable being would ever controvert.

Whether the arguments adduced by Mr. P. be sufficient to disprove its existence remains now to be considered.

HIS OBJECTION is founded on the following positions—That moral agents were *created holy*—that the tendency to defection is *morally evil*—that, if supposed to belong essentially to creatures, it must have been *created with them*—and must *belong also to the Creator*—that the existence of such a tendency stands opposed to the *Mosaic account of man*—and to his *original moral power* which must have been *adequate to his duty*—implies that it was *impossible* for him to comply with his Maker's requisitions—and involves the existence of an *Almighty Fate*.—When these objections have been examined, their formidable appearance will perhaps be removed : and, it is presumed, that what has been already advanced on the improper representation of TENDENCY, and on the various principles employed against it, will greatly contribute to a successful investigation.

1. The emphasis here placed on the *original state* of moral agents, will not be found, on strict examination, either to befriend the author's argument, or to weaken the sentiment against which it is directed. If the representation be allowed, sin cannot be fairly supposed to originate, either from *without*, or from a *tendency within*, or from *any other possible source*. To apply, in the first place, his doctrine of ideas or views, which he calls MOTIVES. "It is not supposable that such improper views or motives could dwell in angels, or in man, as soon as created; for at that moment they could have no ideas or knowledge but what was communicated to them by the Creator, the source of wisdom, purity, and truth." "The more natural, as well as just conclusion would be, that as angels were the productions of a holy God, were created pure and *holy* intelligences, the tendency of their nature, if preserved in existence, would be to a continuance in holiness." These principles being acknowledged, inquiries into the origin of moral evil may, indeed, be deemed nugatory: for it never had nor can have existence! To insist on the necessity of these pure "views and motives," *at the very first moment* of probationary life: and that "moral defection, when it took place, must be supposed to arise from causes subsequent to their creation,"* will avail nothing; for the same prin-

* Strictures, p. 20.

ciple which establishes the necessity of their possessing such ideas, at that moment, will equally prove the necessity of their continuance parallel to the existence of the moral agent. For how can distance of time change the grounds of accountability? If the "ideas" by which moral purity is supported were a *creation due*, to suspend them would be an act of injustice : for the event of sin is equally awful, whether at the *first moment*, at the end of the first century, or at any other period of time. If that by which man's apostacy was prevented were essential to moral accountability, "at the moment of their creation," it would be *always* so ; for the fall, in order to prevent which Mr. P. supposes this communication necessary, would immediately follow, on its withdrawal, whether at the *first* or at any succeeding moment.

2. To maintain that the tendency to moral evil is an "immoral tendency" or "moral corruption"* is to indentify cause with effect, and amounts to the proposition that moral evil originates from "*moral corruption*," a sophism which this respectable author must surely recognize. The question, what is the *origin* of moral evil, which has been the perplexity of ages, would, at this rate, be compendiously solved by replying *Moral Evil!* But the same question would return, with the same reply,

* Strictures p. 20.

ad infinitum. Nor does it appear possible, on this principle, to avoid the concession, that moral evil is *without an origin*! Unless, indeed, with an awful consistency, it be referred to the Manichean notion of an *Eternally evil Principle*: an alternative, which I am confident, would not be chosen by the Author of the *Strictures*. But, without multiplying objections, this argument supposes the existence of sin antecedently to the exercise of *liberty*: for the tendency in question attaches to our *nature*, independently of choice, and thus a machine or a statue may be morally impure! The tendency to moral defection, therefore, is not an *immoral tendency*: nothing, according to its definition, can be less “corrupt;” nothing more simple, more innocent.

3. Equally assumed and erroneous is the assertion that if the moral agent “had such a tendency, at the moment of his creation, it must have been *given* him by that being who is the author of his existence.* It is maintained, on the contrary, that this tendency, though essential to creatures, is uncreated: For who would assert that limitation, dependence, and mutability, which constitute the tendency in question, are “*given*” by the author of our existence? If they could be “*given*” they might have been withheld, and then the creature would have been *unlimited, independent, immu-*

* *Strictures*, p. 21.

table ! The tendency to moral defection, therefore, is not *created* but merely *consequential*.

4. Nor does it follow, as Mr. P. maintains, that the tendency to defection, if essential to his perfect creatures, must *belong*, also, to *God himself* ! For what he says of *created perfection*, and being created "*in the image of God*" is totally irrelevant. An identity is supposed by him where Dr. W. has laboured to establish a contrast—between the nature of God and that of his *perfect* creatures. These are his words : " Either, therefore, man had no such tendency as he asserts, or *this* tendency must also be essential to that Being, *in whose image he was created*."* " If such a tendency had existed in him, at the moment he came out of the hands of his Creator, he could not have been said to be created in the *image* of God : for who will say of that great, infinite and ever-adorable Being, that he has, in himself, a tendency to moral defection ! The religious mind shudders at the thought."† Who, it may be rejoined, would say that the perfect creature, even " at the first moment of his existence," *strictly* resembled his creator ? The ever blessed God is *incapable* of sin, " without variableness and shadow of turning"—holy, just, and good. . And does not this arise from his self-sufficiency, immutability, independence ; the *essential indefectibility* which forms the *glorious peculiarity* of

* Strictures, p. 22. † Ibid. p. 21.

his underived nature? Who, on the other hand, would maintain that a *perfect* creature is self-sufficient, immutable, independent, either “naturally or morally considered,” even at the first moment of his creation? There must subsist, of necessity, an *essential difference* between the nature of God and of his creatures: this difference, it is maintained, lies between the absolute *indefectibility* of God, and the *defectibility*, the tendency to defection, which belongs to all his creatures. The objection therefore is invalid.

5. What is here advanced relating to the *Mosaic account of the fall* does not, it is presumed, affect Dr. W’s statement of the tendency of creatures to moral defection. Agreeably to the account of Moses, it is freely admitted that Adam “*retained* the image of God in which he was created, when he was placed under the additional dispensation of divine favour;” yet, “If he had *not* retained the image of God, when he was first placed in the garden of Eden,” the dispensation which placed him under positive obligation, would *not* have been “an insult instead of a blessing.”* That dispensation of divine favour, like the dispensation of the Gospel to *sinner*s, would have been a blessing to Adam, if he had not retained the image of God. His retaining the divine image was not more necessary, with respect to accounta-

* *Strictures*, p. 23.

bility, at that moment, than at any period afterwards : for, merely as a moral agent, he always bore the same relation to his Creator, and always claimed the grounds of his accountability. That the absence of his Creator's image could not render the covenant with our first parent either insulting or unjust is obvious, because God has a right to require perpetual and inflexible obedience to his will, equally from those who possess his image and those who have lost it.

6. The position that, in his original state, the *moral power* of Adam must *coincide with his duty*—on which the preceding argument is founded, and which stands as a new objection to the tendency in question, is inadmissible. It is asserted, "If Adam had not been endued with such purity of nature and moral power, as might have enabled him to repel temptation, he would not have been criminal."* "His moral power in the first constitution of things, must have been *adequate* to his duty or he would have been treated unjustly."† And yet "this statement does not imply, that after accountable agents have voluntarily sinned, the measure of their duty is to be ascertained by the degree of their moral power."‡—Waving any attention to the unphilosophical and improper application of the phrase "*moral power*," § in the present connexion, it cannot, surely, by any one be allowed,

* Strictures, p. 24. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. § See Definition 10.

especially by a consistent Calvinist seriously examining the subject, that Adam had such *power* by natural constitution, and independently of the super-added favour of his Maker, efficaciously “adequate to his duty :” for then he would, by necessity of nature, have fulfilled his duty, and, by the same necessity, would always have been preserved from sin. It is inconsistent to object, that he *would* not employ his power, for the volition itself is the very essence of the power contended for. Such a power the holy angels do not possess nor claim, for they ascribe all power to God : and the *fact* of sin demonstrates, that it does not essentially belong to moral agents.

By what argument it can be established that the creature’s *moral power* should be “the measure of his duty,” while in a state of perfection, rather than after he had “voluntarily sinned,” I am at a loss to conceive. Are not the grounds as well as the rule of moral obligation unchangeable ? Is the creature accountable, at any time, when he does not possess intelligence, will, outward objects presented to his choice, and freedom from constraint in the act of choosing ? And are more than these required, *at any time*, to the fullest accountability ?

7. When it is asserted that Dr. W.’s Hypothesis appears obviously to imply, that God “originally formed and placed a moral and accountable creature under obligations of duty with which it is

utterly impossible for him to comply;”* justice requires it to be stated, that the impossibility is not supposed to arise, as the author of the *Strictures* maintains, from any *extraneous cause*, but simply from the defectiveness of his nature, which, in its best estate “is altogether vanity.” It is an impossibility purely hypothetical, and strictly consistent with the greatest freedom; and, therefore, perfectly compatible with accountability. This is the simple proposition: If moral agents, *under certain given circumstances*, perform moral actions, it is impossible that they should be *morally good*.

SECTION II.

THE SECOND GENERAL OBJECTION, That the tendency to defection is of *absolute necessity*, answered—Mr. P.’s concession respecting proportions—Whether a creature *not liable to sin* be an object of divine power—and whether a *denial* of this implies an *antecedent fate*—or indicates any *dishonour* to the *humanity* of CHRIST—or argues that intelligent natures *must have been created in sin*—whether the denial of a *physical* character to the tendency in question identifies it with *nothing*—this objection retorted—and the ground of the fallacy.

WITH what success I have attempted to establish the *existence* of the “tendency to defection” as maintained by Dr. WILLIAMS, in opposition to the

* *Strictures*, p. 25.

principles advanced in the Strictures, must be left to the judgment of the reader. The SECOND GENERAL OBJECTION to the Hypothesis, which applies to the ABSOLUTE NECESSITY by which it supposes the “tendency to defection” belongs to every created nature, is now to be considered.

“*Passive Power*” or the “tendency to defection” is justly stated, in the Strictures, to be “something in direct contrariety to God, which exists by an unavoidable necessity, so that he could not prevent it.”*—The idea of *absolute necessity* in some cases is by Mr. P. admitted: but that it does not apply to the existence of a “tendency to moral defection” in creatures, he argues from the following considerations—That to *create* an accountable being *without* such a tendency is not a *physical contradiction*—nor is it inconsistent with God’s *moral perfections*—That the *necessity* of its existence would imply the existence of an *omnipotent Fate*—the *peccability* of the human nature of Jesus Christ—and that intelligent natures must have been created in sin.—When the different parts of this argument have been duly examined, the *necessity* of the tendency, it is presumed, will appear less objectionable than our author is willing to allow.

1. It is, indeed, conceded by Mr. P. that the *proportions of mathematical numbers and quantities* exist by absolute necessity, and no volition

* Strictures, p. 29.

could reverse them, because that would imply a "metaphysical or physical absurdity. Thus, likewise, the *Divine nature* exists by an absolute or more properly, a metaphysical necessity."* Why then may not *passive power*, which, by the definition, is the *metaphysical* cause of evil, or of those properties which form the contrast between the nature of God and of his creatures—why may not passive power attach, by the same absolute necessity, to all created intelligences? Is it not equally certain and necessary that creatures are dependent and *mutable*, as that God is *independent* and *unchangeable*? Or is mathematical necessity, which relates to the proportion of numbers and quantities, more absolute or unavoidable than the metaphysical necessity which establishes the contrast between God and his creatures? To me it appears quite as absurd to suppose a creature independent, as to suppose that two and two added together produce seven, or that one half of any thing is equal to the whole.—It is argued, however, by Mr. P. that "no such *necessity* can with truth be asserted concerning divine operations, except in those cases which would imply *the existence of something incompatible with the NATURAL or MORAL perfections of God*, and would involve a *physical or moral absurdity*:" and "that it may be clearly proved, that in *neither* of these senses of the term, does a

* Strictures, p. 29.

tendency to moral defection, absolutely and necessarily, belong to all created intelligences." *

2. On the former branch of this position, the author observes that "it involves no *physical* contradiction to suppose that *almighty power* should create an intelligent accountable creature, who should not be liable to sin, but whose nature should be holy, and tend *only* to a continuance in rectitude and purity."—This assertion presents two prominent absurdities, equally repugnant to sound reason and to consistent Calvinism:—that a creature (at least as it regards *holiness*) may be *independent*—and that such independence might have been *created* by infinite power. With respect to the former of these, it is inquired, "must not every impartial mind, capable of reasoning correctly, admit, that there is nothing in such a proposition [of an accountable creature not liable to sin] which *infinite power* was not able to accomplish, unless that power were controlled and limited by antecedent fate, which is absurd?" But if man, in his perfect state, was or might have been independent as to his *holiness*, why might he not have been so with respect to his *being*? And if this position were conceded, a moral system, it is evident, could have had no place, for morality always implies *mutability* in the agent. Flagrantly erroneous is the assertion that "even some of the positions of Dr.

* *Strictures*, p. 30

WILLIAMS imply that it was so, for he allows that sovereign favour can counteract passive power, and might have prevented intelligent creatures from becoming actually sinful." The very supposition implies, that, without such favour, passive power would not be counteracted; and *sovereign favour* is evidently something not essential to a created nature, and which might be withholden without injuring its moral perfection. It is also a contradiction to suppose that infinite power can *produce* independent, or in other words, infinite power; for whatever is independent is infinite. To create a moral agent, therefore, "not liable to sin;" which shall "tend only to a continuance in rectitude and purity," is a *physical impossibility*.

3. The second branch of the argument, which relates to the *moral* perfections of God, derives its force from the admission of the former, and is, therefore, invalid. If the state in question be *physically* impossible, it cannot be *morally* proper or possible. That man was created in the image of God is allowed; but that freedom from peccability was included in that image, as in the original, is a supposition contrary alike to plain fact and to common sense.

4. The *necessity* of this tendency to moral defection is, therefore, so far from implying that almighty power was controlled by ANTECEDENT FATE, that to deny it would involve the impious supposition, that a universe of independent beings

or divinities might have been produced ! Instead of concluding it to be “most evidently absurd to suppose, that an almighty being was *unable*, or an infinitely good being *unwilling*, to create holy creatures free from an internal tendency to moral defection,” the fair deduction, from consistent principles, would have been, it is evidently absurd to suppose even an *almighty being* able to effect what is not *an object of power*, or that a moral governor infinitely good as God is, should be willing to form such creatures for government as are in their own nature incapable of defection ; both of which conclusions are evidently implied in the argument of the Strictures. Whether, therefore, to suppose with Dr. W. that creatures are, of unavoidable necessity, dependent in the holiness of their natures ; or, with the author of the Strictures, that they may be independent, is more friendly to the existence of the only true God, in opposition to “the Manichean doctrine of an evil principle eternally existing,” must be referred to the judgment of the discerning reader.

5. The hackneyed objection, that the *perfect humanity* of Jesus Christ disproves the *absolute necessity* of such a tendency, is here again introduced. From the whole of our Lord’s sufferings, and prayers, it is evident that he was, as to his HUMANITY, equally dependent with all his creatures. This tendency is completely innocent, and compatible with the most perfect state of creation :

and without the supposition, no fair solution can be given to the strong cries, and tears, and prayers which he offered up to his Father. Self-sufficiency and prayer are incompatible. The "Hypothesis," however, does not imply, as the Strictures assert, "the *peccability* of Jesus Christ." His perseverance in holiness was infallibly secured by covenant engagements, and effected by divine communication through the medium of faith and of prayer. Thus Dr. PRIESTLEY and Dr. WILLIAMS, so far from being agreed, are directly opposed.

6. The last objection against the *necessity* of this tendency, "that it implies intelligent natures *must* have been *created in sin*,"* is a mere assumption, the fallacy of which has been already exposed.† The tendency is so far from being sinful that it belongs to the purest state of creatural existence: and therefore the objection is without force.—In support, however, of a conclusion so dreadful, more convincing arguments than the following might have been expected. "The assertion is thus proved. A tendency to moral defection would be itself sinful." "And can such a tendency exist for a moment in intelligent minds, unless they are already *impure* and *depraved*?"—The doctrine of *mechanical necessity*, introduced in support of this objection, which teaches that a tendency in rational minds can only be some disposition or inclination

* Strictures, p. 34.

† Vide p. 28, 29, of these Animadversions.

arising from our own "*views and apprehensions*,"* has likewise been considered;† but because it is introduced, in this connexion, it may be placed, perhaps, with some advantage in a different light. Let it be inquired, then, how could a tendency to sin arise, in rational minds, *simply from their own "views and apprehensions,"* without any antecedent disposition in the mind thus viewing and apprehending? And then might be subjoined a question from the same paragraph of the Strictures:—"Can *such* a tendency exist for a moment in intelligent minds, unless they are already *impure and depraved*?" If this reasoning be correct, Mr. P's. conclusion will be reversed, and the argument will stand thus: It is contended in the Strictures, that the disposition is created by *views and apprehensions*, independently of any prior disposition, and that such a disposition is *impure or depraved*; but views and apprehensions are independent of *will*; therefore, the mind may be impure and depraved *without the exercise of will*. Or, it may be represented in the following manner: *views and apprehensions*, even those connected with the *first* moral action, cannot, without the concurrence of the disposition, determine the choice; but this disposition is *impure and depraved*; therefore, the mind, *before its first sinful act*, was impure

* Strictures, p. 34.

† Vide p. 23, 24, 25, of these Animadversions.

and depraved. And so, "intelligent natures must have been created in sin." This is the conclusion, falsely drawn from the "Hypothesis," but fairly deduced from the opinions of its opponent.

Aware, however, that the strength of his arguments rests on the assumption which has been disproved,* that the tendency to defection is *physical*, the author concludes, "It cannot, in the least, invalidate the force of the above arguments, that in the metaphysics of Dr. WILLIAMS, the tendency to moral defection, is represented as *privative*. Mental tendencies cannot be of *this* description; for resulting, as argued in the beginning of this section, from ideas, perceptions, or views which influence the mind, or apprehensive faculty, they must have a *real* existence, and be directed to some object, or they cannot exist at all."—Whatever be the other properties of Dr. W's metaphysics, the idea of *privative* tendency which, it is contended, is not in the least invalidated by what has been here advanced, is the only one which can free the Creator, who is the author of all *positive* existence, from the charge of being the author of sin. For, if *any* positive or "real existence" can proceed from any cause but God, why may not *all* such existences proceed from the same or similar causes? If God be not the author of all things that are *real*, we have no *certainty* that he cre-

* Vide p. 22, 23, of these Animadversions.

ated any thing. But is not this allied to the doctrine of OMNIPOTENT FATE? Or else, to the notion of an ETERNALLY EXISTING EVIL PRINCIPLE?

In answer to the objection, that "if the tendency to moral defection be not *real*, but a mere privation or negation, then it is *nothing*, and nothing has no properties and can produce no effects," it may be rejoined, are not *darkness* and *weakness* properly *privative*? And yet they are connected with certain *consequences*. It may also be observed that the phrase "producing effects" is not strictly proper, because it conveys the idea of *positive* causation.

But allowing this tendency, for the sake of argument, to be *real* or *positive*; the following objection will not be more against the "Hypothesis," than against the *opinions* maintained in the Structures. "If it be a *real* tendency and have *real* effects, then the Hypothesis which asserts its essential connexion with all created intelligent existence, lies open to all the force of the preceding objections." For the tendency, or disposition, might as well arise from *within* as from *without*: and this advantage attends the former supposition, that the *agent* would be concerned in the act; in the latter case it would be entirely *extra se*.

What has been advanced may shew the annexed conclusion to be unnecessary, if not uncandid. "If this (the reasoning just examined!) will not accord

with recondite metaphysics, it will accord with what is unspeakably more valuable, plain, sound reason and common sense, unbewildered by the inexplicable labyrinth of occult qualities."—In brief, the capital error of this last argument of the objector lies in his not distinguishing between the *action itself* and its *morality*.

SECTION III.

THE THIRD OBJECTION, on the impropriety of language—The phrase "*passive power*"—the generation of moral evil—liberty terminating on, &c.

HAVING considered the arguments urged against the EXISTENCE and the NECESSITY of "the tendency to defection," I proceed to the THIRD OBJECTION, advanced by Mr. PARRY, which relates to IMPROPRIETIES OF LANGUAGE. These supposed improprieties belong to the following phrases, *passive power*—moral evil being the *offspring of liberty in union with* passive power—and liberty *terminating on* the disposition.

What has been advanced, in the *Preliminary Observations*, on the use of terms, is particularly applicable to the present discussion. The necessity of borrowing illustrations from sensible objects has exposed Dr. W.'s argument, more perhaps than any other circumstance, to misapprehension and consequent censure. From the association of physical

ideas, where the subject is purely metaphysical, perpetual confusion has arisen.

1. The phrase *passive power* obtains the first attention. It is not a little singular how the respectable author of the *Strictures* could imagine, that “after the judicious observations of Dr. REID on the impropriety of the phrase, *as used by Mr. LOCKE*, no subsequent writer would have adopted it *in any sense*.” Hard, indeed, is the fate of language, if a term, because it has been unfortunately abused, must for ever afterwards be doomed to silent obscurity. But this the severity of criticism cannot demand; and therefore it may with some degree of confidence be expected, that the phrase in question will not be rejected, merely because it has been misapprehended and misrepresented by the Author of the *Strictures*. After Dr. W. has so fully explained its meaning, and since it is professedly employed in a technical sense, in order to avoid circumlocution, this part of the subject does not require a long investigation: especially as it is allowed, that “every author has an undoubted right to express his thoughts in those terms which he thinks most appropriate and descriptive of the ideas which he intends to convey.” It may not, however, be improper to remark, that Dr. REID was certainly mistaken in supposing Mr. LOCKE to be the first author of reputation who used this *phrase*: for the justly celebrated THEOPHILUS GALE, in

his "Court of the Gentiles," employs it frequently, as a mode of expression well understood.

With deference to the authority of Dr. REID, it is presumed that it need not be conceded, that "the union of the words passive power is the union of terms which destroy each other, or imply a *contradiction*." Nor, indeed, would it be easy to demonstrate that to speak of *passive power* is "to speak of *powerless power* ; and is like speaking of a round square, a cubical sphere, a black white or a white black."* Dr. REID and Mr. LOCKE speak only of the *physical*, not of the *metaphysical* use of the terms. But if, according to the definition, *power* be used for *cause*, and *cause* be either positive or negative, active or passive ; then the phrases active power and passive power are the same as active cause and passive cause, hypothetically but infallibly connected with their appropriate effect. Mr. P. is, therefore, greatly mistaken when he affirms "that the idea attached to it by universal consent, is of an *active* nature."† That the *primary* idea of cause, power, and tendency is of an active nature will be allowed, because they belong to God who is perfect, simple act. But, thence to infer that there is no secondary sense of these terms, in which they may be called negative, deficient or passive, is to assert that there is no *created ex-*

* Strictures, p. 38.

† Ibid. p. 37.

istence, as they cannot be excluded from the idea of a creature.

2. The strictures offered on the "other phraseology used in support of this hypothesis" are entirely founded on the notion that VOLITION IS PRODUCED SIMPLY BY VIEWS AND APPREHENSIONS INDEPENDENTLY OF THE STATE OF THE MIND: and, without the admission of this principle, they have no application. This doctrine and the Strictures stand or fall together. And notwithstanding a discussion of this part of the argument might be waved, till the author has proved his position and invalidated the objections which have here been urged against it, a cursory attention shall be given to his Remarks.

To illustrate the nature of *motives*, and to exhibit *the philosophical process of the origination of moral evil*, Dr. WILLIAMS alludes to the subject of natural generation, than which for clearness and exactness of resemblance, few, perhaps, could have been better chosen: an allusion, too, frequently adopted by the sacred penmen, on the sublime and awful subjects of religion.* It has, however, provoked the following inquiry, "Can the adoption of such allusions assist us in any thing like clear ideas on this solemn subject? Or, is there any more propriety than *delicacy* in such representations?"† The allusion, it may be answered, is sanctioned by

* See John iii. James i. 14, 15. † Strictures, p. 39.

sacred authority, and others must judge whether by any candid, I do not say pure, mind its *delicacy* can be questioned.

Dr. WILLIAMS maintains that *liberty* (or a *free act of the will*) in union with *passive power*, produces *moral evil*: and that neither of these principles partakes a *moral* character; the former being a natural good and the latter a natural* evil. The author of the *Strictures*, on the contrary, affirms, "It does not appear that the consequence deduced, from the supposed union of these principles, is a just and logical inference." "The Hypothesis states the result to be something *specifically different from each of the producing principles, and not partaking of the nature of either*. For it asserts that liberty which is a *natural good* terminating upon passive power, which is a *natural evil*, produces *moral evil*. Who does not see that the consequence does not rationally follow?" After a train of reasoning on the probable results of *chemical* experiments, which are obviously foreign from the subject of *morality*, he concludes, "the Hypothesis has not shewn the *modus* by which moral evil is produced out of things so specifically different from it as natural good and natural evil are, and which are allowed, in themselves, to have no "moral quality."—What has

* The term "natural" is evidently used, as connected with evil: not as synonymous with *physical*, but as contrasted with *moral*; which is a frequent acceptance of it.

been already urged on the subject of morality, will remove, it is hoped, this *appearance* of objection and difficulty. Morality, according to the definition,* springs from the exercise of natural powers: the morality of an action is the *manner* of it: the *defective* manner of an action is moral evil, and passive power is the metaphysical, (not the *mechanical*) cause of defectiveness. The contrary position, so evidently involved in Mr. P.'s argument, supposes morality antecedent to volition, a supposition as appalling to the feelings of piety as it is opposed to the nature of things. His reasoning is, therefore, "neither just nor correct." To admit any force in this objection would be, moreover, to exclude the possibility of all sin; except, indeed, it be maintained that moral evil can proceed from no cause but moral evil!

3. The phrases, "*divine freedom terminating on infinite holiness*," "*liberty terminating on a holy disposition*," "*liberty terminating on passive power*," are strongly marked by Mr. P. as "improprieties of language," calculated to convey "false and inaccurate ideas." The import of these phrases, in their proper connexions, might have been supposed too obvious to be greatly mistaken. The phrase "*divine freedom terminating on infinite holiness*" is designed to shew that the perfect nature of the ever-blessed Jehovah infallibly secures the holiness of his actions. The other phrases are

* Def. 8.

intended to shew that the creature's liberty is determined or *metaphysically influenced* by its own disposition rather than by what is purely "*extraneous*," on the principle of *mechanical necessity* so strongly implied in the argument of the Strictures.—The word "*terminate*" is disapproved as tending to convey an inaccurate or undefined idea: for, "agreeably both to its etymology and general acceptation, to terminate," it is maintained, "is to limit, to set bounds, to finish, to end."*—Liberty, it may be observed, is often used, as in the present case, for the *free act* of the will: and as one right line "terminating on" another right line forms an angle, so liberty terminating on passive power forms a junction. As in the former instance, prior to the union of the two lines there was no *angle*, so in the latter, prior to the union of the two principles there was no *sin*. Yet the *cause* of this union was not, in either case, absolutely but only hypothetically certain: but IF the union takes place the *result* is absolutely certain. As all our terms expressing abstract truth are borrowed from sensible allusion, why may not a term used in mathematical definitions be here employed? Were the phrases *united to*, *connected with*, or the like, adopted, the advantage arising from the exchange is not easily to be conceived. They are, indeed, more common but not more accurate: and if the objec-

* Strictures, p. 44.

tion had proceeded from the illiterate, who could form no idea of mathematical allusion, it might have been more easily forgiven.

SECTION IV.

THE FOURTH OBJECTION—The *equity* of leaving rational and accountable creatures to the influence of liberty and passive power, answered—The *harshness* of the representation, answered—That it would be the *height of injustice*, answered.—Existence a *curse* and not a *blessing*, answered—Affords *no relief*, answered—Virtually makes God the *author of sin*, answered.

WHAT has been already advanced in the course of these Animadversions will be found useful, it is hoped, in examining the FOURTH and LAST OBJECTION, which controverts the “*EQUITY of leaving rational and accountable creatures to the combined influence of liberty and passive power.*”

Mr. P. candidly allows, that “the object Dr. WILLIAMS had in view was to vindicate the divine righteousness by the hypothesis he has adopted; and it is evident he was influenced by the most pure and excellent motives in its formation.” But he maintains that “no hesitation need be felt in asserting, that the above positions in the hypothesis give a harsh and unwarrantable view of the divine character; that to deal with rational creatures in the manner it supposes would be so far from pure *equity*, that it would be the height of

injustice; that it affords no relief in accounting for the origin of moral evil; and that it does in effect make God the author of sin." These are the positions by which the *objection*, on the ground of *equity*, is attempted to be supported: and if indeed they be true, the doctrine is manifestly not only false but highly injurious. These bold assertions, however, ought to be established by *proof*; a task which, it is apprehended, the author of the *Strictures* has not accomplished nor ever will be able to perform.

1. It is maintained, in the first place, that "it gives a harsh and unwarrantable view of the divine character." And in support of this position, it is inquired, "Is it consistent with the representations which the scriptures give us of the blessed God, to suppose him to deal with his creatures in the scanty and parsimonious manner stated—giving them *just so much* as might make them *accountable*?"—"What part of the sacred volume will authorize the supposition that he *might* have made rational creatures *merely such as would render them accountable*, giving them neither '*more nor less*' than would be barely sufficient to this end, and endue them with nothing that would make them *good* and *holy*, and place them in circumstances in which they would '*certainly fall*,' well knowing that this would be the case as soon as they began to act at all? Or, on what principles, if this be supposed, can it be called '*pure equity*?' Can one passage

from the word of truth, or one plea from sound reason be adduced to prove that this would have been *equitable*?*

The very terms of these questions, it might have been supposed, would have forced on the mind of the inquirer an *affirmative* reply: for who can question the equity of the Moral Governor in giving to his moral subject what will render him accountable? And if he gives him "*just so much as might make him accountable*," he gives him just so much as EQUITY demands; and PURE EQUITY requires only *just so much* to be given to him as will make him accountable. It is, therefore, not wonderful if, as is asserted, "no arguments are advanced to establish the position." It is not, however, because "no reasoning or considerations could support it;" but because, to adduce arguments for its support might appear to most men like proving the existence of light to a person possessing his eyesight and exposed to the blaze of noon-day.—The question, Whether God might have made creatures merely such as to render them accountable? is the same in effect as to inquire, Whether he might have withholden the grace which was not their due? An inquiry as destructive of itself as it is repugnant to the doctrines of grace and the genius of evangelical religion. A consistent view of the primary design of the Creator in the formation of the moral

* *Strictures*, p. 51, 52.

system would, perhaps, have softened the keenness of our author's interrogations on the present subject.—By appealing, as he does,* to the “original consitution of human nature,” the question is evidently removed from the point of *right* to the point of *fact*; and it is inferred that the state in which Adam *was* created, was the state in which *equity* required he *should* be created. And then the whole concludes; “Is not the representation, therefore, which states that he might, *in equity*, have been created in far different circumstances, very harsh, mistaken and unjustifiable?” If *this* be an *argument*, and especially what it ought to be, a *conclusive* argument, it might, with confidence, be asserted that, because God graciously gave his Son to be the Saviour of the world, he was obliged to do so *in equity*, and that all the benefits we enjoy as the fruits of sovereign favour were demanded by equity. But such an argument requires no comment.

The second branch of the reasoning designed to exhibit the “harshness and impropriety” of Dr. W.’s position, derived from the consideration of what *must* have been the *consequence* respecting “*the whole intelligent creation*, if God had acted towards them *all* in the way which the Hypothesis asserts to be *pure equity*,”† is equally invalid. For, admitting the worst of consequences; supposing that they all had been treated in what is termed

* Strictures, p. 53.

† Ibid.

pure equity, Where, it may be asked, would have been the harshness and impropriety of the divine conduct? The argument, if at all admissible, lies against acknowledged *fact*, and so becomes a libel on the conduct of the Divine Governor in the permission of sin. For the existence of such wretches as "*devils*" and "*evil beings*" is supposed; and, so far as the divine equity is concerned, of what consequence is the *exact point of time* at which they became such?—Whether in their *first* or in any other of their subsequent actions? Neither will the circumstance of *number* affect the question: for, if the defection of a *part* be not inequitable, neither is that of the *whole*. The attempt to expose that treatment as harsh and improper which is avowedly (at least, not shewn to be otherwise than) *equitable*, is indeed novel; and its tendency, as it relates to the divine conduct, is equally degrading and dangerous. Such glaring representations, therefore, though they may at first excite the passions, do not tend either to convince the judgment or improve the heart.

The sentiment deduced as a conclusion from the Hypothesis, that "on the ground of *equity* alone the great Creator could have produced only an universe of diabolical intelligences, and would have acted in a right, just, and equitable manner if he had so done,"* is not less erroneous than it is awful.

* *Strictures*, p. 56.

For, according to the "Hypothesis," the original state of creatures even under the influence of *mere equity*, so far from being sinful, would, of necessity have been perfectly innocent; and if a creature be required to *keep* himself innocent, it is implied in equity that he be *made* so. The creature must likewise be free, for there can be no sin without volition. Is it not strange that this respectable author should so evidently confound cause with effect, by identifying a *peccable* with a *sinful* state?

2. The second argument against leaving creatures *under the influence of passive power and liberty* is still more bold than the first. It asserts that, on this principle, "So far would the condition of existence which the Hypothesis asserts to be 'pure equity,' be from deserving *that* appellation, that it would be the *height of injustice*."† "Here (our author adds) the argument draws to a point. The accountability of intelligent creatures must, in the first instance, have been attended with sufficient moral power to avoid sin. The Hypothesis denies the existence of this moral power *at that period*, and asserts it to be equity to create and leave them destitute of it; that equity could not assist them, and might leave them in circumstances under which sin would be inevitable."*

The position that moral power must "at their first creation" have been commensurate with the

* Strictures, p. 57. † Ibid. p. 61.

obligation of the subjects has been already considered.* It is, in truth, merely a repetition of the *Arminian* doctrine. If, on the principle of equity, moral ability is necessarily *commensurate* with the creature's obligation, it may be further enquired, How could this ability become inadequate? I indeed anticipate the answer: he "might have been gradually led into some improper and false reasonings concerning the authority and commandments of his Creator, until, at length, he was seduced from his fidelity and obedience to God, and fell by voluntary transgression."† But this is to abandon the notion of *adequate power*: for surely that power was not adequate which was overcome by another power. Thus one part of the *Strictures* is destroyed by another, and both, I may add, are subverted by the "*Hypothesis*" which they oppose. A correct view of liberty connected with passive power affords, at once, a certain ground for the existence of moral evil and a complete refutation of the dangerous notion of the mechanical agency of ideas.—It is of importance to observe that the terms *necessary*, *inevitable*, *unavoidable*, and *absolute* are exhibited by Mr. P. in this connexion, as arising from physical impulse or energy, a sense which the author of the *Hypothesis* most decidedly disavows. "Absolute and uncontrollable necessity," he observes, "over which the volitions and powers of the

* Vide *Animadversions*, p. 32, 33.

† Ibid. p. 23.

mind could have no influence, would supersede accountability. No just grounds of it would then remain."* The position that free actions are in no sense *necessary*, no one, it is presumed, will seriously maintain. It opposes the divine foreknowledge as well as the nature of things. But necessity, as connected with moral evil, always implies in the agent an antecedent freedom from external impulse; a necessity which may be counteracted by sovereign influence, and is therefore hypothetical and consequential, not "absolute and uncontrollable." This necessity establishes an assignable ground for the fact of sin, on a principle which, so far from being "absurd and unproved," cannot be denied without admitting the absurdity of an effect without a cause, and which, when once understood, cannot be denied without robbing the Deity of his prerogatives and maintaining the absolute independence of his creatures.

Under another view of this argument against the equity of leaving creatures to "the combined influence of liberty and passive power," Mr. P. inquires, "Might not such unhappy beings consider their creation as an act of injustice, and their existence itself as a curse and not a blessing?" "Who would accept of existence on the condition which the Hypothesis asserts is of "absolute necessity attached it?"† It may boldly be affirmed that *every*

* Strictures, p. 60.

† Ibid. p. 63.

well disposed mind, understanding it, would accept of existence on that condition, and *on that only*; nor, indeed, could it be offered or accepted on any other. Passive power, as already argued, is perfectly innocent; for where is the guilt of their being—or rather, is it not the perfection of creatures humbly to acknowledge that they are—contradistinguished from their Creator in the prerogatives of his infinite nature? To desire any other condition would be the evident expression of unbounded ambition and impiety. Such a desire would be infinitely remote from the mind of Mr. P. but it appears to be the fair inference from his reasoning, however unpleasant the office of deducing it.

3. That Dr. WILLIAMS's scheme of accounting for the origin of moral evil affords "*no relief*" to the difficulties attending that subject, is another objection here advanced against it. And in support of the objection it is observed, that if the scheme were adopted, "still the question returns in all its force, Why was not the actual existence of moral evil prevented? The Hypothesis allows that the great Author of natural and moral good could have prevented the entrance of sin.—With reverence then, it may be asked, Why has he not done it?"*

Various reasons might easily be offered to justify the divine conduct in the permission of sin. The full developement of the divine perfections, it

* *Strictures*, p. 64, 65.

is evident, could never have been made, if, by an act of grace, the supreme governor had prevented the derangement of the moral system. But to assign the reasons of the divine conduct, in the *permission* of sin, does not surely belong to the person who professes to explain merely the *origin* of its existence. The objection, therefore, is nugatory and inapplicable. It applies to the *fact* of sin and not to its *origin*.

4. The objections to the branch of the Hypothesis under consideration are closed by the dreadful but unproved inference, that the scheme of Dr. WILLIAMS *virtually makes God the author of sin.*

This objection, which it is the professed design of the Hypothesis to remove, it seems scarcely necessary to consider, because it rests on a principle which has been frequently disproved. It is maintained by Mr. P., that if God did not, by an act of sovereign grace, interpose to prevent the existence, he must be the author, of sin.* By a strange inconsistency, the communication of divine grace is supposed to be necessary on the part of the Governor, though "it is not due in equity" to the subject; to *God* is ascribed the *causation* of sin, because he withholds the grace without which the *creature himself* would *commit* sin; by excluding a liability to sin from the moral subject, the very foundations of the moral

* Strictures, p. 64.

system are subverted, and sin together with its origin are shut out of the universe. But the Hypothesis, on the other hand, assumes the peccability of moral agents, and explains the origin of sin, in a manner which at once reconciles the fact with the acknowledged perfections of the Deity and the infinite rectitude of his government.

It would not be suitable to enter, in this place, on a defence of any other sentiments of Dr. WILLIAMS, which Mr. PARRY is pleased to denominate (with what specific motive is best known to himself) "*peculiarities of opinion.*" If, however, he should think proper candidly to state his objections to the public, it is not improbable that they may, from some quarter, receive attention. On the surprise and regret which he affirms to have been felt by many on Dr. WILLIAMS' making the new edition of the works of an author* of established reputation the vehicle of communicating his opinions, and its being "an unnecessary departure from the line which has the sanction of established custom," it may be observed, that such feelings cannot consistently be entertained by those who are the advocates for free discussion; and that to write notes on authors of the most distinguished reputation has been the approved practice of ages. Nor can the strictures here advanced be considered less than a severe reflection on the conduct of that numerous

* DR. DODDRIDGE.

body of Expositors, Commentators, and Paraphrasts who have, with deserved praise, employed their ingenuity and their learning, not only on works of literature and science, but even on the infallible oracles of God. Dr. DODDRIDGE himself was the author of a Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament, with *Critical Notes*.

PART III.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

Introduction—Differences of opinion stated—Practical tendency of this discussion—Dr. WILLIAMS's argument makes apparent the divine Equity in the permission of sin—establishes the necessity of divine influence—displays the harmony of divine revelation—appears of great practical importance in the ministry of the Gospel—exhibits the rationale of Christian experience—and supplies the most powerful aids to Christian piety and devotion.

THE preceding parts of these Animadversions will tend, it is hoped, as well to explain and establish the fundamental principles and logical connexion of Dr. WILLIAMS's argument, as to invalidate and expose the objections of his opponent. The attentive reader will have observed that Mr. PARRY's principal force has been derived either from misapprehensions of his author's meaning, or from having employed inferences, deduced from the language, the data, or reasonings of his author, which can neither be justified nor allowed: With the texture of his argument have likewise been interwoven various assumed principles which have been shewn to stand opposed equally to reason and revelation, and completely to sap the foundations of the moral system.

On reviewing this controversy, it must be acknowledged, that both the authors equally admit the fact of sin, and appear equally desirous of maintaining, that the glorious Creator and Governor of men was not nor could be its author, nor, in any criminal sense, concerned in its production. In conducting the argument, however, various striking and important differences of opinion have appeared. It will not be improper, in this place, concisely to state the following. Dr. W. supposes that a moral system necessarily implies such a condition in the subject as may and in an hypothetical sense must terminate in sin; Mr. P.'s argument implies the contrary, by maintaining that moral power and moral duty must *coincide*—Dr. W. maintains that the moral subject must be *free* in his choice from external compulsion; Mr. P. maintains that the will is determined by views and apprehensions which are purely "*extraneous*"—Dr. W. asserts that the accountable agent is, of necessity, the subject of "passive power," which is sometimes called "limitation of nature," and also that kind of "tendency" to evil which accounts for the fact of sin, to the exclusion of the causal influence of Deity; this Mr. P. denies, and contends that "almighty power" might have produced creatures free from it—Dr. W. maintains that morality springs from the exercise of natural powers, and that self-sufficiency, with regard both to natural and to moral good, is the prerogative of God; Mr. P. speaks much of

moral power as the property of the creature, and his arguments imply that, with regard to moral goodness, he is independent—Dr. W. holds that it is not the province of divine equity to support the creature's defectiveness, so as to insure an upright choice; Mr. P. maintains the contrary, and contends, that if a creature's defectiveness could not be originally prevented by almighty power, it should have been at least counteracted by sovereign grace—Dr. W. maintains that moral evil springs from the union of liberty with passive power, neither of which principles is or can be sinful; Mr. P. argues, on the contrary, that the origin of sin must be sinful—From these and similar other principles Dr. W. infers that moral evil stands, in its own nature, independent of God; while the arguments of his opponent either, by making moral power and moral duty parallel, exclude sin from the world; or, by ascribing to it a positive nature, refer its causation to God who is the author of all things: results as impious and dangerous in their tendency as their principles are assumed and false.

I cannot close these Animadversions before I have taken a cursory review of the PRACTICAL TENDENCY of this discussion, and particularly of the Argument which Mr. P. opposes under the title of "Hypothesis." This I feel the more important, because the investigation of the origin of moral evil has, of late, been represented as unprofitable and dangerous, or at least as adapted only to engage

the curious speculations of learned ingenuity. Such views Mr. P. has openly declared. For though he has thought proper to bestow considerable attention on the question, he adopts the opinion that a solution of it cannot in this world be given, and owns himself at a loss to ascertain its practical utility. These opinions certainly demand consideration. If the subject had been so regarded by the author whom Mr. P. opposes, it would not, I may confidently assert, have so deeply engaged his attention. Many practical advantages, and those of the highest importance in morals and religion, are supposed to arise from a consistent apprehension of it. The argument of Dr. W. in the opinion of not a few, demonstrates the origin of moral evil; and among other practical advantages is supposed to possess the following.

1. It contains a defence of the divine Equity in the permission of sin, and the moral government of the world.—Nor ought such an advantage to be lightly esteemed; especially when we consider how important a relation it bears to the divine honour, as well as to the morals and happiness of mankind. Is the natural philosopher who, by patient and laborious research, develops the causes of natural things justly esteemed and applauded? And does not he, then, who, by exerting the powers which God has given him, detects those hidden principles which elucidate and harmonize the system of moral government, deserve the gratitude of his fellow

creatures? By those who justly appreciate the merits of the subject, this, it is presumed, cannot be disputed. If, as the Hypothesis states, the origin of that fatal evil which has marred the moral beauty of our nature can be traced into the creature *himself*, while exercising the purest freedom, unconstrained by foreign influence, placed under a perfect and righteous law, invited to obedience by all that is good and amiable, and guarded from sin by all that is awakening and tremendous—if sin originates independently both of the concurrence and approbation of the supreme Governor—the divine equity stands unimpeached. The conclusion does not elude, it invites investigation. If the government of God be holy, why not assert his honour, and justify his conduct? Pure from the daring assertions of ignorance and impiety, the righteous Governor of the universe maintains the glory of his throne and the honours of his kingdom; and all who behold the origin of evil, as here described, will feel and with reverence pronounce him, “HOLY, JUST, AND GOOD.”

Nor will the worth of this advantage be diminished by the consideration that the christian's *faith* recognises the truth of the argument, though his judgment does not perceive it. The value of true faith cannot be too highly exalted; but every subject of faith has an infallible ground, and to know subjects in their causes must be desirable. The christian receives a confirmation of his faith

by understanding the grounds on which it rests. A knowledge of the true cause of moral evil will enable him, with regard to God and his government, at once to exclaim, I both firmly *believe* and assuredly *know*, that the Judge of all the earth does right.

The doubts of the christian on this head, as well as the objections of the infidel will, from a consistent view of the source of evil, receive a satisfactory solution. That such doubts frequently arise, and that they are greatly strengthened by the insinuations of those who "make a mock at sin," is a fact too common and too painful to be disputed. But here the alarms of the one might instantly be silenced, and the audacity of the other confounded. Viewing the present argument, in application to the permission of sin and the moral government of the world, they must both confess that "righteousness and judgment are the habitation of Jehovah's throne,"

But this mode of accounting for the origin of moral evil,

2. Establishes the absolute necessity of divine influence in the recovery and sanctification of our nature.—This leading doctrine of orthodoxy, taught by Revelation and confirmed by universal experience, receives from the argument a complete demonstration. It states the absolute dependence of creatures on their Creator for all good, both natural and moral, and the infallible tendency of their unaided

nature to defection. It asserts and proves the necessity of a continual influence from God, for the support of our nature even in its purest state, and especially for its recovery from sin and establishment in holiness.

Some indeed, by maintaining, as the author of the *Strictures* does, the mechanical agency of ideas, have precluded the necessity of divine influence as well in supporting our perfect nature as in restoring it when depraved. For if the will be determined by what is merely "*extraneous*," there remains no room for the exercise of sovereign grace on the heart. But the fallacy of this principle is exposed by Dr. W.'s argument, and the necessity of a good disposition is, by various proofs, demonstrated. It shews that the tree must be good before the fruit can be so ; and that a new nature must be imparted before there can be "fruits of holiness" to the glory of God. It proves our total inability, and teaches that "all our sufficiency is of God," who worketh in us "both to will and to do of his own good pleasure."

This important truth, which stands so immediately connected with our salvation, is constantly reiterated from the pulpits of the orthodox. It was urged by the apostles with all the holy energy of argument and affection which the eternal interests of mankind could suggest. And the instant we feel the impression of that view of our nature which this argument presents, we shall exclaim

O Lord, work all our works in us, for without thee we can do nothing !

3. The argument here defended appears highly important as it tends to display the harmony and to shed a lustre over the various parts of Divine Revelation.—And, indeed, Revelation itself is simply a developement of important truth, respecting the relations between God and his creatures in his moral government and the dispensations of his grace. A consistent view, therefore, of the origin of sin, so radically connected with both these subjects, must be expected to contribute much towards comprehending them.

In the Holy Scriptures there are many obscurities which may be easily explained, and many important truths which may be established on the principles of this “Hypothesis.” It would not be difficult to shew its connexion, in an immediate or more remote sense, with the whole body of revealed truth. By tracing the cause of sin into the defectiveness of creatures, it furnishes a ground for the foreknowledge of God without his concurrence ; by explaining the *mode* of the ruin of our nature, it proves the necessity of the gospel plan of its recovery ; by shewing the real character of our guilt, it vindicates the divine justice in the sufferings of the unrighteous, and the divine sovereignty in the salvation of the church. By exhibiting a correct view of the state of accountable agents, it reconciles their inability and dependence

with their being the subjects of exhortation and command, while it demonstrates, on essential principles, the absolute necessity and the superlative glory of the various parts of the economy of redemption. By leading us, as it were, into the elements of things, it unfolds to our admiration the majesty and mercy of the Deity in the equity of his government and the sovereignty of his grace.

4. An acquaintance with this argument appears, likewise, to be of great practical importance in the ministry of the gospel.

What has been already advanced may serve to illustrate, in some respects, the aids which it contributes towards a clear understanding and a consistent defence of divine truth. And this is, surely, no mean advantage to the minister of Religion, whose province it is, as "a scribe well instructed," to "feed the flock of God," to "give them their portion of meat in due season;" "studying to shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." It gives to the divine, while exercising the functions of his ministry, advantages similar to those which are derived by the architect, the chemist, or the surgeon, from a knowledge of their respective sciences. A practitioner, comparatively ignorant of science, in each of these departments may meet, in common cases, with encouraging acceptance and success. But if a case of perplexing difficulty arise, it must instantly be given in favour of the man

whose science has taught him to penetrate beyond the surface into the hidden nature of the subject.

Nor are mental embarrassments and moral dilemmas of rare occurrence within the sphere of the christian minister's official duty. How frequently do the most harassing questions arise, especially in the minds of young professors, respecting their state and their relation to God, which a knowledge of the present subject, and that only, can fully remove. Such doubts are often strengthened by the sophistry of infidels and the buffetings of Satan, and therefore a possession of the argument becomes an object greatly to be desired, both for the establishment of the christian and the confusion of his adversaries.

This argument may, likewise, be powerfully employed against many, who, from erroneous views of the subject, have backslidden from their christian profession. By correcting their false apprehensions of the character and the government of God, and stating the true cause and nature of sin, their scepticism may be removed and their souls reclaimed. Among reflecting men, improper views of this subject may, perhaps, be fairly reckoned among the most fruitful sources of scepticism, and of backsliding from the institutions and the profession of religion.

With what advantage a correct statement of the origin of moral evil may be urged against gainsayers who "make a mock at sin" is abundantly obvious. It will expose at once their folly and their impiety; and, though it may not remove their op-

position, it will convince their judgments and awaken their remorse.—The practical importance of such advantages cannot but be felt by all who reflect, and especially by those who are called, by their office, to “minister in holy things.”

5. Dr. WILLIAMS’S argument on the origin of moral evil exhibits the rationale of christian experience.

It is often asserted by scoffers, and sometimes even feared by christians, that experimental religion is wild enthusiasm, the offspring of a disordered fancy, or the effect of ignorance and credulity. To defend it, therefore, on the one hand from unfounded apprehensions, and from unjust aspersions on the other, is doubtless an object much to be desired.

The principles of this demonstration and the experience of the devoutest christians invariably coincide. The christian feels and deplores his sin and his misery as arising from himself, and equally acknowledges that all his goodness is the effect of divine operation; that he is, in himself, “poor and blind and naked;” that he is not sufficient of himself to think any good thing, as of himself, but all his sufficiency is of God. He feels the necessity and the importance of a divine nature and divine influences, that he may be enabled to live unto God, and, by a course of holy obedience, be trained up for “glory, honour, and immortality.” The conflicts of the corrupt and renewed natures, the prayers and confessions, the desires and disgusts, the

joys and the griefs, and all the revolutions of experience which they occasion, are recognised and accounted for in the light of these principles.

And such experience, much as it is despised, need not be concealed, either as irrational or indefensible. A clear apprehension of the connexion of this argument will enable the christian to be "always ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and fear." Reasoning from the original constitution and the essential tendencies of his limited nature, he may convince the gainsayer that he is not, as he is falsely reproached, the dupe of his own fancy nor of the wiles of priestcraft; that he does not utter the cant of a sect, or follow "a cunningly devised fable;" that he is "not mad, but speaks forth the words of truth and soberness."—As another important advantage of this argument,

6. It supplies, when properly understood, the most powerful aids to christian piety and devotion.

Here it must be allowed, that whatever tends to promote self-knowledge and the knowledge of God is of the first consideration. Self-knowledge, a science revered even by philosophy, is obviously essential to true devotion; for without it true sentiments and feelings can never be experienced; and, without a knowledge of God, he cannot be approached with the reverence, the awe, and the confidence which he requires and approves. The argument in question is founded on the essential

natures of God and of man and the relations which subsist between them; and he who is best acquainted with God and himself, and the mutual relations and obligations implied in the systems of moral government and sovereign grace, is best prepared and most likely to embrace it.

Our *absolute dependence* and *insufficiency*, so true in our experience, and so invariably and strongly inculcated in the scriptures, are adopted as leading principles, and impressed on every part of the argument. By shewing that all derived natures are essentially dependent, we are led to God as the undervived, self-sufficient, and independent cause of all things. It teaches the strong and emphatic propriety of the declaration, "I am God all-sufficient;" it leads us to feel and to confess that we are "less than nothing and vanity," that in God we "live and move and have our being," and that "without him we can do nothing."

And thus to contemplate the character of God and of human nature will most powerfully recommend and excite *the spirit of prayer*. Those who, from ignorance of these important subjects, are filled with pride and presumption, are utterly unprepared for this solemn duty. Acceptable prayer must flow from a sense of our spiritual wants, and be accompanied by a holy reverence of the Majesty and a firm persuasion of the all-sufficiency of God. In these respects the Pharisees failed, and therefore, after their most splendid performances, "verily

they had their reward." But a knowledge of the origin of evil, by exposing the absolute weakness and essential defectibility of our nature, in connexion with the majesty and fulness of God, produces the most becoming impressions, infuses the spirit and trains us to habits of prayer. It makes our petitions coincide with our wants: it inspires us with humble confidence while imploring all things necessary for "life and godliness," and leads to this last, perfect conclusion, "nevertheless not my will, but thine be done."

Hence arises the most unlimited *resignation* to the divine will.—The heart impressed with the force of these views instantly receives Jehovah's authoritative declaration, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and that maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord." It prompts us cheerfully to surrender all the faculties of our nature unto God, as his own production, to be governed by his will, and rendered subservient to the noblest objects of his kingdom. By constant appeals to experience and the nature of things, it recommends the most uncontrolled, universal, and implicit surrender of soul, body, and spirit; a surrender which Christ exhibited, which christianity inculcates, and which our salvation demands.

Viewed in these connexions, the argument evidently tends to cherish the exercise of *christian humility*. If such views of the character and state of our nature do not make us humble, it is not easy

to comprehend by what means this can be effected. Here we perceive, in all possible relations, our universal dependence, poverty, and ruin : and, from the very nature of things, we are constantly receiving this important christian exhortation, “ Be ye clothed with humility.”

By contemplating this subject, in its various connexions, all the devout feelings of the christian nature are combined and co-operate. Every consideration, derived from the character of God and of man, to deepen the convictions of our depravity and to carry the soul towards heaven, may here be obtained.

But the subject is peculiarly adapted to enkindle the warmest emotions of *gratitude* and *praise*. Standing in this centre, we may look around and gaze with admiration on the whole universe, in its boundless magnificence and glory, variety and excellence, as existing in God : and while we contrast our own emptiness, guilt, and insufficiency, with the all-sufficiency, the mercy and the grace of the Creator and Governor of all things, we must exclaim, from the overwhelming emotion of admiring gratitude, “ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God !” “ Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name give glory.”

Appendix,

CONTAINING

BRIEF STRICTURES

ON

THE REV. WILLIAM BENNET'S

“ REMARKS, &c.”

Fateor hîc cum permissione accessisse negationem gratiæ et
auxilii efficaci, quo actu staret; nam si tale auxilium dedisset,
ADAMUS lapsus non fuisset. TURRETTINUS,



STRICTURES, &c.

PREVIOUSLY to the appearance of Mr. PAR-
RY's "Strictures," the Rev. WILLIAM BENNET,
a gentleman whose talents and respectability give his
thoughts a just claim to public attention, addressed
a series of Letters to Dr. WILLIAMS, containing
"Remarks" on what he is pleased to denominate
"a recent Hypothesis respecting the origin of mo-
ral evil." As Mr. B. has treated the subject in a
manner somewhat different from that adopted by
the author of the Strictures, I shall subjoin a short
examination of some of his "Remarks." A very
extended consideration of them is, indeed, become
unnecessary, as they have already received an able
Reply, the arguments of which Mr. B. has not
yet thought proper to controvert, though he has
noticed the work in an Appendix. Confining my-
self, therefore, principally to such particulars as
may tend to place the subject discussed in the
Animadversions in an additional light, I would
refer the reader, for a more minute but very con-
vincing view of the present debate, to Mr. GIL-
BERT's Reply.

1. In his FIRST LETTER, containing Preliminary Observations, Mr. BENNET states the difficulty of the subject, and offers it as *his opinion* that the Scriptures, "altogether silent, rather discountenance than invite an investigation of it." He considers it a "curious speculation," the most laboured discussions of which are not calculated to "subserve any practical uses," but are "in danger of undermining the authority of revelation and leading men aside from the humble exercise of faith into the airy regions of sceptical philosophy."

Such declarations concerning a discussion which many, both learned and pious men, have thought worthy of the strictest and the most serious attention, must be supported by evidence and not merely by *opinion* before they can be allowed. That a subject misapprehended or misrepresented may prove dangerous in its practical influence, and that in proportion to its importance, is too obvious to be disputed; but this objection, if indeed it deserves the name, may be urged against every Hypothesis and against every TRUTH. And *effects*, without doubt, religious and moral as well as others, are powerfully experienced by some who are ignorant of their *causes*: But must we, then, decry the investigation of causes? An idiot is warmed by the beams of the sun, and feels pleasure in existence while enjoying their genial influence: But has an astronomer who explores causes, who investigates principles, no advantage over an idiot?

Surely Mr. B. is not a little unguarded when he disclaims all practical advantages arising from this interesting subject. For illustration, let the following example be selected from a thousand others which might properly be adduced. A person, accustomed to reflection, is convinced of his guilt and misery, but feels lost in attempting to reconcile the fact with the acknowledged perfections of the Deity; and, to add to his confusion, the poison of Infidelity and Atheism is artfully administered. In this paroxysm of distress he applies to his minister with the hope of relief, but is informed that such inquiries are "dangerous." He is afterwards led, by providence, to express his feelings to one who, by diligent and serious application to the subject, is enabled "to speak a word in season." It requires no uncommon acquaintance with human nature to pronounce who, in this case, would have the advantage in point of practical utility, or be in the greater danger of leading the inquirer's mind into "the airy regions" of scepticism.*

2. The peremptory tone in which Mr. B. asserts that "whatever scheme is proposed for clearing up this profound question is at best but a metaphysical speculation," cannot be approved. The subject is confessedly both profound and awful; yet I cannot ascertain, nor has Mr. B. attempted to *prove*, either from Reason or Revelation, why it may not "be understood by us" even "at present."

* Vide Part III. of the Animadversions.

—The tendency of these Letters to extinguish the principle of inquiry, if recognised in its just consequences with regard to other subjects, would lead us back into the darkness of the middle ages. Past attainments must not certainly be reckoned the standard of future perfection: and why should it be supposed that the darkness which may have hitherto surrounded the present subject will never be dispelled?

3. The “supreme” importance of the “*positive* evidence of the scriptures” is not more firmly believed by Mr. B. than by his opponent. In this connexion, however, I cannot help observing, that the style of the “Remarks” is too derogatory to the uses and the aids of reason. And the observation seems but too correct, that the cause of religion is often seriously injured by the extreme fastidiousness, in this respect, of some of its real friends. Thus, in the present controversy, the phrases, “speculative philosophy,” “sophistical reasonings,” “the clouds of metaphysics,” and various others, are so applied as to check the exercise of one of the noblest faculties of our nature. If Mr. B. had fully understood the reasoning of Dr. WILLIAMS, he would not, it is presumed, have expressed his fear that it “will have an unfavourable influence *on the minds of youth* in their interpretations of the scriptures, so as to produce a dissonance between one part and another, or oblige them to adopt explanations of

particular parts, very novel and unedifying to the generality of christians."

4. "*Undue confidence*," a charge here brought against the author of the "*Hypothesis*," is on any subject highly censurable; yet *undue diffidence* which cannot move one step in argument without interrupting the connexion to express our doubts and display our modesty, has been considered by some, and with apparent propriety, neither necessary nor proper in the man who undertakes, from a conviction of its truth, to defend the cause of God and religion. And Mr. B.'s Strictures on this head with regard to the term *Demonstration* which Dr. W. has applied to his argument, are certainly much stronger than the case will support. He cannot, or at least ought not to be ignorant, that "the language of demonstration" is currently applied to subjects of moral science. If this be not allowed, what apology can be offered for some of the greatest metaphysicians and moral philosophers which the world has ever produced?

The SECOND LETTER exhibits a concise statement of the fundamental principles of Dr. WILLIAMS's argument in reference to the origin of moral evil. The definitions and illustrations of these principles are given at length in the Doctor's own words. I have only here to observe that Mr. B.'s remark on the use of the phrase "passive power," is out of place, because he himself considers "technical language in a great measure of arbitrary ap-

pointment, and therefore no reasonable objection can be urged against its admission." *

Mr. B. proceeds in the THIRD LETTER to examine and controvert Dr. W.'s notion of PASSIVE POWER.

1. He begins by asserting (with how much truth and candour I do not decide) "Your definition of passive power is evidently drawn up with a view to answer the purpose of your *favourite* hypothesis."

To state Dr. W.'s view in forming his definition is not my present object: but how Mr. B. could be led to such a definition of it as that which he has given cannot easily be conceived, without supposing him to be greatly unacquainted with his subject, or chargeable with misrepresentation. Both these conclusions I should, for myself, most willingly abandon, if another could fairly be adopted. But no one who has read the *Sermon* and the *Notes* on which these remarks are founded, which invariably and explicitly renounce the idea of *positive* or *physical* influence as belonging to passive power, can surely refrain from wondering that Mr. B. should ascribe to it a "*physical aptitude and propensity*," "somewhat analogous to the principle of gravitation in matter," or "LUCRETIUS's motion of declination." By omitting the grand and most important distinction between *physical* and *meta-*

* Vide Definition 6. p. 9. and Dr. W.'s note on EDWARDS, Vol. I p. 313-317.

physical, positive and *negative* causation, he has evidently been betrayed into a labyrinth, into which the farther he has proceeded the more he has been confounded. This remark is of essential moment in ascertaining the state of the present controversy; for it will be found that the whole strength of Mr. B.'s argument rests on the gratuitous assumption, that passive power is a *positive* principle. The motion of a ball over "an inclined plane," so far from affording an "accurate illustration" of "freedom terminating on passive power," is exceedingly erroneous and unjust. Mr. B. should have remembered that a ball has no *will*, and therefore is not accountable for its motion; but moral evil implies the *volition* of the moral agent. This Dr. W. always maintains, while he endeavours to shew, what indeed every pious mind must feel, that sin has a *cause* entirely exclusive of the positive efficiency of God.

2. A close investigation of Mr. B.'s attempts, in several places, to shew that Dr. W. and PRESIDENT EDWARDS his author are at variance on the subject of *passive power*, will prove them to have been unsuccessful. The expressions in Mr. B.'s extracts from EDWARDS are left, it must be acknowledged, contrary to the usual manner of that great reasoner and divine, so unguarded that a person, without consulting their connexion and the general argument of the author, might conclude that the tendency in question was by him considered

morally bad or *physically* corrupt. But EDWARDS's design appears to be simply to prove that the state of human nature is such as infallibly and universally to fall into sin and misery, if not supported by sovereign grace. Though in metaphysical disquisitions the application of *positive* terms to *negative* ideas is not strictly proper, yet such a mode of speaking is popular, and common to all languages. That EDWARDS did not, however, hold that notion of tendency to moral evil which is attached to it by Mr. B. in the passages which he has quoted, the reader may be convinced by turning to VOL. II. p. 330. of Dr. W.'s edition of his works, where the very notion is professedly discussed and refuted.

3. Mr. B.'s remarks on "nihilty physically considered" are quite inapplicable to the subject of *moral evil*: and, indeed, all that he has laboured to prove seems to be implied in Dr. W.'s acceptation of that phrase. But in examining the other part of the axiom, which relates to moral evil, he confounds the physical act with its morality, and then advances a position which, if true, would exclude sin from the universe. Of moral agents in their state of mere accountability he observes, "every thing *in* them and every thing *around* them conspired to concentrate all their powers in the contemplation, love, service and enjoyment of God." Whence then, it may be asked, if neither from *within* nor from *without*,

whence could any thing arise so fatally to blast their devotion and their happiness?

4. Mr. B.'s erroneous view of the *Adamic Covenant* seems greatly to have contributed to partial and inadequate, not to say dangerous views of several collateral branches of the controversy, especially the doctrine of original sin. For he argues as if Adam's breach of covenant had not only deprived his posterity of covenanted blessings, but also infused into their nature a *positive taint* or *corruption*. How he was induced to attach the idea of original sin, as consisting in a *privation* of superadded favours, to the PELAGIANS, I have not yet been able to understand. Mr. EDWARDS, it is certain, held this view of the subject, and he wrote professedly against the PELAGIANS, as well as the ARMINIANS. Had Mr. B. possessed clear ideas of the Adamic Covenant, he would not, it is presumed, have exclaimed "strange, indeed, to hear these things affirmed by a divine of Dr. Williams's respectability and high esteem among his brethren!" But he must surely be aware that inquirers into this profound subject are to be convinced by evidence and not by expressions of grief and surprise. For notwithstanding the zeal or even eloquence of an objector, the person who seeks for truth will be satisfied only with arguments.

5. Mr. B.'s principal objection lies against the phrase "tendency to evil morally considered;"

and the apparent force of it arises from erroneously considering it a *physical* tendency, as in the example of the ball and inclined plane alluded to in a former Letter. This confounding of ideas which ought ever to have been preserved perfectly distinct seems to have led him to the conclusion, that the accountable creature was originally "free from *all inherent tendency*, as well as from all *positive impulse* to sin." But here the *fact of sin* must be urged, and let the opponent say if ever there was, or indeed could be, an *effect produced*, without some *tendency* to such effect in the *producer*?

The FOURTH LETTER is confined to the subject of MERE EQUITY, another of the principles comprehended in Dr. WILLIAMS'S demonstration.

1. Concerning equity the Doctor asserts, in an extract made by Mr. B., "Then alone can moral agents fall into sin when dealt with in pure equity." But Mr. B. in this as well as in other parts of the Letters, speaks in a manner which leads to the conclusion that the perfect creature, in order to his accountability, must be endowed with *morally good* powers for the production of moral effects. But how could the creature, as such, be morally good or morally bad, prior to his act of volition? And if equity required that he should in this sense be morally good, *at first*, it certainly demands that he should

be *always* so ; unless, indeed, it be supposed that the circumstance of time can change the nature or the demands of equity.*

2. In the next paragraph Mr. B. infers from the Doctor's reasoning, that "when Adam was placed in a state of moral probation and dealt with in 'mere equity,' under the covenant of works, he suffered a *deterioration* of his mental state or disposition, *prior to any volitions or acts* of his own ; *i. e.* he did not enter upon his covenant relations and probationary condition, in the possession of that positive holiness in which Dr. W. allows he was created." If by deterioration is meant any thing sinful, the conclusion is evidently unjust, for Dr. W. supposes only the suspension of what is *graciously superadded* to his equitable claims : but if merely the withholding of that gracious influence by which he was preserved in holiness be intended, it must be allowed, for otherwise the effect of sin could never have appeared. The latter part of the conclusion is certainly unjust ; for the "Hypothesis" supposes that Adam *did* enter upon his probationary condition in the possession of the positive holiness with which he was created, And yet, notwithstanding this suspension, the creature, while in purity and in innocence, did not undergo any change that could be deemed "a real degradation." There can be no real degradation where

* Vide Def. 1. p. 7. of the Animadversions.

there is no sin, and it is not sinful to be deprived of what was possessed not as a matter of right but merely as an effect of sovereign favour. —The extracts from GURNAL, OWEN, and others, so far from opposing are coincident with the avowed sentiments of Dr. W.: and what is here denominated “a recent” and “*adventurous hypothesis*,” “a *private scheme* for accounting for the introduction of moral evil,” a “curious theory,” or an “abstract speculation,” is a professed, and by some is considered a complete DEMONSTRATION, the radical principles of which are derived equally from the nature of the case, the christian’s experience, and the “plain testimony of scripture ; and are recognised in the writings of the most eminent orthodox divines.”

3. “When we contemplate (adds Mr. B.) a moral agent in covenant with his Maker—would it ever have been questioned that such a being when required to act for himself and to be responsible for acting, so highly responsible as to incur eternal guilt, and expose himself to everlasting ruin, for choosing and acting wrong : could it ever have been questioned whether, in these awful circumstances, he possessed a power of acting well? Can it be reconciled with any principle of reason or goodness, that from the first moment of his being placed under such a covenant, he was under an absolute necessity, and that arising from a physical cause, of choosing and

acting wrong? *Credat Judæus Apella?* Every thing here contended for is allowed, and the *imaginary* absurdities here so gravely opposed are equally opposed by Dr. W. and therefore the whole paragraph is a declamation about nothing; controverting what was never maintained, and contending for what was never denied. The Doctor invariably argues that a moral agent has "a *power* (a natural power) of acting well," and denies that he was or could be under "an absolute necessity, arising from a *physical* cause, of choosing and acting wrong." He maintains, however, the infallible connexion between the agent's being left in the state of his mere accountability and his falling into sin: a position which Mr. B. himself, in another place, appears most fully to admit; for he affirms that "it is but mere *weakness* and *folly* for *any* to imagine that they *should* or *could* have preserved their integrity in the same circumstances in which he [Adam] transgressed."

In the FIFTH LETTER, "MAN'S RESPONSIBILITY" is considered; a subject "at once of the greatest moment and greatest difficulty."

1. From Mr. B.'s expressions it would seem that Dr. W. had been exceedingly cautious and "guarded in framing and adjusting his views of it, so as to harmonize with some preconceived "*favourite*" opinions. And yet, after all, what he wishes to establish, on this point, the Dr. most fully admits—"That without a suitableness of

principles to the state in which he was called to act—and in which he was under the necessity of acting—and for acting in which he was so *highly responsible*—there could be neither wisdom nor justice in his introduction into such a state.” And “what God owes to an accountable being, as such,” the Dr. asserts to be “intellect, will, freedom from impulse (or decreative, positive causation) to sin, and objects suitable to his wants exhibited to his choice; in short, capacity for enjoying the chief good, and sufficient moral or *objective* means for that end.” What more is necessary I am not able to comprehend. But to all these it seems that Mr. B. would add an *adequate moral principle*; a principle which, if possessed, would have placed the creature in a state of absolute impeccability.—In this connexion Mr. B. objects to a most important distinction between “the system of providence and the system of moral government.” But, if the distinction be not allowed, how can we conceive of a difference between *physics and morals*? In the system of providence, God acts by his own impulsive energy; in the system of moral government, the moral agent exercises the purest freedom.

2. What Mr. B. advances on the phrase “AN ETERNAL NATURE OF THINGS, *antecedent to all WILL*,” which with Dr. W., he says, is a “favourite” one, and about which he professes to have discovered a “wood of words” calcu-

lated only to darken and confound the subject, leads one to suspect that he himself is lost in a maze of confused ideas. Here it may be inquired, Is the *existence of the divine nature* an EFFECT OF WILL? Are truth and error, good and evil the *effects of will*? Or could any will make that to be *right* which in itself is *wrong*, and the contrary? If these queries be answered in the *affirmative*, it does not appear that we have any evidence of the certainty either of the divine existence or of the distinction between right and wrong; for they might have been otherwise had it been the pleasure of the antecedent will. But "where," it may be retorted, "is the difference between this and the heathen notion of fate?" Not to mention the contradiction implied in the position: for a *will* supposes an *agent*, but the christian's God is the *primary agent*, "the first cause and last end of all things."—It is rather singular that Mr. B. should inquire about the *kind* of necessity which results from the nature of things. He cannot certainly be ignorant of "*connective necessity*;" a necessity which, though not controlled by will, infallibly connects the truth of ideas, as in the proposition—two and two make four. On this subject Dr. W.'s own words are exceedingly applicable; "The nature of things is nothing else, radically, but the nature of God, who is essential *truth* as well as essential *goodness*."

3. Disregarding the idea of the will's being determined by motives, Mr. B. seems, on the contrary, to suppose that the will itself is concerned in *governing* the motive. For he observes, in a disapproving inference, "Hence nothing can be more evident than that the will in its first act of wrong choice is influenced and determined by passive power, *not passive power by the will*. And that "*no act of the will is concerned in this*." But what act of choice could be concerned before the operation of the motive, which, as President Edwards has demonstrated, is "that which determines the will?"

4. From Mr. B.'s manner of reasoning, in this Letter, in reference to the relation between Adam and his posterity, it would seem that the "grounds of moral obligation" do not alike belong to all moral agents—to Adam and to his posterity. But, if this be granted, actual and personal guilt can have no existence; unless, indeed, a moral agent can violate moral obligation without possessing the grounds of moral responsibility! And has not this "the appearance of insulting reason and setting credibility at defiance?"

The FIFTH and LAST of these letters, which treats of the CAUSATION OF SIN, consists principally of a repetition of opinions before expressed.

Here again is introduced, in Mr. B.'s analysis of Dr. W.'s statement of the causation of sin, the stale

objection against Adam's continuance in holiness till the fall, being the effect of sovereign favour, which he apprehends "has been shewn to be grounded in divine WISDOM or EQUITY." That the fact of his continuance in that state was in perfect harmony with these perfections cannot be disputed: but whatever he may be allowed to have possessed as *a creation due*, "founded in a becomingness and moral meetness in the conduct of God" towards him, Mr. B.'s argument will not be in the least strengthened by the concession. If we suppose him to have possessed *ten* degrees of power, and the temptation by which he was assailed to have contained *twelve* degrees, the certainty and the supposed iniquity of the event of failure would have been as great as if he had had no support, and had been assaulted by a temptation containing only *two* degrees of force. The event proves that the power which he actually enjoyed, whatever it might be, was inadequate to perpetuate his moral perfection: and Mr. B. himself justly affirms that "it would be but mere weakness and folly for any to suppose that they *should* or COULD have preserved their integrity in the same circumstances in which he transgressed."

These cursory observations exhibit some general views of the points in debate between Dr. WILLIAMS and Mr. BENNET. And if what has been advanced be correct, the argument of Dr. W. so far

from being dangerous or injurious in its tendency, will become, in proportion as it is examined and embraced, of the highest importance to the cause of christian morality, and evangelical religion. It will teach us to feel our absolute nothingness, to rely on the grace and to extol the uncreated and independent glory of the thrice blessed Jehovah, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

THE END.