

**THE DOCTRINE OF DIVINE
EFFICIENCY: DEFENDED
AGAINST CERTAIN
MODERN SPECULATIONS**

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The doctrine of Divine efficiency: defended against certain modern speculations by Edward D. Griffin

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EDWARD D. GRIFFIN

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THE
DOCTRINE
OF
DIVINE EFFICIENCY,
DEPENDENT AGAINST CERTAIN
MODERN SPECULATIONS.

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"Love the Truth and Peace."—Zech. 8. 19.

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CONTENTS.

	Page
INTRODUCTION	5
CHAPTER I. <i>Dr Fitch's Theory</i>	13
CHAPTER II. <i>Dr Taylor's Theory</i>	43
CHAPTER III. <i>Notice of Two Other Writers</i>	55
CHAPTER IV. <i>Meaning and Origin of Corrupt Nature</i>	63
CHAPTER V. <i>Divine Efficiency</i>	73
CHAPTER VI. <i>Importance and Instrumentality of Truth</i>	105
CHAPTER VII. <i>Scripture Testimony to Divine Efficiency</i>	117
CHAPTER VIII. <i>Sinless Creatures Dependent for Holiness</i>	165
CHAPTER IX. <i>God's Power to Prevent Sin</i>	179
CHAPTER X. <i>Alleged Dominion of Motives.—A Distinct Theory</i>	203

INTRODUCTION.

THERE is something in controversy which is calculated to awaken unhallowed passions, even when the object is professedly most remote from personal interest. Religious controversy is therefore in itself an evil, though it is often necessary. This discussion I hope to conduct with good will to my brethren, all of whom I respect, and some of whom are my personal friends. I consider it lawful to examine with freedom the soundness and even the fairness of their arguments, but not to extend my censure beyond the reasoning. I regard our dependence on divine efficiency as one of the sweetest doctrines of the Bible, and know it to be most deeply felt under the special effusions of the Spirit. Take from me my dependence on God, and I must despair. I consider too the honour of raising to spiritual life a world dead in trespasses and sins, as one of the brightest glories of the Godhead; and I have been grieved at my very heart to see this honour taken away. This has been the severest cut of all. These reasons for entering into this discussion will, I hope,

plead my cause with those who may think me in error. Not that I am afraid to speak for God; but I know it to be my duty to speak in a way least offensive to my brethren, and least calculated to grieve the Spirit from our churches by party strife. But I may be permitted to call things by their right names, and intend to be so explicit as to make the theories I am opposing clear to ordinary capacities.

By divine efficiency I mean the effectual power of God immediately applied to the heart to make it holy. This is the meaning which the Calvinistic world have always given to the phrase; and no man has a right to use it in another sense, to set off a contrary doctrine or otherwise. Nor may I be accused of wrongfully charging a denial of divine efficiency, because some may choose to wrap up another doctrine under this name.

There are two theories of modern origin abroad in our country which deny this doctrine, and more or less place the cause of holiness in motives clearly presented by the illuminating Spirit. One of these is understood to have proceeded from New-Haven, and to owe its origin to the Rev. Doctors Taylor and Fitch, Professors of Theology in Yale College. This system plainly denies the power of God fully to control the mind by motives. The other, which is adopted by here and there an individual, ascribes to God an absolute dominion by motives. Both disclaim the self-determining power, on account of the influence allowed to motives: but the New-Haven system as plainly involves the self-determining power as did that of Arminius himself. I shall examine both theories.

but shall direct my chief attention to the former, as occupying more of the public attention and involving errors of a larger size.

Dr Taylor, in treating of consideration and the comparison of different objects of choice, says, "We have already had occasion to say, that to deny the tendency of the acts specified to produce a change of heart, is to maintain the doctrine of the self-determining power of the will."^{*} As though this was a pretended power to act without motives. And a writer on the same side, in a late Periodical, rejects the imputation under a notion that the theory of the self-determining power is, that the will determines the will. Now Pres. Edwards did, *by way of inference*, push his antagonists into this inconsistency, that the will is determined by a previous act of the will, and that therefore there is a volition before the first volition; but no Arminian, I believe, was ever willing to admit into his theory this inconsistency. And Pres. Edwards himself, in his book on the Freedom of the Will,[†] says, "I shall suppose that the Arminians, when they speak of the will's determining itself, do, by the will, mean the soul willing. I shall take it for granted that when they speak of the will as the determiner, they mean the soul in the exercise of a power of willing—I shall suppose this to be their meaning because nothing else can be meant without the grossest and plainest absurdity." They meant to say that the man himself chooses, unconstrained by a higher power; but they did not mean to say, (though this was an inference drawn from their arguments,) that he has

^{*} Christian Spectator for 1729; p. 486. † Lon. Ed. 1730; p. 45.