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There is no more certainty of the soul's immortality than there is of the body's. The one rests on as firm a basis as the other. We may retire, therefore, from the tomb of the dearest earthly friend, if not with joy, yet with chastened sorrow, and with a serene trust, as if an angel present though invisible, hovered as a faithful guardian over the beloved treasure we have left behind.

ARTICLE III.

PRESIDENT EDWARDS'S DISSERTATION ON THE NATURE OF TRUE VIRTUE.¹

It is a remark of Cicero:² "Virtutes ita copulatae connectaeque sunt, ut omnes omnium participes sint, nec alia ab alia possit separari." "Virtus," he says again,³ "eadem in homine ac deo est." It has ever been a tendency of philosophers to simplify the theory of morals, and reduce all the virtues to some one principle. Thus we have been told that all moral good consists in the mean between two extremes; or in acting agreeably to the dictates of reason; or in acting obediently to the conscience; or in gratifying our higher moral sentiments; or in obeying the will of God; or in acting so that all may safely imitate us; or in acting consistently with ourselves; or in living in harmony with ourselves; or in living in harmony with the constitution of nature; or in living in harmony both with ourselves and with all rational beings; or in striving after a likeness to God, or a union with God; or in reverence for the absolute; or in fitness; or in proportion; or in truth; or in justice; or in benevolence. The more common opinion of modern philosophers has been, that virtue may be reduced to benevolence to the universe. "It is," says President Edwards,⁴ "abundantly plain by the Holy Scriptures, and generally allowed, not only by Christian divines but by the more

¹ The present Article, like some which have preceded it, is inserted anonymously, because it cannot with truth be ascribed to any one individual. The italics in the quotations are made by the writers of the Article.

² De Fin. V. 23.

³ De Leg. I. 8.

⁴ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. p. 95. Dwight's Edition.

considerable deists, that virtue most essentially consists in love. And I suppose it is owned by the most considerable writers to consist in general love of benevolence, or kind affection." "Virtue," he says again,¹ "by such of the late philosophers as seem to be in chief repute, is placed in public affection or general benevolence." We have already shown² that President Edwards entertained in early life the same views on this topic which are developed in his Dissertation. They were no sudden, immature developments of his mind. It were easy to prove that he held them in common not only with the most eminent philosophers, but also with the most eminent of our divines. He has been represented as peculiar in his theories of morals; as an innovator who has gained but few disciples. An attempt has been recently made to prove, that on the subject of Virtue Bellamy differed from Edwards. Thus we read that Bellamy "followed Edwards on all the great principles of practical and theoretical divinity; but followed him not in this single exceptional case, wherein he was eccentric to his main orbit. He [Bellamy] contended that 'right and wrong do not result from the mere will and law of God, nor from any tendency of things to promote or hinder the happiness of God's creatures. It remains, therefore, that there is an intrinsic moral fitness and unfitness absolutely in the things themselves.'"³ But is it possible for an author to misunderstand President Edwards, so far as to accuse him of denying that there is "an intrinsic moral fitness and unfitness in things themselves?" The very first sentences in the last chapter of his Dissertation are the following:

"Virtue is a certain kind of beautiful nature, form or quality. That form or quality is called beautiful, which appears in itself agreeable or comely, or the view of which is immediately pleasant to the mind. I say, agreeable *in itself*, and *immediately* pleasant, to distinguish it from things which in *themselves* are not so, but either indifferent or disagreeable, which yet appear eligible and agreeable *indirectly*, for something else with which they are connected. Such indirect agreeableness or eligibleness in things not for themselves, is not beauty."⁴

In like manner Edwards often speaks of justice, "as agreeable to God in itself considered," as "agreeable in itself, and not merely for the sake of some other end." He says: "Faithfulness and truth must be supposed to be what is in itself amiable to God, and what he

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. p. 35. Dwight's Edition.

² Bib. Sac. Vol. X. p. 411 seq. ³ See Biblical Repertory, Vol. XXV. p. 21.

⁴ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. pp. 148—152.

delights in for its own sake."¹ Throughout his Works he abounds in descriptions of that which is "in itself right," "fit in itself," "holy in its own nature," etc. "Benevolent affection," he teaches, "is *due* to God and proper [fit] to be exercised toward him."

Why should the Biblical Repertory affirm that Bellamy dissented from the Edwardean theory, because he believed that right and wrong do not result "from any tendency of things to promote or hinder the happiness of God's *creatures*?" Does not Edwards contend that virtue consists chiefly in supreme love to the *Creator*? Does he not labor to refute that theory which makes the welfare of *creatures* the great object of holy choice? Does he not reiterate the remark that "all other being, even the whole universe, is as nothing in comparison of the Divine Being?"² Does he not censure those philosophers who "do not wholly exclude a regard to the Deity out of their schemes of morality, but yet mention it so slightly that they leave me room and reason to suspect they esteem it a less important and subordinate part of true morality; and insist on benevolence to the *created system* in such a manner as would naturally lead one to suppose, they look upon that as by far the most important and essential thing in their scheme. But why should this be so? If true virtue consists partly in a respect to God, then doubtless it consists *chiefly* in it. If true morality requires that we should have some regard, some benevolent affection to our Creator, as well as to his creatures, then doubtless it requires the first regard to be paid to him; and that he be every way the supreme object of our benevolence." "If the Deity is to be looked upon as within that system of beings which properly terminates our benevolence, or belonging to that whole, certainly he is to be regarded as the *head* of the system, and the *chief* part of it; if it be proper to call him a *part*, who is infinitely more than all the rest, and in comparison of whom, and without whom, all the rest are nothing, either as to beauty or existence. And therefore, certainly, unless we will be Atheists, we must allow that true virtue does primarily and most essentially consist in a supreme love to God; and that where this is wanting there can be no true virtue."³

If, then, Edwards and Bellamy agree in supposing that virtue is a good in itself, apart from its consequences, and especially in supposing that it does not result from its influence on *creatures*, wherein do the two divines differ? Does Edwards affirm, while Bellamy denies, that "right and wrong result from the mere will and love of God?" We presume that this will not be soberly pretended; for it is too

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. pp. 10, 11. ² *Ib.* p. 103. ³ *Ib.* pp. 104, 105.

evident to need proof, that the whole Edwardean theology favors the doctrine, that right and wrong are not dependent on any antecedent enactment; that they are in no sense arbitrary, but are right and wrong in themselves and eternally. Do the two divines differ with regard to the nature of sin? The Biblical Repertory says,¹ that one "fruit of the principle [that all virtue is benevolence] was to resolve all sin into selfishness. But as men are conscious of virtues which do not class under benevolence, so they are conscious of sins which do not class under selfishness." Now we are far from conceding, that if a man believe all virtue to consist in benevolence, he is therefore logically required to believe that all sin consists in selfishness. Still we grant that if a man believe all sin to consist in selfishness, he is logically required to believe that all virtue consists in benevolence. Did then Dr. Bellamy adopt the Edwardean doctrine (be it true or false) that all sin consists in inordinate self-love?

He says: "All rational creatures, acting as such, are always influenced by motives in their whole conduct. The principal motive to an action is always the ultimate end of the action. Hence if God, his honor and interest, appear to us the supreme good, and most worthy of our choice, then God, his honor and interest will be the principal motive, and ultimate end of *all we do*. If we love God supremely, we shall live to him ultimately; if we love him with all the heart, we shall serve him with all our souls; just as, on the other hand, if we love ourselves above all, then self-love will absolutely govern us in *all things*; if self-interest be the principal motive, then self-interest will be the last end in *our whole conduct*." He then proceeds to divide men into two classes on this basis; those in whom "*God's interest* is the principal motive and last end of the whole conduct," and those in whom "*self-interest* is the principal motive and last end;" of these, the first "serve God," the last "serve themselves;" and to sum up all he adds: "to love God so as to serve him, is what the law requires; to love *self* so as to serve *self* is rebellion against the majesty of heaven."²

Agreeably to this division he says: "And at the day of judgment, when a wicked world comes to God's bar, and their past conduct is all brought to light, nothing will be more manifest than that there never was a spark of true love to God or man in their hearts, but that, from first to last, they were actuated and governed either by their animal constitution or else merely by self-love."³ "All kinds

¹ Vol. XXV. p. 23. ² Bellamy's Works, Vol. I. pp. 64, 65. First Edition.

³ Bellamy's Works, First Edition, Vol. I. p. 191.

of false religion, however different in other things, yet all agree in this, to result merely from a principle of self-love, whereby fallen men, being ignorant of God, are inclined to love themselves supremely, and do all things for themselves ultimately."¹ Indeed, the idea pervades the whole of Bellamy's system, that "supreme self-love governs every apostate creature," that "all their (sinners') joy results from self-love merely," their "religion is merely from self-love," all their acts are "for self ends," and, as love to God and love to men are "like the seed that virtually contains the whole plant, or like the root from which the whole tree grows, with all its branches and fruit," so the disposition to seek our own "is the root of all wickedness." Indeed, Edwards himself has not been more explicit in teaching that all sin is selfishness, and all virtue is benevolence, than Bellamy can be proved to have been.

In the attempt of the *Biblical Repertory* to prove that Bellamy, "as he held the true view of the nature of virtue," differed therefore from Edwards, there are two very noticeable facts. The first is, that the argument used to show the diversity between the two divines is founded on a passage of Bellamy, which substantially affirms instead of denying, the theory of Edwards. The passage is the celebrated note on pp. 81—88 of the *True Religion Delineated*, in Bellamy's Works, Vol. I. First Edition. The second fact is, that this very treatise of Bellamy, in which he taught so explicitly that virtue does not result from the Divine enactment, nor from its influence upon the created system, was diligently examined by Edwards in manuscript, and publicly recommended by him to the churches. It was one of President Edwards's favorite volumes. Of this identical treatise, which is now imagined to impugn the fundamental theory of Edwards, the President says in his Preface: "As I verily believe, from my own perusal, it will be found a discourse wherein the proper essence and distinguishing nature of saving religion is deduced from the first principles of the oracles of God in a manner tending to a great increase of light in this infinitely important subject;" "things being reduced to their first principles in such a manner that the connection and reason of things, as well as their agreement with the word of God, may be easily seen," etc. Is it probable, that these two Christian friends and philosophers were at variance with each other on this radical doctrine, and that their mutual opposition should not have been discovered by themselves, and that the detection of it

¹ Bellamy's Works, First Edition, Vol. I. p. 194. See also pp. 190, 192, 193, 206, 206, etc.

should have been reserved for a writer who first proclaimed it in the hundred and third year after Edwards had publicly endorsed the theory of his imagined opponent?

Having now attempted to show that Edwards did not stand on any insulated position with regard to the nature of virtue, let us proceed to notice some of the objections which have been made to his theory.

It has been often opposed on the ground that it is too incomplex, too simple. "The fundamental error of the whole system," says Robert Hall,¹ "arose, as I conceive, from a mistaken pursuit of simplicity; from a wish to construct a moral system, without leaving sufficient scope for the infinite variety of moral phenomena and mental combination, in consequence of which its advocates were induced to place virtue *exclusively* in some *one disposition* of mind." Philosophers are doubtless unduly tempted to reduce all phenomena to a few laws. The simplicity of a theory, however, is no proof that the theory is false. Consciousness and observation may show it to be untrue; but so long as it is not opposed by known facts, it should not be disparaged in our esteem by the mere circumstance of its simplicity. The laws of the universe are simple. The whole progress of science has been to develop the unity of law amid a variety of phenomena; to exhibit the real simplicity amid a seeming complexity. Other things being equal, then, the simplicity of a doctrine is an argument in its favor, as it brings the doctrine into manifest analogy with the general system of science.

It has been again objected to the Edwardean theory that it makes virtue impossible. It reduces all holiness to the one principle of "benevolence to being in general." This "system of being," says Robert Hall,² "comprehending the great Supreme, is *infinite*; and therefore to maintain the proper proportion, the force of particular attachment must be infinitely less than the passion for the general good; but the limits of the human mind are not capable of any emotion so infinitely different *in degree*." But the Edwardean theory does not imply that men must have infinite ideas of the universal system, nor that they must have infinite feelings of attachment to it, nor that their love for the whole must be infinitely greater than their love for an individual part. It recognizes the finiteness of all our conceptions. It only teaches that men should love the universal system so far forth as they comprehend it, and that their preferences

¹ Robert Hall's Works, Am. Ed. Vol. I. p. 44; see also Alexander's Moral Science, pp. 194—198.

² Works, Am. Ed. Vol. I. p. 43.

for different parts of it should correspond with their finite ideas of these different parts and of the whole. Did not Mr. Hall believe that we should love God more than man? Did he believe that there should be an infinite difference between the two affections? — Neither does the Edwardean theory teach, that men should indulge no pathological or natural feelings which are disproportioned “to the magnitude of their objects in the scale of being.” The mother may be allowed to feel an intensity of constitutional grief for the death of her first born, which she does not feel for the greater loss of some distant stranger. God has implanted within us certain ineradicable sensibilities which were made to be affected by their appropriate objects. In deference to the divinely prescribed laws of our nature, we may cherish a more ardent instinctive love for our relatives, friends, country, etc., than we are able to cherish for the antipodes of whom we have but little knowledge. In thus regulating our constitutional sensibilities, we are virtuous, according to Edwards, for we thus consult the welfare of “being in general.” It is therefore true, that our particular involuntary attachments may of right have more “force,” more instinctive energy than belongs to our more general preferences. Yet while the excitement of the pathological affections may be more intense than that of the will, there may be a positive preference of the will for the universal, above the particular, good. The mother may choose to yield up her first born for the interests of the universe, even while her maternal instincts are more excited than is her “passion for the general good.” Says Dr. Williams: “A truly virtuous mother may have a great *force* of affection for her child, or husband, and be more conscious of it than of her love to God; but let her be put to the test of *deliberate* esteem, and she would sooner part with child, husband, or life itself, than renounce her supreme love to God.”¹ A preference for the general welfare may be the strongest of our moral feelings, and may control the pathematic affections; and yet may be less impetuous than some of those affections. The ruling sensibility is not always the most highly excited. There may be a governing power in calmness.

Another objection to the Edwardean theory is thus stated in the felicitous language of Robert Hall:² “Since *our views* of the extent of the universe are capable of perpetual enlargement, admitting the sum of existence is ever the same, we must return back at each step to diminish the strength of particular affections, or they will become disproportionate, and consequently on these principles vicious; so

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. p. 149.

² Works, Am. Ed. p. 43.

that the balance must be continually fluctuating, by the weights being taken out of one scale and put into the other." This objection seems to imply that the Edwardean theory requires an *absolute* decrease of our pathematic affections. But the theory may allow them to increase *absolutely*. It may allow the patriot to cherish and to strengthen his instinctive attachment to his fatherland. It supposes that our affections may be quickened rather than depressed by multiplying their objects; that they may become the more vigorous in proportion to the number of demands made upon them. The theory, however, does require, that there be a greater increase of our love to God than of our love to man; that there be a quicker and a larger growth of our attachment to the universal welfare than of our attachment to a private good. Every Christian theory of virtue demands the same. It does not diminish our interest, absolutely, in our friends, but it does so, *relatively* to God. Our Christian feeling requires us to love our race absolutely more and more, but to love it less and less in comparison with the Creator and Redeemer. Every good man has the conviction, that he should prefer the Creator above creatures, heaven above earth, and that this preference should be daily gaining strength. Thus does the Edwardean theory correspond with Christian consciousness. In demanding a relative change of our voluntary attachments, it simply demands that we "grow in knowledge and in the grace of our Lord and Saviour." Robert Hall's objection to it, as encouraging a mutability of virtue, is equally an objection to his own and to every other ethical scheme which favors our moral progress. Pious men are becoming more and more assimilated to God; therefore they are constantly changing the proportion between their affection for things above and their affection for things below.

It is objected still further to the theory of Edwards, that it unjustifiably depresses the domestic, social and other particular attachments. It calls for the general love to the universe, and this expanded feeling, when represented as the only virtue, lessens our esteem for the private affections. Indeed, if this theory be true, our private affections, it is said, lose their praiseworthy character, and become even obstacles to our moral progress. But in reply to this allegation we may remark, first, that the objects of our private affection are parts of "being in general," and therefore they demand our love. We are as *really* obligated to love our friends, relatives, countrymen, as to love any other object. If we have the right feeling toward the universe, we must have the right feeling toward that part of the universe of which we are more immediately cognisant. Secondly, as

we know more of our relatives, friends, countrymen, than of strangers, we are under obligation to love them more. Virtue must be proportioned to our ideas of sentient being. But, in general, we have clearer ideas of the value belonging to those more intimately connected with us, than we have of the value belonging to those distant from us. We are, then, not only allowed on the Edwardean theory, but are required to exercise a stronger affection for the men whose worth we know, than for the men of whose worth we are ignorant. Thirdly, God in his providence has committed certain individuals to our special care, and we are therefore obligated, "other things being equal," to cherish more affection for them than for individuals who are not thus committed to us. If we should love God and strive to please him, and if he has required us, in the world's economy, to foster a peculiar interest in our own domestic circles, we are as really obligated to foster such an interest, as we are to serve God in any other way. In the very act of cherishing a peculiar regard to our own communities we love "being in general;" we aim supremely to please Him who commands us to love our friends as well as foes. Robert Hall replies, that, on the Edwardean theory, the immediate, nay the necessary tendency of the private attachment is, "to attract to their objects a proportion of attention which far exceeds their comparative value in the general scale."¹ But our private attachments, on the Edwardean theory, direct our attention to the munificent Creator who has given them to us, and who is pleased with our cherishing them in the modes which his economy has designated. Fourthly, the general good demands, that we cherish a peculiar interest in the communities with which we are the more intimately connected. If every parent attended to his neighbor's family and neglected his own; if every monarch intermeddled with the affairs of all other nations and overlooked his own subjects, confusion would take the place of order, and well-meaning men would perpetually mistake, and thus injure, their neighbor's interest. But Robert Hall replies:² "To allege that the *general good* is promoted by them [the private attachments] will be of no advantage to the defence of this [the philosophy of Edwards] but the contrary; by confessing that a greater sum of happiness is attained by a deviation from, than an adherence to its principles." But we do not deviate from the principles of the Edwardean theory, by requiring that men strive, in fostering the private attachments, to please God who is the "chief sum

¹ Hall's Works, Vol. I. p. 44.² *Ib.*

of being;" that they aim to benefit the whole universe in preserving the order of that part which is especially committed to them. The great object which we have in view, when we cherish our love to parents, children, brethren and neighbors, is the glory of God. We nurture the private affections with the chief aim of promoting the general well-being. This is the spirit of the Edwardean theory. The theory stimulates the domestic and social virtues, by developing their relation to the Divine honor, which is the summit of the universal well-being. Those constitutional, pathological affections which are in themselves neither right nor wrong, ought to be regulated according to the will of their great Author and the welfare of the universe. In thus regulating them we direct them, "other things being equal," toward the welfare of our neighbors more than toward the welfare of remote strangers. The choice to control them in this beneficent manner, is an exercise of good will toward all sentient being of which we have an idea. And this, according to Edwards, is the essence of virtue. He says emphatically that, "pure benevolence in its *first* exercise is nothing else but being's uniting consent or propensity to being; and inclining to the general highest good, and to each being, whose welfare is consistent with the highest general good, in proportion to the degree of existence, understand, *other things being equal*."¹

As it is often alleged that the theory which we are now canvassing, is too vast and comprehensive for the popular mind, so it has been alleged that it is narrow and one-sided. The Biblical Repertory says:² "It is artificial, one-sided, inadequate to reduce all sin or all virtue to one category. It fails to find a response in the living consciousness of men, and must weaken the power of that preaching into which it radically enters, over their consciences. It must, therefore, tend towards a one-sided development of moral and religious character. The disposition to reduce all religion to *philanthropy* is a dangerous vice of the times." Is it here implied that the theory now under review, resolves all religion into philanthropy? Is love to "being in general" nothing more than love to the human race? Does not every body know, if he has ever carefully perused the Dissertations of Edwards, that benevolence to universal being includes benevolence even to the sentient creatures who are inferior, as well as to the hosts who are superior to men, and that it includes *chiefly* benevolence to the Supreme Ruler? Dr. Alexander seems to oppose the ethical scheme of Edwards, on the ground that it is "not so com-

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. pp. 97, 98.

² Vol. XXV. p. 22.nd

prehensive as to embrace the whole of moral excellence." He says:¹ "It is not correct to confine all virtuous actions to the exercise of benevolence." "A prudent regard to our own welfare and happiness is undoubtedly a virtue." "As the whole is made up of parts, it is evident that if it is a virtue to promote the well-being of the whole, it must be so of each of the parts." These expressions were made with primary reference to the theory of Bishop Cumberland, which Dr. Alexander strangely considered as identical with the theory of Edwards.² But is not self a part of "being in general?" And if Edwards taught that virtue is benevolence to the whole, did he not also teach that it is benevolence to self, which is a part of the whole? Does he not expressly affirm that "the virtue of the Divine mind must consist primarily in *love to himself*?"³ "There are acts of moral agents," says Dr. Alexander,⁴ "which have nothing of the nature of benevolence, yet which the moral faculty judges to be morally good. For example, if a man, for the sake of moral improvement, denies himself some gratification which would in itself be pleasing to nature, we judge such self-denial to be virtuous." And is it possible that these words can be regarded as hostile to the scheme which represents virtue as consisting in a love for the well-being of all sentient existences, self included? What is it to act for the sake of *moral* improvement? It is to choose our moral improvement; it is to love our own holiness; it is to exercise the love of complacency toward our own love of being in general. The love of complacency is the highest form of virtue, on the theory which Dr. Alexander opposes. To love God so much as to deny our instinctive desires in order to increase our love to him, must be virtue, if the love to sentient being is virtue.

But although Dr. Alexander seems to regard himself as opposing Edwards's theory, when he propounds this objection, he virtually recalls the objection, except so far as the phraseology of the theory is concerned. "It is so evident," he remarks, "that some actions which have our own welfare as their object are virtuous, that rather than give up their theory that all virtue consists in benevolence, they [who?] enlarge the meaning of the word, so as to make it include a due regard to our own welfare. But this is really to acknowl-

¹ Moral Science, pp. 164, 165; see also pp. 168, 169.

² A large part of Dr. Alexander's errors on this theme arises from his misunderstanding the theory of Bishop Cumberland, and then confounding it with the scheme of President Edwards. See Bib. Sac. Vol. X. pp. 403—410.

³ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. p. 108.

⁴ Moral Science, pp. 195, 196.

edge that all virtue does not consist in benevolence, according to the usual meaning of that word. Any term may be made to stand for the whole of virtue, if you choose to impose an arbitrary meaning upon it. Benevolent affections, however, is a phrase which has as fixed and definite a meaning as any in the language, and by all good writers is used for good will to others. Benevolent affections are, therefore, constantly distinguished from such as are selfish. If, however, any one chooses, contrary to universal usage, to employ the words in a sense so comprehensive as to include self-love, be it so. We will not dispute with such a one, about the meaning of the word, provided he agree, that the judicious pursuit of our own improvement and happiness is virtuous." Neither Edwards nor any one of his disciples has expressed a doubt, but that such pursuit is virtuous. The criticism of Dr. Alexander, then, is a criticism on the *style*, rather than on the meaning of the *Edwardeana*. He errs, however, in implying that their definition of the word, benevolence, was an afterthought. It is a fact that they spoke of benevolence to ourselves as well as to God. According to the nomenclature of some of them, all voluntary self-love is sinful; because it is the love of self for partial reasons; it is the love of self *as* self; but the *virtue* with regard to self is *benevolence* to self, a kindly affection toward self as a part of the general being. Their technical nomenclature is, in this regard, contrary to popular usage; and if it had been understood, it would have precluded many very singular complaints against their comprehensive theory. Dr. Alexander's criticism upon it would have been more forcible, if he had extended the criticism to the terms imputation, eternal generation, etc., which are still used by some divines (of whom he has been considered one) with a meaning still more diverse from that ordinarily attached to them.

As the theory of Edwards is repudiated by some because it is too metaphysical, by some because it is too vast, by others because it is too narrow; so it is condemned by a few because it is too indiscriminate. Dr. Alexander says:¹ "While benevolent actions generally meet with the approbation of the moral faculty, we can easily conceive of an exercise of benevolence which, instead of being approved, would be viewed as morally indifferent or merely amiable—as a natural affection, or even as an evil. We never ascribe morality to the kind feeling of brutes to one another. The natural affection of parents, called *στοργή* by the Greeks, is no more of a moral nature, than the same affection to inferior animals. The natural affection of

¹ Moral Science, p. 195; see also p. 164.

our relatives, our neighbors and countrymen, is amiable and useful, but not of a moral character. If a judge should feel a strong benevolence toward all criminals, so as to avoid inflicting on them the penalty of the wholesome laws of the country, we should judge it wicked. It might be said that the benevolence which counteracts a greater good is not virtuous but sinful; yet it is an exercise of benevolence, and serves, on the concession of those who make all virtue to consist in benevolence, to show that all benevolence is not virtue, which is the very thing to be proved." If the Dissertation on the Nature of True Virtue have one characteristic more obvious than another, it is the carefulness with which it guards against the possibility of confounding our natural with our moral feelings. This seems to have been the chief design of its terminology. But all this carefulness seems to be ineffectual in some cases. The theory of Edwards and of his followers is, that holiness consists not in mere benevolence, not in every kind of benevolence, not in animal, or natural, or instinctive, or pathological benevolence, but in that benevolence which is a free choice of the general above the private good. Before this free choice can be exercised there must be an exercise of reason, of comparison. The good to be chosen must be measured with the good to be rejected; then that which is judged to be the greater, is preferred to that which is judged to be the less. To say that being in general should be loved, is to say that every individual should be loved according to his "amount of existence," or according to his relative value in the great scale; and he should be loved on account of, as well as in proportion to, his relative value. God should be loved supremely because he is infinitely the most valuable of all existences. There should be also the beauty of proportion in all our attachment to created intelligences. Does not this graduated love to sentient beings on account of their worth, exclude all merely instinctive love? Is our *natural* affection for our friends elicited by our estimate of their comparative value in the scale? Is it not well known to be elicited by the view of our friends *as* friends, and not as parts of the general good? Do brutes ever exercise *the* benevolence which President Edwards so analytically explains? Is not the love which he exalts into a virtue, the direct antagonist of the partial love which leads a judge to prefer an individual to the general good? These questions answer themselves. We readily concede that the phrase, "love to being in general," is sufficiently cumbrous and awkward. One would have thought, however, that it had this excellence; a clearness in distinguishing the moral benevolence from that which is instinctive; the natural love

from that which is merely animal; the preference following comparison, from the involuntary attachment preceding all examination of relative worth.

There are several other objections to the substance or the style of the ethical theory, that all virtue is reducible to general benevolence; but we will consider only one, and that the most important of these objections. This theory, it is said, favors utilitarianism. The Biblical Repertory goes so far as to assert,¹ that the doctrine of Edwards is one form of the system "which makes happiness the only good. According to this [system] other things, such as virtue and truth, are good *only* relatively, as they are instruments of promoting it. *Nothing* is really good except as, and *because*, it conduces to happiness." "The first and least offensive form of it [this system] is that which makes the *essence* of virtue lie in promoting the highest happiness of the universe. According to this, *nothing* is morally good in itself, but *only* as it is a means of happiness, the *only* ultimate and *real* good." Does President Edwards assert anywhere that virtue is not a *real* good? that it is a good only as a means to happiness? If so, where? If not, why is he accused of teaching it? In the very Dissertation which we are now examining, he declares² that virtue is "some kind of beauty or *excellency*," "true and general beauty;" it "appears *in itself* agreeable or comely;" "agreeable *in itself*; and *immediately* pleasant;" "they who see the beauty of true virtue do not perceive it by argumentation on its *connections* and *consequences*;" virtue consists in love to "particular beings in a proportion compounded of the degree of being, and the degree of virtue, or benevolence to being which they have. And that is to love beings in proportion to their *dignity*." Is not this dignity valuable in itself? The entire Dissertation of Edwards implies, that benevolence is a good, and the chief good. His pupil Hopkins, in defending the substance of the Dissertation, reiterates the remark, that "holiness is the greatest good in the universe."³ In his kindred Dissertation on "the end for which God created the world," Edwards teaches,⁴ that if anything be "*fit* and valuable *in itself*;" "the knowledge of God's glory and the esteem and love of it must be so," and "the most excellent actual knowledge and will that can be in the creature, is the knowledge and love of God." The great aim of that Dissertation is to prove, that God created the universe for his own glory; that his glory is the

¹ Vol. XXV. p. 14.

² Works, III. pp. 93, 94, 116, 148, 149—153; see also pp. 706—7 of this Article.

³ Hopkins's Works, Vol. III. p. 9.

⁴ Works, Vol. III. p. 33.

highest good in the universe; and that it consists in exercising, expressing and communicating his knowledge, holiness and joy. "The whole of God's internal good or glory is in these three things; viz. his infinite knowledge, his infinite virtue or holiness, and his infinite joy and happiness."¹ In his Treatise on the Affections,² Edwards teaches in consistency with himself, that "the holiness of love consists especially in this, that it is the love of that which is holy for its holiness," and that "moral excellency alone" "is in itself and on its own account the excellency" of intelligent beings, etc.

The error of the Princeton Reviewers in accusing Edwards of teaching that "happiness is the only good," arose, perhaps, from their misunderstanding his use of the phrase "ultimate" and "last" good. He does teach that the general happiness is the final object which righteous men aim to secure, that it is their "ultimate end." But he makes the well-known distinction between the last end and the chief end. He calls an end "ultimate," "because it is the last in the chain where a man's aim rests, obtaining in that the thing finally aimed at."³ The very first paragraph in his Dissertation concerning God's Chief End in Creating the World, contains the following emphatic words:⁴ "To avoid all confusion in our enquiries concerning the end for which God created the world, a distinction should be observed between the chief end for which an agent performs any work, and the ultimate end. These two phrases are not always precisely of the same signification; and though the chief end be always an ultimate end, yet every ultimate end is not always a chief end. A chief end is opposite to an inferior end; an ultimate end is opposite to a subordinate end." Now because Edwards believes that the will of good men regards, ultimately in point of time, the general happiness, the Princeton Review accuses him of believing that this general happiness is the only good; just as if, because one good is the last which is sought, it is therefore the greatest, and because it is the final it is therefore the only good! Because there is to be a last day, can we infer that there is to be only one day? In the explanations of the theory under review, the use of the words, "last" and "ultimate good," implies that there is more than one good.

The Edwardsian theory, then, is not that form of utilitarianism which represents happiness as the sole good. Much less is it that form of utilitarianism which represents the happiness of creatures as the great object of pursuit. The system of Edwards has been noted

¹ Works, Vol. III. p. 82.

² Ib. Vol. III. p. 6.

³ Ib. Vol. V. pp. 146, 143.

⁴ Ib. p. 5; see also pp. 6—12.

for its exalting the glory of the Creator to the highest place in our affections; see page 707 above. What then shall we think of the assertion in the Biblical Repertory, that Edwards's ethical system is logically less consistent than "that, which makes the essence of virtuous action to lie in its tendency to promote the highest happiness of the *agent*?" "For," adds the Repertory, "if happiness be the supreme good, is it not incumbent on every man to make it his first object of pursuit?"¹ Edwards does not teach that happiness is the *supreme* good. Besides, if he did teach it, he could not have meant the happiness of a single agent, but of the whole universe. Now the happiness of the universe is *chiefly* that of God himself. If, then, the happiness of an entire and infinite system of sentient beings, be the supreme object of choice, does it logically follow that every man should make his own happiness the supreme object? Edwards would say that this "is not strong arguing." If the early Christians were bound to labor for the common fund of the church, can it be logically inferred that Annanias and Sapphira were bound to make their own emolument their "first object of choice?" If a parent is bound to make it his great aim to provide for the comfort of his entire family, does strict logic oblige us to conclude that it should therefore be his first aim to secure his own comfort? It is the common opinion of men unversed in syllogism, that a command to seek chiefly the glory of God, forbids us to seek chiefly our own glory; and that the command to labor with *supreme* affection for the happiness of an infinite system, forbids us to labor with *supreme* affection for our own happiness.

The Edwardean theory, so far from being logically compatible with the idea that "the essence of virtuous action" lies "in its tendency to promote the highest happiness of the agent," is not even compatible with the idea that the essence of virtue lies in a *tendency* to the general happiness. As it is neither that form of utilitarianism which makes happiness the only good, nor that form which makes the happiness of all *creatures*, still less the happiness of the individual agent, the only or the chief good; neither is it that form which resolves virtue into a mere tendency to the happiness of the Creator and creatures. The love of being in general is a good in its own nature. Edwards distinctly separates the tendencies of holiness from holiness itself. Thus, after specifying the element of virtue which is manifested in just affections, he says: "And *besides* this, there is the agreement of justice to the will and command of God [see page 706 above] and *also* something in the tendencies and consequences of

¹ Bib. Rep. Vol. XXV. p. 14.

justice agreeable to general benevolence, as the glory of God and the general good. Which tendency *also* makes it beautiful to a truly virtuous mind."¹ Another way in which Edwards teaches that the tendency of benevolence is entirely distinct from the virtuousness of it, is in showing that the good tendency of an act is one *sign* of its being virtuous. "Nothing can be plainer," he says, "than that affections which do not arise from a virtuous principle, and have no tendency to true virtue as their effect, cannot be of the nature of true virtue."² This beneficial tendency of acts, however, is no *infallible* sign that they are virtuous; for he teaches that many of our natural principles "tend to the good of mankind, and herein agree with the *tendency* of general benevolence," but do not "have the *nature* of true virtue."³ Edwards does, indeed, in one instance at least, let fall the loose assertion, that "the true goodness of a thing must be its agreeableness to its end, or its fitness to answer the design for which it was made."⁴ But he cannot mean that *all* goodness is the fitness of a thing to its end; for he admits that there is an *ultimate* end, which is good in itself. Neither can he here mean *virtue* merely, by the phrase "true goodness," for he applies it to other than moral objects, and his aim is to prove that the *evidence* of true virtue is its fitness to the end of our creation, and this fitness he defines to be "true goodness." Virtue then, in this connection, does not suggest the same idea with the "true goodness" which is an attribute, and therefore an evidence of the virtue. The meaning of the passage evidently is, that virtue is conducive to the glory of God, and is proved to be virtue by its conduciveness to the end of our being.

But it is said that Edwards does *favor* the utilitarian scheme, by teaching that holiness *becomes* a good on account of its tendency to promote happiness. Does he make this affirmation? If so, it is unnecessary to his theory. The idea that all virtue is benevolence, does not logically imply that benevolence is right merely because it is useful. It may be right, even if it should be hurtful.⁵ But where does Edwards make this affirmation? We are referred to his *Dissertation on the End for which God created the World*, and there he says,⁶ in a style too unqualified: "That the ultimate end of moral goodness or righteousness is answered in God's glory being attained, is *supposed* in the objection which the Apostle makes, or supposes some

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. p. 116.

² *Ib.* p. 146.

³ See the Biblical Repertory's quotations from Emmons, Vol. XXV. p. 18.

⁴ Works, Vol. III. pp. 48, 49.

⁵ *Ib.* pp. 137, 142.

⁶ *Ib.* 109.

one will make, Rom. 8: 7: 'For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why am I judged as a sinner?' i. e. seeing the great end of righteousness is answered by my sin, in *God being glorified*, why is my sin condemned and punished; and why is not my vice equivalent to virtue?' It is said that, in this passage, President Edwards justifies the reasoning which Paul ascribes to the cavilling Jew, and infers that vice would be as good as virtue, if it conduced as much to the glory of Jehovah. But on this passage we may remark, first, that President Edwards supposed virtue to be a good both in itself and also in its results; and vice to be an evil both in itself and also in its results, and therefore if the results of vice should become like those of virtue, then, *so far forth*, vice would be equivalent to virtue. It would be equivalent not in itself, but in its results. Secondly, while Edwards believed that virtue is a good in itself, and vice an evil in itself, he yet believed that the *chief* good of the creature's virtue consists in its being an object of *holy* pleasure to the Creator and a means of manifesting his glory; and that the chief evil of sin consists in its being an object of *holy* displeasure to the Creator and a means of tarnishing his glory. The fact that Jehovah as holy takes delight in our goodness, gives to this goodness its chief, not its only worth. If then the nature of sin should change so that a holy God would be pleased with it, and so that the highest glory of God would be expressed in and by it, then, *so far forth*, it would, according to Edwards, be equivalent to virtue. Holiness having a certain nature is always a good; but if we make the absurd supposition that its nature is so changed as to become pleasing to a holy Judge, then, *so far forth*, it would cease to be a good. Sin having a certain nature is always an evil; but if we make the absurd supposition that its nature is so changed as to become displeasing to a holy Judge, then, *so far forth*, it would cease to be an evil. We may censure President Edwards for making such unguarded suppositions, but we cannot pronounce them *utilitarian*. For, in the third place, he does not teach in this passage that virtue would become vice, if it produced mere misery, nor that vice would become virtue if it produced mere happiness; but he teaches that vice would become equivalent to virtue if it equally glorified God. And how could sin equally with holiness glorify God? Only by expressing, manifesting, imaging forth the holiness of God; by harmonizing with his plan of government and thus gratifying his benevolence; by being, in short, an emanation of his fulness.¹ God might be glorified by sin equally

¹ See Edwards's Works, Vol. III. pp. 25, 71—83.

with holiness, if sin were equally in unison with his essential character; if it not only conduced to the mere happiness of the universe, but if it also agreed with the disposition of Jehovah, and pleased his benevolent heart as well and as much as holiness. This absurd supposition, which the Apostle in Rom. 8: 7, 8 does not condescend favorably to answer, is the only supposition in which Edwards affirms that vice would be equivalent to virtue. The hypothesis that sin produced the *mere* felicity of the universe, is entirely different from the hypothesis that it produced the *purest* and *holiest* felicity of the universe.

In enumerating the objections against the theory of Edwards, we have anticipated the statement of the theory itself. Therefore we only need to define it by saying, that it makes virtue consist in love to sentient beings according to their relative value; in benevolence to them on account of and in proportion to the good which does or may exist in them; in a preference of the higher and greater above the lower and smaller kind and degree of good; in the hatred of all that opposes the well-being of the universe. Accordingly, there are two divisions of virtue; the love of benevolence, or good will toward beings viewed as capable of happiness, or holiness, or both; and the love of complacency, or good will toward beings viewed as holy. The love of benevolence is exercised on account of and in proportion to the susceptibilities or capacities of sentient being; and the love of complacency is exercised on account of and in proportion to the holiness of being. The love of the general happiness is a good in itself, and does not derive its goodness merely from its being a means of the general happiness. The love of the general holiness is also a good in itself, and does not become such by its mere conduciveness to some other end.¹ The greatest good in the universe is holiness, although in point of time the last good aimed at is the general happiness. In kind, the highest of the specific virtues is the love of complacency, although in the order of growth, the root of all other virtues is the love of benevolence. In point of dignity and worth, the chief end, which is a good in itself, is the love of the general holiness; but in the order of development, the final object of pursuit, the last but not best, is the general happiness. In the present Article we have not space to defend all these propositions, and will therefore close with a brief allusion to some of the reasons in favor of the two theories, that all virtue consists in the love to the general good or in hatred to

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. X. pp. 409, 410.

whatever opposes it; and that, in the order of time, the general happiness is the final object to which holiness has regard.

The first reason for the theory that all virtue consists in a love to the general good, or (which is the same thing) hatred to whatever opposes the general good, can be now barely mentioned. It is derived from consciousness. We are convinced in an analysis of our mental operations, that all our holy preferences may be reduced to a love to Jehovah as the chief good, and a love to his friends for their likeness to him, and a love to all sentient beings for their susceptibilities or capacities to be happy, or to delight in pleasing God, or both. Even Dr. Alexander, in the same treatise which impugns so laboriously the ethical system of Edwards, is at last induced to confess, that all our duties toward God, such as adoration, admiration, reverence, thankfulness, submission, trust, prayer, desire of union with him, desire of promoting his glory, "are commonly combined and mingled in the conscious experience of the mind; so that in the same moment various acts and exercises appear to be simultaneous. They may, however, be *all* comprehended under the single term *love*, if we give a genuine meaning to that term."¹ This is Christian consciousness, our opponents themselves being judges. If our duties toward God can be thus reduced, so can be our duties toward man; so all our duties.

The second reason for the Edwardean scheme is derived from the Bible. It is a noticeable fact, that in the attempts of the Princeton Reviewers to invalidate this scheme, they do not resort to the sacred volume. Their own theory of virtue is built not on the Scriptures, but on unaided reason. If they should undertake to refute the Edwardean doctrine fairly, and reply to its Biblical argument, they would feel, as they do not appear to have felt, its meaning and power. By no means do we object to the proper use of reason. We are often called to defend the proper use of it, in opposition to those who decry reason while they pervert it. We are well aware that philosophy, developed aright, will never contravene the Bible. But the Bible will aid us in forming a correct philosophical theory, and a correct philosophical theory will aid us in interpreting any obscure phrases which may be found in the revealed Word. Moreover, no uninspired man can be *sure* that he has made the right use of his reason, and developed a sound philosophy of morals until he has compared his theories with the sacred record. In all cases where the Bible makes plain and authoritative decisions, every man ought

¹ Alexander's *Moral Science*, p. 269.

to abandon his ethical science, if it be at variance with the spirit and intent of these decisions. And if any man will start, as did Edwards and Hopkins, with Biblical results, he will find at once, as they did, that these results are the germs of a true and comprehensive philosophy.

What, then, is the Biblical decision in regard to the nature of virtue? The standard Edwardean reply, one which in former days was often quoted and may fitly be quoted here, is: "Our Divine Teacher has, in his great wisdom and goodness, given us a summary of the Divine law in the following words: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.' Matt. 22: 37—40. Here all obedience to the law of God is reduced to one thing—*love*; love to God and our neighbor, including ourselves. This is the whole that is required; therefore, this is the whole of true holiness; it consists in this love and in nothing [exclusive of this love]. When Christ says: 'On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets,' he must be understood to assert, that the whole of the law and the prophets, *all that is required in them*, is love. All depends upon this; so that, if love is removed, all that is required is removed; the law and the prophets come to nothing, and fall to the ground. Take love away, and there is nothing left that is required in the whole of Divine revelation. If love [were] not the whole that the law requires, [the law] could not be said to be wholly suspended upon this, so as utterly to fall if love is excluded; for the law would still exist, as there would be yet something commanded. But if there could be any doubt about the meaning of these words of our Saviour, St. Paul has explained them when he says: 'All the law is fulfilled in one word; thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' Gal. 5: 14. If all the law is fulfilled in love, then this is all that the law requires; for the law is not fulfilled unless the whole is given which it requires. Therefore love is the whole of that obedience which the law requires—perfect, supreme love to God, and that love to our neighbor which is implied in it, i. e. loving him as ourselves. This love, expressed in all proper ways, which is implied in its being perfect, is the fulfilling of the law; this is true holiness. Therefore the love of God, and the keeping of his commandments, is spoken of as one thing: 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.' 1 John 5: 3. This could not be, if there [were] any obedience or

holiness, which is not love, or if there [were] any command which required anything less or more than love." In Rom. 13: 8—10, the Apostle Paul has given a full exposition of the nature of virtue: "Owe no man anything but to love one another [this is the great duty], for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law [obeyed it in its grand principle]. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet [each is comprehended in the law requiring impartial love to our fellow beings], and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" which respects our fellow-men. And love to our fellow-men is essentially the same principle with love to God. "For if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also." 1 John 4: 20, 21. 8: 17. In 1 Cor. 13: 1—3, the same Apostle declares unequivocally that the gifts of tongues and of prophecy, that all knowledge and all faith, and all outward virtues are nothing and *profit* nothing without love. In 1 Tim. 1: 5, he affirms that "the end [the final purpose or object, that to which all the parts tend and aim] is love, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned."

One chief aim of John's First Epistle is to illustrate the nature of holy love both in God and in man. His great theme is, "God is love," 1 John 4: 8, 16; love is the sum of the Divine character; and "every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God," and "dwelleth in God and God in him." 1 John 4: 7, 16. What, then, is love in God? How has it been manifested? What is love in man? How ought it to be manifested? Now we call attention to the great fact, that in reply to these queries, the Apostle describes love not as a mere complacency in holy intelligences, but as benevolence to all sentient being, the choice of the whole welfare of minds and of existences capable of feeling. The case is too clear to admit a doubt; for in men, originally, there is no holiness in which a virtuous spirit can feel complacency, and yet these men, entirely sinful, are the objects of that love which John describes with great fulness. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us [before he could have any complacency in us] and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." 1 John 4: 10. "In this was manifested

the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world [while we were objects of his displicence], that we might live through him." 1 John 4: 9. This love of God is in its nature the same that we ought to feel. Hence John again says: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John 3: 16. In view of the same example of Divine benevolence, we are called on by our Lord to love our enemies, to bless them who curse us, to do good to those who hate us, and to pray for those who despitefully use us and persecute us; and this is enjoined in order that we may be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect. Matt. 5: 44—48. The Apostle Paul takes the same view of love. "God commendeth his love toward us in that *while we were yet sinners*, [and before we could have been loved with complacency] Christ died for us." Rom. 5: 8. In view of this example, he also exhorts us to "be followers of God as dear children and to walk in love," etc. Eph. 5: 1, 2. This kind of love is the grand characteristic displayed by Christ in his life and death, and also by his apostles; and it is in its essence a pure and disinterested regard to the well being of others. It can be nothing else.

Without multiplying quotations from the Bible, we remark, that a third reason for the theory that all virtue consists in benevolence to universal being, is found in the agreement of the theory with the entire evangelical system. President Edwards was encouraged to publish his Dissertation on Virtue by his hope of making philosophy contribute to the support of a sound theology. The Princeton Review asserts,¹ that he "appears to have been led to propound his fundamental dogma on this subject" "by his repugnance to the sentiment that conscience can be truly said to be no more than a *senti-ment arbitrarily* given by the Creator, without any relation to the nature of things." But on the *very next page*, that Review asserts,² that his object in the Dissertation was "to erect a new adamantine barrier against a selfish scheme of religion." Now the first of these representations is obviously superficial; the second is inadequate. The truth is, that the theory of Edwards, so far forth as it originated in his own mind,³ was the result of those remarkable intuitions of religious truth, with which God so wonderfully favored him, in the

¹ Biblical Repertory, Vol. XXV. p. 19.

² Ib. p. 20.

³ Although his theory had, in its substance, been often defended previously, yet it seems to have occurred to his own mind before he had perused any published treatise on the theme.

early stages of his Christian life, and it was in its mature form given to the world as a bulwark of the great fundamental doctrines of natural and total depravity, regeneration, etc. This he has clearly made known.¹ In order to explain the nature of sin, it was necessary to explain the nature of the law of which sin is the transgression; and as the law is summed up in one word, love, it was necessary to unfold the meaning of this word. When we have ascertained the nature of holiness or obedience, we infer at once the nature of sin or disobedience.² If holiness consist in the impartial love of sentient beings according to their value, then no man is by nature holy, all men are totally depraved; for all men are lovers of pleasure, of honor, of money, or of some inferior good, more than lovers of God; all men seek their own rather than the things of Christ. Unless we admit the Edwardean theory of virtue, it will be very difficult to reconcile the Biblical doctrine of our entire sinfulness and our resulting need of regeneration, with the consciousness of man. Dr. Alexander specifies various virtues other than benevolence.³ And what are they? One is *thankfulness*. But if we separate supreme love to God from thankfulness to him, is the gratitude holy? Do not all men, even when totally depraved, feel occasionally grateful to their Benefactor? Another virtue is *submission*. But do not impenitent men exercise a submission to their irresistible Sovereign? A submission void of love, however, and therefore not holy. Another virtue specified is *trust*. But do not some of the most abandoned men trust their long-suffering Preserver? Why has their confidence no moral worth? Because it is destitute of the principle of love. Another of the duties particularized is *prayer*. But do not entirely sinful men offer prayers to God? Are their prayers truly virtuous? Why not? Because they are offered without supreme affection to the Being who says that all duties, without this affection, are as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." Dr. Alexander quotes Bishop Butler as including *prudence* among the virtues, and he frequently specifies it himself as a virtue.⁴ But can a writer who be-

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. II. p. 581.

² Dr. Alexander says: "Some who maintain that all virtue consists in benevolence, admit that we may seek our own happiness just as we seek that of our neighbor; but the human constitution is not formed to exercise that abstract impartiality." Moral Science, p. 165. But who does not see that precisely the same objection may be made against the law, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

³ Moral Science, pp. 259—272.

⁴ *Ib.* pp. 164—166, 193—197.

believes that unregenerate men are entirely devoid of "true virtue" or holiness, deliberately affirm that prudence, if it *do not* include supreme love to God, is a part of true virtue or holiness? The great argument used against the doctrine of entire depravity by its opponents, is, that all men are veracious, frugal, prudent, grateful, reverent, submissive, etc. at certain times, and therefore are not entirely sinful. But who has ever pretended that all men do, at times, love God according to his relative worth, and love their neighbors according to their value as compared with all other men and with the infinite One? Men have a *natural* benevolence,¹ but this is no virtue, because it is not the good will to universal being, in proportion to and on account of the worth of that being. Here is the dividing line, and elsewhere no dividing line can be safely and accurately drawn, between real holiness and real sin. Here then, and here only, can the evangelical system rest as a philosophical as well as Biblical system. On the theories of the Princeton Review, it is difficult to find any dividing line between the virtue of real Christians, and the false virtue of impenitent men. Dr. Alexander and the Princeton Review appeal with misplaced confidence to Bishop Butler, as an antagonist of the Edwardean theory. But what is Butler's idea of virtue? "On the other hand," he says,² distinguishing the virtues from the vices, "treachery," "meanness," "a little mind," etc., which he had previously enumerated, "what we call *greatness of mind* is the object of another sort of approbation than superior understanding. *Fidelity, honor, strict justice* are themselves approved in the highest degree, abstracted from the consideration of their tendency." Now who does not know that rationalistic authors are perpetually appealing to Aristides, Cato, Brutus, and men of like character, as examples of true virtue, true "honor," "greatness," "fidelity," "justice," "veracity" among men who have never been regenerated, in the Calvinistic sense of that term? Who does not know that Romanists have consigned many of the Pagan "worthies" to purgatory, because those worthies had too much of real virtue for banishment to hell, and were excluded from Paradise through their want of sacramental grace? Who does not know that such expressions as those of Butler are at the basis of the theology which denies the entire sinfulness, the radical moral needs of man. If a theologian of the distinctively New England school should rise up against President Edwards on

¹ Because "all benevolence is not virtue," Dr. Alexander seems to infer (Moral Science, p. 195) that all virtue is not benevolence!

² Butler's Works, Vol. II. p. 179.

the ground of the Princeton divines, and if in self-defence he should, without emphatically expressed reserve and strong disclaimers, appeal to Bishop Butler's authority, and quote his latitudinarian remarks on the nature of virtue, we doubt not that our ears would be saluted with the dulcet song of Pelagianism, Arminianism, Semi-Pelagianism, and even "dangerous tendencies." But where we have *argument* against our opponents, we feel no need of resorting to opprobrious epithets.

A fourth reason in favor of the Edwardean theory, is its substantial accordance with the expressed faith of the mass of Christians. It is a mirror of the consciousness of the church. We do not pretend that good men have generally reduced their inner convictions to a strict metaphysical system. Still they have expressed sentiments which are in beautiful harmony with the doctrine, that the essence of all the virtues is love to sentient beings in proportion to their worth. The phrases, which are repeated too often to be quoted in this brief Article, and repeated with marked emphasis by the Jeromes, Chrysostoms, Augustines, Bernards, Paschals, Fenelons, Anselms, Newtons, Martyns of the church, that the *sum* of religion is to do all things for the glory of God, to strive in all things to please him, to lose ourselves in him, to dedicate our all to him, to find our highest delight in him, to make him our Alpha and Omega, the first and last object of our service, the beginning and end of our desires, are popular, so popular as to become almost monotonous, modes of expressing the truth which Edwards developed more abstractly. His doctrine is the philosophical exponent of the common faith as exhibited in diaries, hymns, tracts. "From what has been said," he remarks,¹ "it is evident that true virtue must chiefly consist in *love to God*; the Being of beings, *infinitely* the greatest and the best. This appears, whether we consider the *primary* or *secondary* ground of virtuous love. It was observed, that the first objective ground of that love whereiu true virtue consists, is being, *simply* considered; and, as a necessary consequence of this, *that* being who has the greatest share of universal existence has *proportionably* the greatest share of virtuous benevolence, so far as such a being is exhibited to the faculties of our minds, other things being equal. But God has infinitely the greatest share of existence. So that all other being, even the whole universe, is *as nothing* in comparison of the Divine Being. And if we consider the *secondary* ground of love, or moral excellency, the same thing will appear. For as God is infinitely the greatest Being, so he is allowed to be infinitely the most beautiful and excellent."

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. pp. 101-3.

“Therefore he that has true virtue, consisting in benevolence to *being* in general, and in benevolence to *virtuous* being, must necessarily have a supreme love to God, both of benevolence and complacence. And all true virtue must *radically* and *essentially* and as it were summarily consist in this,” i. e. supreme love to God as the sum of *being* and of *holy being*. How obvious is the substantial identity of this and the like scientific statements, with the devout breathings of godly men in all ages of the church! Archbishop Leighton is the exponent of the prevailing faith, when he says¹ of love to God and to our neighbor: “Not only because it is love that facilitates all obedience, and is the true *principle* of it, that makes it both easy and acceptable to God, but besides this, that love disposes the soul for all kinds of obedience, this very act of love is in effect *all that is commanded* in the law.” “This is the *sum* of that which God requires in his holy law, the reforming of our *love*, which is the commanding passion of the soul, and wheels all the rest about with it in good or evil.” The true redress for selfishness is, “first, that all our love ascend to God, and then, that what is due to men descend from thence, and so, passing that way, it is purified and refined, and is subordinated and conformed to our love of Him above all, which is the first and great commandment.” This is but slightly discrepant from the language in which Edwards explains his abstract proposition, that virtue is the love of the *sum* of being, of God chiefly, of his creatures as belonging to God.

We might fill a volume with quotations from practical, spiritual divines, who have sanctioned the Edwardean theory. But we must suppress the excerpts which we had gathered. We hasten to assign some of the reasons for the second theory of Edwards, that the general happiness, although not the *chief*, is yet in the order of mental phenomena, the *final* object to which holiness has regard. Virtue, being the love of general existence, is *ultimately* in the order of time, the love of existences viewed as capable of happiness. It is, *comprehensively*, the love of beings viewed as holy, and as capable of holiness, and as capable of happiness. But minds are loved *before* they are holy because they have powers which qualify them to become such. And sentient beings are loved, if they cannot be holy;

¹ Leighton's Works, Vol. II. pp. 259—261. Leighton agrees with Edwards further than he need agree with him, in asserting, that “the great disorder and wickedness of the corrupt heart of man consists in self-love; it is the very root of all sin both against God and man; for no man commits any offence, but it is in some way to profit and please himself,” p. 260; see p. 708 of this Article.

for they may be happy. In the last resort, holiness is such a preference for God as involves a choice to please him, and to gratify those of his creatures whose happiness is pleasing to him; and it is such a preference for creatures as involves a choice for their happiness in the *proportion* in which that happiness is valuable. Robert Hall, in opposing President Edwards, concedes that "the *ultimate* end of virtue — is allowed on both sides [by his own school and the Edwardean] to be the greatest sum of happiness in the universe."¹ Of course, he does not concede that happiness is the chief good in the universe; still less that it is the only good. The distinction is obvious between *ultimate* in respect of time, and *ultimate* in respect of dignity and worth; between the true proposition, that the mind terminates, chronologically, its sequence of choices at the general happiness, and the false proposition that the general happiness is the greatest good, greater than the love of holiness.

It is needless to say, in defence of Edwards's second theory, that it gives to holiness an amiable aspect; divests it of those gloomy, repulsive associations which are apt to surround it when it is misunderstood. That is lovely, which ends its aspirations at the highest bliss of the universe.

It is also unnecessary to say, that so forth as holiness respects the mere animal tribes, their happiness is the only end which the holiness exercised toward them alone, aims to secure.

It is further needless to say, that so far forth as holiness has regard to impenitent minds, it is not a love of their existing moral excellence, for they have none. It is a love of something which they possess, which is not holiness. The Bible gives great prominence to God's love, and to the Christian's love for totally depraved beings. They are to be loved, in part, because they are capable of happiness and misery unending. All will admit that this is one ultimate end to which the holy regard for sinners has reference.

Still further, there is no need of insisting, that happiness is a result of holiness, that the highest happiness is the consequent of holiness only, and therefore must be posterior to it, as an object of the regard of Him who views all causes and all effects precisely as they are.

We shall not dilate on these very obvious truths, nor on the fact that if the general happiness be considered the *final* object of regard, all the demands of our moral nature are met, and all the conditions of a complete theory of virtue are fulfilled. The love of complacency supervenes upon the love of benevolence, and includes all the

¹ Hall's Works, Vol. I. p. 44.

virtues which have respect to a higher good than the mere bliss of the universe.

Nor shall we dilate upon the argument from consciousness in favor of this second Edwardean theory. We love God for his mercy, or disposition to deliver the wretched from their woes; for his grace, or disposition to save the guilty from their merited pains; for his justice, or disposition to check malevolence, and promote benevolence by inflicting misery upon those who prefer a partial to the general good. We esteem gratitude, or a disposition to please those who have been kind to us. We esteem veracity, or a disposition to promote the peace, comfort and security of others by asserting the truth. By such analysis we find that all the virtues, although good in and for themselves, apart from all or any of their consequences, do still terminate in a regard for the general happiness in some of its forms.

Leaving these bare suggestions, however, we need insist on only one argument, and that a very simple one. Unless the general happiness be finally regarded in the holy choice, the definition of holiness will involve us in an infinite series of repetitions. For all those who admit holiness to be love, concede that it is, ultimately, either the love of the general happiness, or else the love of the general holiness, or both; and if it be, ultimately, the love of the general holiness, then we ask what is this general holiness which is loved; and according to the definition, it must be the love of the general holiness, and when we inquire for the definition of this second general holiness we receive the same answer, and so on *in infinitum*. Virtue is represented as the last object of virtuous love, and it is an object ever retreating. *So far forth*, likewise, as holiness is, in the last resort, the love of holiness, *just so far forth* are we involved in the endless circle. For the very holiness which is supposed to be the *last* good, is a love of a general holiness still later. This is the favorite and certainly the characteristic argument of President Edwards. "What is commonly called love of *complacence*," he says,¹ "presupposes beauty. For it is no other than delight in beauty; or complacence in the person or being, beloved for his beauty. If virtue be the beauty of an intelligent being, and virtue consists in love, then it is a plain inconsistency to suppose that virtue primarily consists in any love to its object for its beauty; either in a love of complacence, which is delight in a being for his beauty, or in a love of benevolence that has the beauty of its object for its foundation. For that would be to suppose, that the beauty of intelligent beings

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. III. pp. 96, 97.

primarily consists in love to beauty; or that their virtue first of all consists in their love to virtue. Which is an inconsistency and going in a circle. Because it makes virtue, or beauty of mind the foundation, or first motive of that love wherein virtue originally consists, or wherein the very first virtue consists; or it supposes the first virtue to be the consequence and effect of virtue. Which makes the first virtue both the ground and the consequence, both cause and effect of itself. Doubtless virtue primarily consists in something else besides any effect or consequence of virtue. If virtue consists primarily in love to virtue, then virtue, the thing loved, is the love of virtue; so that virtue must consist in the love of the love of virtue, and so on in infinitum. For there is no end of going back in a circle. We never come to any beginning or foundation; it is without beginning and hangs on nothing. Therefore if the essence of virtue, or beauty of mind, lies in love, or a disposition to love, it must primarily consist in something different both from complacency, which is delight in beauty, and also from any benevolence that has the beauty of its object for its foundation. Because it is absurd to say, that virtue is primarily and first of all the consequence of itself; which makes virtue primarily prior to itself."

The Princeton Review remarks:¹ "When it is pleaded in behalf of the [Edwardean] scheme objected to, that 'God is love,' and that 'love is the fulfilling of the law,' we simply ask, love to what? Is it not primarily love to moral excellence, as it exists in the Most High?" Now we maintain, that God's love to the impenitent is not a mere love of his own moral excellence; for the sinners who are loved, are entirely destitute of spiritual goodness. So the love which fulfils the law, is not merely a love to our holy neighbors, but a love to our neighbors as ourselves, even if they be totally depraved. Can it be defined, then, as a love of moral excellence merely? Besides, if holiness be, in the last resort, the love of God's excellence, what is that excellence? Is it holiness? Then it is the love of God's excellence. And what is this second excellence? We are thus following the successive links of an endless chain of love to the love of excellence perpetually repeated, and ever flying from our grasp. All virtue is complacency in complacency in complacency in an ultimate good which we can never reach, and an idea of which we can never attain, and which in fact is nothing.

But the Review says again:² "Virtue is a good in itself [true]. To love it is therefore good [true]. If it therefore 'hangs on noth-

¹ Vol. XXV. p. 24.

² Ib. p. 19.

ing' [unless it have an ultimate regard to the general happiness] then happiness 'hangs on nothing,' for it surely is no more than good in itself. To inquire why righteousness is good, and why we ought to pursue it, is no more reasonable than it is to inquire why happiness is a good and why we ought to pursue it." But the Princeton Review entirely misapprehends, at least in this instance, the Edwardean scheme. It confounds the question, *Why* is virtue a good? with the question, *What* is virtue? It falsely represents the dispute to be, whether virtue be produced by its tendencies, or whether it exist, as virtue, in the very nature of the virtuous acts. President Edwards will admit, that virtue is a good in itself, but he does not consider this a *definition* of virtue in the concrete. He is inquiring for the *nature* of virtue, not for the *causes* which make it what it is. If the Princeton Review should define happiness to be complacency in happiness; the question would be still unanswered, What is this happiness in which the complacency is felt? If the Review should persevere in reiterating this definition, it would make happiness "hang on nothing." But it defines moral excellence to be the love of moral excellence. We can never explain a thing, by saying that it is the love of the same sort of thing. Now the general happiness is a distinct idea. The love of the general happiness is a distinct idea. It is the primordial element of virtue. The complacent attachment to this love is also a distinct idea. It is the highest kind of virtue. The hatred of all that opposes this love, and of all that opposes the general happiness, is another distinct idea, and is a new form of one and the same comprehensive virtue, the love of being in general.

It is sometimes objected to President Edwards, that he makes happiness now the *primary*, and then the *ultimate* good; occasionally the first, and occasionally the last. But we may speak of the beginning as the end, and of the end as the beginning according to our point of inspection. Edwards believed that the love of the general happiness is the foundation of virtue; and we may, from one point of view, consider the foundation as the first part of the edifice, and from another point of view, as the last part. He supposed that the love of the general happiness is the root of virtue; and, regarding the tree in one way, we may represent the root as the first part of it; and, regarding the tree in another way, we may represent the root as the last part of it. Nothing is more common than to interchange the terms *primary* and *ultimate* in this manner. An object is regarded as having two ends, one of which is designated, for the sake of distinction, by the pleonastic phrase, "*ultimate* end." Besides, if the

primary virtue be the love of the general happiness, and if this be the condition of all the virtues, then, on the Edwardean theory, happiness must be the *ultimate* object in the sequence of virtuous affections. For, reduplicate as we may the virtuous complacencies, they can amount, *in the end*, to nothing more than complacency in the love to beings capable of happiness; and thus happiness will be the last, though not the most exalted, term, in every sentence expressing the full analysis of virtue. The doctrine is not that holiness merely conduces to happiness, but that it *is* a love to beings capable of happiness, and a complacency in some form of love to the general happiness; so that, if we must first love sentient beings as capable of bliss, we must love them as choosing the bliss of the universe. Therefore, although mere bliss is not the highest good, yet it must be the object to which holiness, which *is* the highest good, finally directs itself.

But it is said that President Edwards has contradicted himself in affirming, sometimes, that the general happiness is the primary or ultimate object of virtuous regard, and in affirming at other times, that moral excellence is the primary or ultimate object. We are referred to one class of excellent passages like the following: "I say, that the supremely excellent nature of Divine things is the *first* or *primary and original* objective foundation of the spiritual affections of true saints; for I do not suppose that all relation which Divine things bear to themselves, and their own particular interest, are excluded from all influence in their gracious affections." "It was before observed, that the affection of love is, as it were, the fountain of all affection; and particularly, that Christian love is the fountain of all gracious affections. Now the Divine excellency of God, and of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, his works, ways, etc. is the primary reason why a true saint loves these things; and not any supposed interest that he has in them, or any conceived benefit that he has received, or shall receive from them."¹ Again: "A holy love has a holy object; the holiness of love consists especially in this, that it is the love of that which is *holy*, for its holiness; so that the holiness of the object is the quality wherein it fixes and terminates. A holy nature must needs love that chiefly which is most agreeable to itself; but surely that which above all others is agreeable to a holy nature, is holiness; for nothing can be more agreeable to any nature than itself. And so the holy nature of God and Christ, the Word of God, and other Divine things must be above all agreeable to the holy

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. V. p. 129.

nature of the saints."¹ Now it is said that this first class of expressions is directly antagonistic to a second class like the following: "There is room left for no other conclusion than that the *primary* object of virtuous love is being, simply considered; or that true virtue *primarily* consists, not in love to any particular beings *because of their virtue or beauty*, nor in gratitude because they love us, but in a propensity and union of heart to being, simply considered; exciting *absolute* benevolence, if I may so call it, to being in general. I say, true virtue *primarily* consists in this. For I am far from asserting, that there is no true virtue in any other love than this absolute benevolence." "The *first* object of virtuous benevolence is being, simply considered." "The *second* object of a virtuous propensity of heart, is benevolent being. A *secondary* ground of pure benevolence is virtuous benevolence itself in its object."² Here are specimens of the two classes of passages, in which is a verbal collision.

We think, however, that between these two verbally dissimilar sets of phrases, there is a substantial agreement. The words, *primary* and *secondary*, have a different meaning in the first class of passages from that which they have in the second class. Throughout the first class, President Edwards is wisely endeavoring to show that moral excellence is the *chief* good to be chosen; that God's holiness is to be loved *primarily* in the sense of *supremely*. Our affections are to terminate in his holiness; as the good which is ultimate in respect of *dignity and worth*. Throughout the second class he is endeavoring to show an entirely distinct truth; viz. that the good which is the highest in point of dignity and worth, has in the order of development a *primary* or *ultimate* reference to the general happiness; that unless there be a love for the general happiness there can be no true virtue, no complacency in benevolence, etc.; and therefore that, in the sequence of our acts, a love to the general happiness is *primary* or *ultimate*, in the sense of *antecedent* or *final*. Again, in the first class of these passages, President Edwards is contrasting the holiness of God with his particular regard for us as individuals, and therefore he states, that we are to love him chiefly for his holiness; and are to love him subordinately for his particular regard to ourselves. In the second class of passages, however, Edwards is far from contrasting the claims of the Divine excellence with the claims of our own self-interest, but is simply aiming to establish the fact, that before

¹ Edwards's Works, Vol. V. p. 146.

² *Ib.* Vol. III, pp. 97, 98; see also pp. 96, 103.

we can love the Divine benevolence we must ourselves have benevolence, and that our regard to the happiness of the universe must be involved, finally, in every virtuous affection. When he affirms that a love to God for his holiness must precede a love to him for his bounty to us, he by no means contradicts his affirmation, that we must have the love of benevolence before we can have the love of complacency, and the former must be the ground on which the latter ultimately rests. In making this interpretation, we adopt the common rule of explaining the text of an author by his obvious aim, and by collateral passages, and especially by the context of the disputed passage.

We need offer no apology for the length of our essay on Edwards's theory of virtue. Our remarks are far briefer than the nature of the theme demands. It will receive from us more attention at a future period. For the theme has extensive relations to the whole circle of truth. The Biblical Repertory concedes, that the doctrine of Edwards has come "to impregnate a large part of the writings which have received the distinctive appellation of New England Theology."¹ If it had not been so, the doctrine would claim our serious regard for its intrinsic importance. In sublimity, in subservience to Christian feeling, no subject can be of greater moment than the nature of holiness. For holiness is the joy of heaven. It is the character of the saints. It is the glory of God. "It is the noblest object of thought. Holiness would be the greatest good conceivable, even if it did not tend to secure happiness.

¹ Vol. XXV. pp. 21, 22.