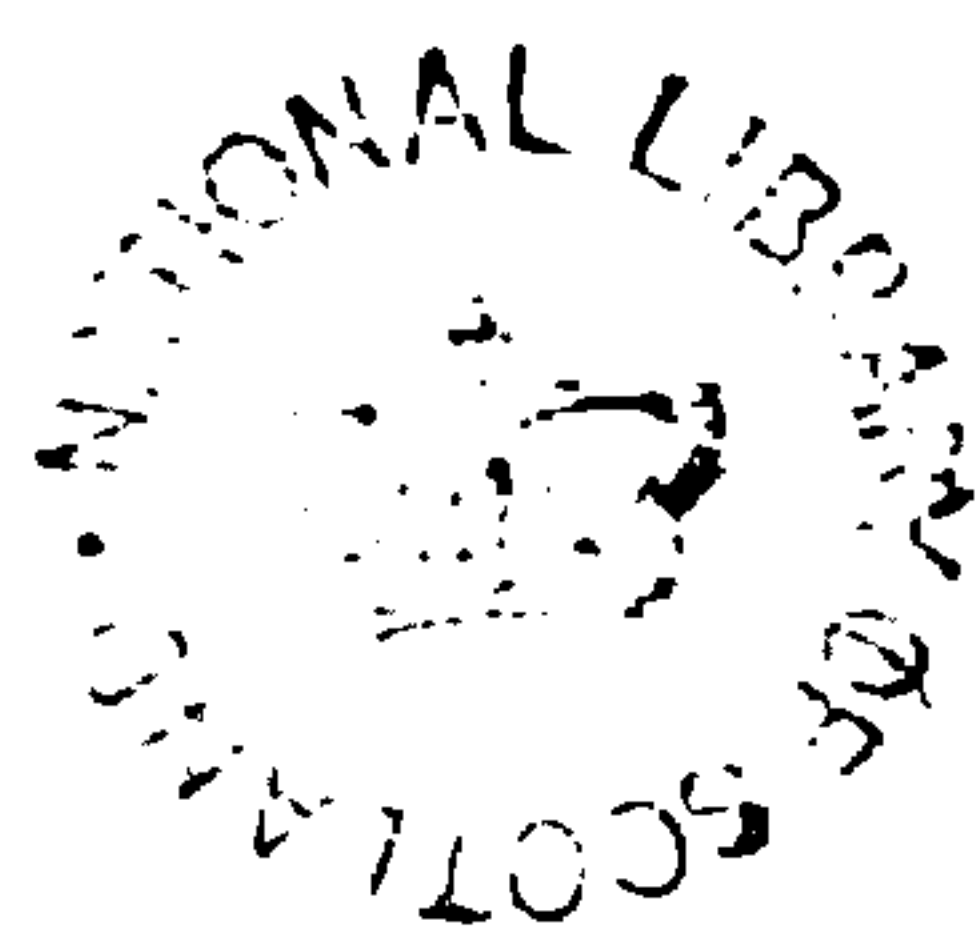


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57/23

L E T T E R S

O N

THERON and ASPASIO.

ADDRESSED TO THE

AUTHOR of that WORK.

With Two PREFACES and Two APPENDIXES.

C O N T A I N I N G

An Account of the Progress of the CONTROVERSY,  
and of the principal P I E C E S that have  
been wrote against these L E T T E R S.

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*One Thing is needful.* LUKE X. 42.

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T H E F O U R T H E D I T I O N .

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I N T W O V O L U M E S .

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V O L U M E I I .

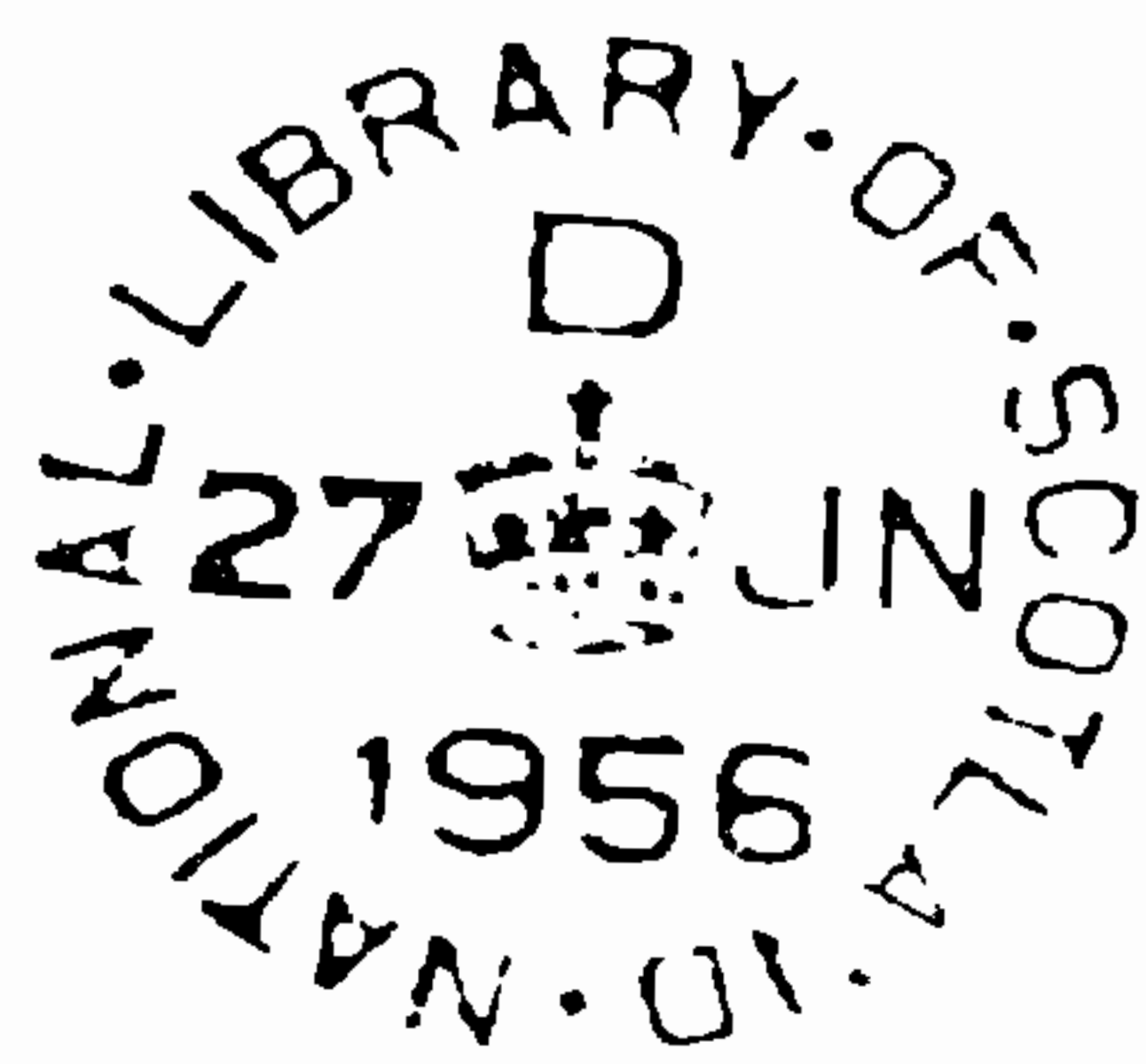
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M D C C L X V I I I .





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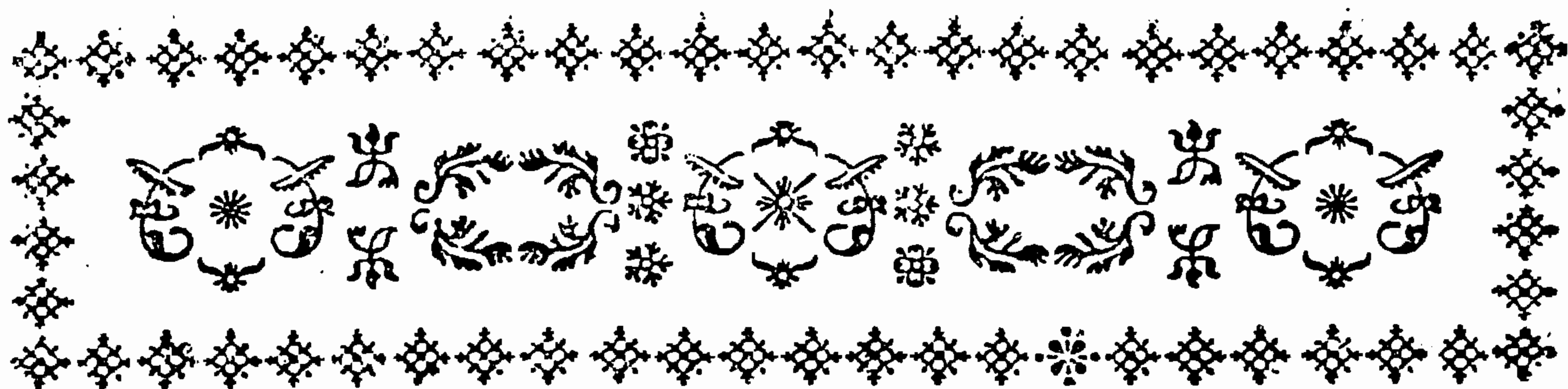
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LETTER






# L E T T E R S

O N

*THERON* and *ASPASIO*.

L E T T E R V.

DEAR SIR,

 Y O U never appear in a more amiable light to me, than when I find you accounted a sick-brained enthusiast, or sometimes in softer terms, a man of a good-enough heart indeed, but a weak judgment, by many who would take it much amiss not to be held for good Christians. These men despise you on the account of the likeness your doctrine bears to that of the apostles, or rather judging yours and theirs to be the same. The very sound of *imputed sin*, or *imputed righteousness*, is disagreeable to their ears; and the subject does not appear to them to be of sufficient importance to draw their serious attention, or to lead

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B

them



them to inquire what the scripture says or means concerning it. Thus you are vile in their eyes ; and it would complete my esteem for you, could I hear you saying, with the man after God's own heart, *And I will be yet more vile than thus.*

For when I would think of you with pleasure, and sympathise with you as an honourable sufferer by the reproach of these men, my satisfaction is abated, by hearing the applause given you by those votaries of a perverted gospel, who prefix to your name the title of **THE INCOMPARABLE.** And what chiefly gives me concern is, to think, that, in your writings, any just occasion should be given to expose you to their commendation. As men of this sort bear the deepest grudge against the ancient gospel preached by the apostles, he who stands high in their esteem, must either be a great deceiver, or greatly deceived himself, or at least much mistaken by them. As I am far from being willing to consider you in the first of these views, I shall make it the business of this Letter to take notice of some of the leading sentiments and ways of speaking, which I apprehend you have adopted from such men without sufficient examination.

As man was formed a religious creature, and it behoved mankind every where to have some religion, great men and politicians have in all ages taken advantage of this, and instituted some public leading in religion, that might best answer the ends and purposes of worldly society. The

re-



religion of Jesus, who was born to bear witness to the truth, and thereby to reign, serves to form individuals of all nations to be members of one grand society in the world to come. So it may justly be reckoned the only religion in the world that is not political, or which cannot be adapted to promote any system of politics, without being greatly corrupted, or becoming the reverse of what it was when first instituted.

As human nature has in all ages been found to be depraved, and men every where acknowledged to be more or less blame-worthy, some atonement or consideration for averting the displeasure of the Deity has readily been admitted in the framing of all national religions. In this respect the religion of Jesus stands distinguished above all others, as it exhibits an atonement of the highest dignity, proved to be effectual by the highest evidence.

Religion holds and draws man by the two strongest movements of his heart, *fear* and *hope*, which are sometimes resolved into one, namely, *self-preservation*. Real, as well as fictitious causes of fear, are every where ready at hand; but in all religions, except the true, the grounds of hope are entirely fictitious.

The true religion sets forth in a full and clear light a distinction in man's heart, which, though not utterly lost, has been greatly obscured and confounded in all other religions; even a distinction betwixt that in him which witnesses for God, and the principle of all his disloyalty, or in fewer words, betwixt his *conscience* and his *pride*, or



self-conceit. In all others the concerns of conscience and of pride are in many respects intimately blended together; so that, agreeably to the genius of any one or all of them, a man may be very religiously, very conscientiously, very piously or devoutly proud. But “the word of God, which is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,” fairly divides asunder these two real opposites, which the wise and religious in all ages have taken much pains to reconcile. PAUL himself, who had been from his youth a diligent student of religion, and a notable proficient, assures us, that he did not understand this distinction till he became a Christian: And indeed no body else can have courage to attend to it.

The genuine product of sinful man’s conscience is *fear*; and he can have no *hope* naturally, but what is suggested by or grafted on his pride.

HAVING premised this much in the general, we may now turn our eyes more particularly to those who are most successful in propagating a perverted gospel, the popular preachers. These men do indeed press very hard upon the conscience to awaken fear: But when they have driven the serious hearer almost to despair, by an awful description of his miserable condition, and by representing him as utterly unable in every respect to contribute any thing toward his own deliverance, they at last condescend, with no small art and address, to make some comfortable exceptions from  
from



from the foregoing awful doctrine, which comes now to be wrapped up in more loose, and less absolute terms. And the audience is addressed thus: “Ye will do for yourselves as if ye were  
 “to do *all*; and yet *overlook* all ye do, as if ye  
 “had done nothing. Will ye do *nothing* for  
 “yourselves, because ye cannot do *all*? Lay down  
 “no such impious conclusion against your own  
 “souls.”

It would be a reflection on their skill and understanding, to suppose, that such reserves were not all along in their eye: But then we must consider, that it was by no means seasonable to disclose them till now. Now is described, in a variety of particulars, a convenient resource, where the pride of the serious hearer may exercise itself with great hopes of success. And he is animated thus: “Do what you *can*, and it may  
 “be, while you are doing what ye *can* for your-  
 “selves, God will do for you what ye *cannot*.  
 “It is *probable* this course may succeed. God  
 “is good and merciful,” &c. Now the field is opened for every one who wills to run. The scripture, it is true, says, *It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, &c.* However, the preacher finds it necessary on this occasion to warn his hearers to avoid all thoughts of this doctrine of election at present, as the suggestions of Satan; because, says he, there is in this doctrine no visible ground for faith to rest upon. And indeed it must be owned, that this doctrine affords no visible resource for the pride of any man; while yet it always hath, and ever will prove the



most comfortable of all resources for them who have lost sight of every other.

If we consider these gentlemen in their assumed character of mediators between the Deity and men, we shall find them, in their own way, very careful of the honour of both parties. In speaking of the former, they can declaim in such a manner about his glory, as it would seem no flesh had any room left to glory in his presence. In their animating addresses to men, they elevate them in such a manner, as to leave them no other use for the Deity, but to be an assistant to their pride. Mean time they are far from forgetting their own honour; for while they are thus employed, they effectually secure to themselves the devotion of the people, who find their concurrence necessary to help them in putting forth their acts of faith; of which it is difficult to form any distinct notion, unless we consider them as acts of sympathy, or rather sympathetic feelings corresponding with the doleful or animating notes of the preacher by turns. Such of the hearers as may be reckoned proper adepts in this doctrine, must find no small pleasure in these transitions from fear to hope, wherein they behold the success of their serious endeavours, and find an exquisite gratification of their pride. Here we are readily reminded of the *desirable things*, the incentives to, and objects of religious desire; against which the divine judgments are so often pointed in the prophetic writings.

The forementioned gratification may, I think, be justly deemed the highest criminal pleasure  
that



that human nature is capable of. We need not wonder, then, that such people should highly adore the ministers of such pleasure ; and that they should shew but a very cold regard to the writings of the apostles, which are extremely unfit for gratifying their favourite passion. Accordingly we may daily perceive, or, as often as the trial is made, that nothing is more odious to these people than to hear of the comfort of the guilty arising solely from the simple belief of the truth, or, which is the same thing, from the bare truth itself. To see one of these people converted to Christianity, would be seeing such another miracle (abating the extraordinary signs) as the conversion of PAUL. If we have known any such converts, we have no doubt observed them shewing the like remorse and shame as upon the gratification of any other guilty passion.

Though it is natural to expect, that these preachers, in their double dealing with God and man, should be expert in using the maxim, “ That the perfection of art lies in concealing “ the artifice ;” yet while they proceed, twisting together the language, or even the doctrine of the scripture with their own, the difference betwixt the former and the latter, which is indeed very great, and the absurdity of joining them together, must often strike our eyes, if we do not shut them. After they have told us at large, that we can do nothing to justify ourselves, we may perceive them greatly imbarressed in directing us what we must do in order to attain to

B 4

justification.



justification. They say and unsay so much about *working* and *doing*, that though it is evident all along, that the doing of something is necessary; yet neither they nor their hearers can have any distinct notion of what is to be done. In this respect they answer exactly to the description given by PAUL of their predecessors, who swerved from the faith in much the same manner. In his first Epistle to TIMOTHY, having made mention of *faith unfeigned*, he adds, *From which some having swerved, have turned aside unto vain jangling; desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.* Accordingly we find them, for the ease of their own understanding, and that of their hearers, betaking themselves alternately, now to reasoning agreeably to nature, then to what they call *mystery*, or rather their favourite *depths*.

Sometimes they take great pains to shew us how very little we do, when we put forth an act of faith; yet again this act, however little, when narrowly inspected, is found to contain such a variety of particular acts of great importance, as would require a whole sermon to display them. It now resembles a *little green bud*, containing both the flower and the fruit: Though the several parts, and the leaves of them, are not yet unfolded, nor appear to fight; it is found to contain in miniature, or in embryo, every justifying qualification in the natural way. Or, we may say, it resembles a small piece of paper, which, when put in the scale, is found so light as scarcely to move the balance, but when examined by the  
eye,



eye, is found to be a note of many thousand pounds value. This small piece of paper we are to hold forth for our justification: And though we ourselves are, in our secret thoughts, sufficiently sensible of its value, we are to hold it forth, humbly acknowledging, that it is light even as vanity, and thankfully to receive in return the expected benefit, under the notion of a mere favour or free gift bestowed upon us, “without money  
“and without price.” For thus Mr BOSTON presumes we will behave when under right influence: “Ye will do for yourselves as if ye were to do  
“*all*; and yet *overlook* all ye do, as if ye had done  
“*nothing*.”

As it is in confounding the simple notion of the faith given us in the scripture, that such men more especially play their game, and put the change upon us, leading us most effectually to establish our own righteousness, while they entertain our ears with many swelling words of vanity concerning the divine; we may find them, among other arts, very remarkable for an uncommon use of similitudes and metaphorical expressions in their descriptions of faith. The common use of these is to help our attention and understanding to a more ready apprehension of the things reported to us. Their use of them serves to amuse our fancy, and confound our understanding; while the main tendency of the discourse is, to stimulate our pride, and set in motion our several passions in subserviency thereto. They give us parables without things, mere shells without kernels. We are led to expect a substance, but  
grasp



grasp at a shadow. When the images are removed, we find no reality remaining. Accordingly we find they seldom or never incline to tell us what they mean by *faith*, but by some laboured circumlocutions. Their conduct in this respect is not unlike to what we have heard said of men dexterous in another sort of traffic :

“ Unwilling to be short or plain

“ In any thing concerning gain.

They constantly represent faith to us as furnished with hands, feet, wings, &c. or under the notion of some instrument operating our peace with the Deity. Accordingly they ascribe to it various ideas of motion and action : And though a very simple motion well meant may do the business, yet that which has the greatest activity in it, is commended to us as by far the best. Thus we are taught by Mr R. ERSKINE, “ Though a slow  
 “ and simple motion, if it be real and upright,  
 “ is what has the promise, *Him that cometh he*  
 “ *will in no wise cast out* ; yet the scripture speaks  
 “ of a hasting, striving, running, fighting, and  
 “ wrestling, that should be aimed at. A man  
 “ that is running from the greatest misery to the  
 “ greatest happiness, would endeavour to have  
 “ his motion such, as would evidence his hatred  
 “ to the one, and his great liking to the other.”  
 And he adds in the same sermon \* the following encouragement to beginners: “ They who would  
 “ fain

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\* Intituled, *Christ's love-suit*. Song ii. 13. *Arise, &c.*



“fain mint to get up upon their feet, may read  
 “a strong encouragement from a preventing-call  
 “of God to them to rise, and come away.” If  
 we deprive their faith of its hands, feet, and  
 every idea of motion, we shall be at the greatest  
 loss to know what it is; whereas nothing is more  
 easy to be understood than the belief of a truth,  
 or one’s being persuaded, that a report is true.  
 It is likewise easy to be understood, that no small  
 motion is produced in our minds by doubtfulness,  
 anxiety, and our various efforts to quiet ourselves:  
 But no sooner does the salutary truth appear,  
 than all that motion ceases. If an alchymist,  
 after much fruitless labour, should, from some  
 unexpected hand, hear and understand the secret  
 of making gold, all his former preplexity would  
 be at an end, and he would then begin to labour  
 upon a more joyful and hopeful plan. Nor  
 would he grudge to admit the conviction of the  
 vanity of all his former skill, labour, and ex-  
 pense.

Another of the arts of these preachers consists  
 in their use of scholastic words. These words,  
 like the cups and balls of jugglers, serve them for  
 a variety of purposes. By these they sometimes  
 blindfold the people, and sometimes make them  
 stare; while they imagine some profound meaning  
 to be contained in them: And at any rate these  
 words serve to confound and perplex the plain  
 simple doctrines of the gospel, as well as to  
 furnish upon occasions no small matter of idle  
 disputation among the teachers. I shall only point  
 at one instance: Mr E. ERSKINE divides the  
 sufficiency



sufficiency of the atonement into a threefold distinction. The first he calls *intrinsic*, the second *ordinate*, and the third *legal* \*. Then, after giving his explication of them, he very gravely tells us which of these faith has to do with, and which not. The preachers of his doctrine are at present at no small variance as to the proper use of these words, publishing ingenious controversies for the benefit of those who are disposed to read them.—The poor people, who cannot well fathom such depths, must be left to follow the guides they severally most admire.

We may also take notice of the great ambiguity of the words and phrases which have been used on this subject, and the changes which have happened in them ; some falling into disrepute, and replaced by others of less obnoxious sound : For no stone has been left unturned to intercept the light of the sacred truth, and decoy our attention with an endless variety of the most abominable jargon about faith. The time and pains taken by the apostles in holding forth the heavenly ray of hope, have been employed by thousands of preachers in directing us how to search for farthings in the dunghill.—The word *merit*, as applied to our faith or our endeavours after it, has generally fallen into disrepute among Protestants, as having been long tarnished by Popish fingers : Instead of it *condition* is often used with approbation. Yet this has likewise become suspected ;

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\* See his sermon on Heb. xi. 7. *By faith Noah, &c.* in a volume of his sermons printed at Edinburgh, 1755.



pected; and many preachers scruple to use it without clogging it with some explication. *Instrument*, I think, is now the word least excepted against. And this can serve us for *receiving*, *applying*, *closing with*, and *taking hold of* the proposed benefit. And this instrument is sometimes a *mouth* for receiving, and sometimes a *hand* for taking and giving. We are likewise told, that faith has two hands; one for taking home Christ to ourselves; and another for giving away ourselves to Christ. But if faith must be called an instrument, and if it be at the same time maintained, that justification comes by faith only; then I am at full liberty to affirm, that he who is possessed of the instrument, hand, or mouth, is already justified, without regard to his using the instrument, his taking or giving with the hand, or receiving with the mouth. Thus the artifice by which they would impose upon us may be very easily discerned.

We also hear much of *terms*. If they venture to tell us, that we are justified by a righteousness imputed to us, they must add, *upon the terms of the gospel*. Accordingly they warmly exhort us to comply with and accept of the terms, or to receive the benefit on *gospel-terms*. Thus we are taught to treat with the Deity, as free states or sovereign princes do with each other; the one obtaining peace of the other, by complying with his terms. In short, these men will make a thousand shifts rather than speak plain truth.— Let all the prophets and apostles be consulted  
upon



upon the question, What is required of us in order to acceptance with God? we shall find their unanimous reply to be, *Every thing*, or *nothing*; for no trimming is countenanced among them. If we attempt to do in any sense, we bind ourselves to do all; yea, the least attempt to do in this matter, is shewn to be damnably criminal. What then is the ground of hope? The divine truth itself.

Where shall we find among the popular preachers that unreserved freedom of speech which so well becomes the declaration of divine truth? We shall seldom find them speaking any thing like the language of the gospel, without cautioning, mincing, or clogging it with some exceptive, *but, if, only, though, &c.* If they sometimes tell us, that nothing is required of us in order to our peace with God; they quickly add, but a few particulars; which at present must not be considered as coming up to the length of *something*, but which in another chapter, when they have more leisure to expatiate upon them, will be found to contain *every thing*.

I AM sorry to find, that the *Dialogues*, which do indeed contain several bold strokes, uncommon to the popular preachers, should yet, in too many places, be tainted with their noxious influence. But what author can drink out of such fountains, and not transmit some of their qualities into his writings? We are indeed too apt to be ensnared by reverence for men, in competition  
with



with our common Maker. We are afraid, or we think it ungenteel, to say with confidence, *Let God be true, and every man a liar.*

ASPASIO in his Fourth Letter to THERON says, or which is the same thing, adopts with approbation the following words: † “ Our LORD JESUS CHRIST is so called, (The JUST ONE), not so much for having fulfilled all righteousness in his own person, and performed an unfinning obedience to the will of God, as because by his righteousness imputed to us, we also, upon the terms \* of the gospel, are justified, or accounted righteous before God.”

A note is subjoined, cautioning what is said of *terms*, in the following manner: \* “ That is, *freely*; or, as the prophet speaks, *without money, and without price.* For nothing is requisite, in order to a participation of Christ and his benefits, but a conviction of our extreme need, and an humble desire to receive them; receive them as gifts of pure grace to the most undeserving creatures. This point, which is so intimately connected with our comfort and hope, the reader may see more fully stated in *Dialogue XV.*” If we turn our eyes to *Dialogue XV.* which contains indeed some excellent and just things, we find ASPASIO speaking thus: “ So that nothing is required, in order to our participation of Christ and his benefits, but a conviction of *our* need, a sense of *their* worth, and a willingness to receive them in the

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† Vol. ii. p. 336, 337.



“ appointed way ; that is, *freely*, and as matter  
 “ of pure grace \*.”

According to this Dialogue, THERON, in order to his participation of the righteousness of Christ, has no occasion for any righteousness of his own, yea, none but such “ as the *Samaritan* woman  
 “ and ZACCHEUS the publican possessed ; or such  
 “ as the *Philippian* jailor and the profligate *Corinthians* might boast.” He is divested of every qualification but extreme indigence, guilt, and unworthiness ; of every recommendation but that of extreme wretchedness ; and not our own duty and obedience, but Christ’s suffering and Christ’s obedience, are declared to be the terms. Thus it would seem the nail is thoroughly driven, and no room left for any reserve. But then we must carefully remember, that though THERON is divested of all *righteousness of his own*, of every *qualification* and every *recommendation*, he must yet be well provided with *requisites*, even such as may embolden him to make the *appropriation*, which is declared to be essential to faith. Here, for distinction’s sake, I am obliged to call the sovereign cure sent from heaven to relieve the guilty, by the name of the SOLE REQUISITE. And I do it with the more pleasure, that it so readily calls to mind that significant saying of Jesus, *One thing is needful*. Now I beg leave to make a few remarks.

THERON, as guilty and unworthy, as destitute of righteousness, of every qualification and recommendation,

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\* Vol. iii. p. 239.



recommendation, is perfectly on a level with all his fellow-creatures, and can see no difference whatsoever betwixt himself and those who shall eternally perish. Thus indeed the gospel considers all whom it relieves ; thus all who are relieved consider themselves, when they are first comforted by it, or when they believe it : And the gospel, when it first speaks relief to them, intimates no difference betwixt them and others. On the other hand, THERON, as furnished with his *requisites*, must perceive a manifest difference betwixt himself and others ; such a difference, as gives all the promises a peculiar direction to him, and such others as are, I must not say *qualified* here, but furnished with the proper *requisites* as he is ; such a difference as may encourage him to consider himself as a friend of God, and an heir of eternal life, and so affirm what is accounted essential to faith. The faith, then, by which THERON is justified, must be the persuasion of the reality of this difference. Though the apostles declared every one to be *born of God*, and to have *eternal life*, who believed that *Jesus is the Christ* ; yet that ancient truth is now considered among us modern Christians as a very insipid tale : We have come the length to say gravely, we see not what comfort or benefit can be derived from it. According to what is now imagined, the first Christians, when they believed the truth, wanted the very essence of faith ; and beyond all peradventure they wanted what is now called so. For what else is the essence of modern faith, but mere self-conceit, maintained with a high hand,



and dignified under many sacred names, as the leading principle of religion? But the essence of their faith was the eternal God: *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*

ASPASIO I think will agree with me in saying, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*; or that nothing is well-pleasing to God about any man till he believes. And I am ready to agree with him in maintaining, that the proper scriptural faith cannot be where any thing essential to it is wanting: And the scripture will keep us both in countenance, if we should affirm, that no man before he believes can have any ground of hope but what is fictitious and vain.

Now THERON does not arrive at the faith taught him by ASPASIO, till toward the latter end of *Dialogue XVI.* and scarcely then. For past the middle of it, after many reasonings, against the appropriation he is exhorted to make, he still anxiously says, "My soul is in jeopardy," *p.* 293. And all that we can hear from him at last, is much liker the language of a fond selfish presumption, not sufficiently assured, than of that boldness and confidence which so well becomes a man affirming a divine truth, wherein his own pride is no way flattered: *Pag.* 305, 306. "May I then believe—that—all—are—mine?" follows a modest complaint of remissness and inactivity; then, *p.* 306. "O! that I may arise, and, with the divine assistance, shake off this stupor of unbelief!" He is very willing to believe, that he is a gracious person; but his confidence fails him:



him : And a considerable part of ASPASIO's reasoning with him is to the same purpose, as if he were comforting the lady described in these well-known lines :

“ Thro' hopes of contradiction oft she'll say,  
“ Methinks I look so wretchedly to-day !”

He often compliments and encourages him upon his complaints, extracting thence some hopeful sign or other : Whereas an apostle would have enforced them, and given him some broader foundation for them ; would have declared the divine truth, which respects no man's person ; and if he gave not credit to it, instead of sympathizing with him, declared the judgment of God against him. But whatever be called *faith*, I think we are not led to consider THERON as having arrived at his faith, till the period above pointed at. He indeed says, not far from the end of *Dialogue XV. p. 256.* “ I am ready to declare, in the language of AGRIPPA, *Almost* “ thou persuadest me to commence a believer.” And at the very end of that Dialogue, he aims strongly at it. But as he cannot be said to profess the faith while he persists disputing against it, we cannot well look on him as a believer, till toward the close of *Dialogue XVI.* where his objections grow languid : And then, though we cannot say he is fully persuaded, yet we may say, according to the popular stile, *he desires to believe.*



If then I am allowed to say, that faith is the entrance into the Christian religion, and that there can be no true piety or good hope but what follows upon it, I must at the same time be allowed to express some surprise at finding THERON in very hopeful circumstances, while he is yet an unbeliever, so cannot with any propriety be called a *Christian*. For ASPASIO often congratulates him on the happy change he perceives in his condition; and while THERON cannot be brought to believe, ASPASIO beholds his title perfectly clear to every heavenly blessing. I see no way of accounting for this, unless we say, that ASPASIO finds the unbelieving THERON furnished with every requisite fit to embolden him to claim, to accept, and to possess; or, in other words, he plainly sees that THERON is a sincere penitent, and commenced a good and righteous man; and therefore is surprised why he will not entertain a better opinion of himself, and put an end to his anxiety, by exerting the appropriating act of faith, or, which is the same thing, by affirming with confidence the goodness of his title to life. I apprehend, that an expert preacher, who would lead men to hope for life by repentance in the natural way, might pursue his plan with much less embarrassment, by haranguing in the manner many have done on that passage of EZEKIEL, which was considered in a former Letter: *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live.*

IT



IT is now time to take some notice of the *requisites* insisted upon, in order that one's title to the blessing may appear; *conviction*, &c.

One must have seen little of the deceits of the popular Sermons, if he has not perceived what large work is cut out for the pride of the devotee, in the doctrine about convictions of guilt. So many directions are given, such care and pains, and such exercises of mind are required, for attaining proper convictions, that it is by no means to be wondered at, if the soul, devoutly employed in these, should entertain some question like this: Whether the pains taken to find himself guilty, and the distinction he thereby acquires above the careless and profane, may not go far to counterbalance all the guilt he comes in this way to be sensible of?

HERE we may stop a little, and see what the scripture teaches on this head. It will support us in saying, that sin and misery are inseparably connected; that man is an object of mercy by that which constitutes him miserable, or fixes and ascertains his misery, whether that misery be presently felt in any intense degree or not. If two men are led to execution for the same crime, the one overwhelmed in sorrow, and the other elevated to noisy mirth by strong drink, we justly reckon the condition of the latter to be fully as miserable as the former: And if mercy respects mere misery, wretchedness, and unworthiness, it will certainly as readily regard the insensible person as him who has the quickest feeling of



what is before him ; otherwise it must needs regard the one as more worthy than his fellow ; which would be inconsistent with the nature of mercy, at least that of divine mercy ; for wherever the least degree of worth appears, there the province of mercy ceases, and that of justice and equity takes place.

Happy is it for men, that the Deity does not consider our condition in the manner that we commonly do. Perhaps the world never made a finer appearance as to all that is admired in it, than when the divine compassion to the nations was manifested. The Roman power and laws had civilized the world ; the Greeks had enlightened it with learning and wisdom ; and the Jews diffused piety every where. Peace, with her many advantages, prevailed, to render the life of men more agreeable. But how did it then appear in the eye of the Deity ? ISAIAH informs us : *Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people ; but the Lord shall arise, — and his glory shall be seen.* Were we to take a summary view of the images used to describe the state of the world then, we should find it now considered under the notion of a great infirmary of sick, maimed, and bruised ; then under that of a vast and darksome dungeon, filled with criminals in chains, ready for execution, &c. Moreover, those to whom mercy was shewn, are represented as extremely insensible of their real condition, as *past feeling, yea dead in trespasses and sins.* But, says the messenger of glad tidings to the Heathen, *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where-*  
*with*



*with he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; (by grace ye are saved).*

The divine mercy is not narrow and limited, nor, like that of man, backward to interpose, till some inviting and amiable requisite appear in the object. No; it prevents the most hardened rebels, and brings every requisite along with it: Or rather the divine grace operates all its effects by the *sole requisite*, the righteousness which it brings to view. It reigns among the insensible and the dead through that righteousness unto eternal life. If we inquire at PAUL, why the gospel is called the power of God to save men; he tells us, *For therein is the righteousness of God revealed.* If we ask again, how the righteousness it reveals appears to be divine, he adds, *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.* In the death of Christ, where wrath was evidently revealed from heaven, we have the broadest view of the divine displeasure against all unrighteousness of men, as well as a high proof illustrated by his resurrection, how differently God judges of righteousness from what men do; that which was highly esteemed among men being found to be an abomination in his sight; and that which was *disallowed of men*, found to be *chosen of God and precious.* In the death of Christ, then, is held forth the broadest view of human guilt and misery, and the clearest discovery of the all-sufficient remedy. There divine judgment itself is made to rest for a light to



the nations. There is no occasion then for popular preachers to lead men through their idle process of a law-work, before they will condescend to display the glad tidings before them.

If Christian teachers would imitate the apostles in preaching, let them hold forth the sacred truth, Christ crucified, the divine wisdom and power to salvation; and so leave it wholly to God to make converts. The merciful truth is all-sufficient to save. It needs no requisite, no preparative from man to produce a relish for it. It creates a relish for itself; it answers to the majesty of him whose voice it is, and who framed the conscience of man for hearing his voice; it wounds and it heals; it kills and it makes alive; it blocks up and darkens all the resources of the pride of man, in the light of which he formerly walked and lived; and it brings him light and life from an unexpected quarter, by opening as it were a window in heaven. No lecture about any law can affect the conscience of man like this truth, which shews the divine law magnified and honoured in the most eminent manner; which demonstrates the Deity to be inflexibly in earnest as to every word spoken in his perfect law, and so demolishes all the subterfuges of human pride. What preparative, what requisite had PAUL when the merciful truth surprised him on the road to Damascus? And if we inquire what effect it had upon him, we find it made such a revolution in his sentiments, and all the springs of his life, as if we should see the course of a mighty torrent changed from east to west by the shock of an earth-

earth-



earthquake. The extraordinary signs affecting his body, shewed what befel his mind. The miraculous shutting, and the miraculous opening of his eyes, were signs of that *turning from darkness to light*, which Jesus told him his ministry was to operate among the Gentiles : And he tells us himself, he was designed *for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe to life everlasting.*

It is likewise true, that convictions of guilt are often awakened by other means than the truth of the gospel, such as sickness, the approach of death, and other calamities. Moreover, though nothing less than the saving truth can thoroughly wound the root and principle of man's alienation from his Maker, yet many convictions are often produced by a partial view of its evidence, which so nearly resemble those which issue in repentance unto life, that nothing but the event can distinguish them. We cannot therefore judge merely from the disquiet produced in any man's mind by a sense of guilt, whether his convictions will land in the saving knowledge of the truth or not ; so cannot have the least ground to suggest to him any hopeful symptom in his condition from thence. But this much I think may be said, that if we find any man heartily pinched with a sense of guilt, we have good reason to conclude that it is fore against his will. For no man willingly puts a thorn deeper into his own flesh than he can easily pull it out again. I must frankly own, then, that I see no more difference betwixt a careless and convicted sinner, than is betwixt a felon ranging



ranging his round at large, and one newly apprehended by the officers of justice : And for my part, I think it would look liker an impertinent sarcasm than any thing else, to tell either of these last, that he was now in a very hopeful way. As for THERON'S convictions, which are acquired by his good-natured compliance with the advice of his friend, leading him to take a strict survey of his deficiencies, I am not at all surpris'd to find them asswaged and healed up again by the skill of the same friend, kindly reminding him of his several excellencies and amiable virtues : But the wound which God gives, none but God can heal.

Perhaps never man made his obeisance to the imputed righteousness, in a more generous and genteel manner than THERON has done. In the beginning of *Dialogue XIV.* THERON having seriously ruminated on the several branches of ASPASIO'S doctrine, having considered the blessings propos'd in it, and that ASPASIO had affirm'd his interest in these blessings, begins to conceive some liking to that doctrine. So his soliloquy ends with these words. " This doctrine, especially in such a connection, begins to put on a more recommending appearance. My prejudices are really wearing away. I am almost a convert." Well, after all other objections are desisted from, the well-dispos'd THERON is still more afraid, lest the gospel have some unrighteous tendency, than of any bias to unrighteousness in himself. *Pag.* 269. " But are the interests of morality secured ? This is what I am strongly  
" in-



“ inclined to doubt. And to say the truth, this  
 “ is now my principal objection to your scheme.”  
 ASPASIO commends his concern for morality.  
 “ I shall never blame my friend, for being vigilant  
 “ and jealous over the interests of morality. I  
 “ am glad to find, that a jealousy for the interests  
 “ of morality is the chief obstacle in the way  
 “ of your assent.” ASPASIO, after quieting his  
 friend’s righteous jealousy on that score, finds  
 him still unreconciled to his doctrine ; and takes  
 notice of the reason, saying, “ You—have not  
 “ the proper preparative,—a sense of your great  
 “ depravity, your extreme guilt, and your utterly  
 “ undone condition ;” telling him withal, that,  
 instead of those convictions which are “ *slight,*  
 “ and *hover* only in the imagination,” he ought  
 to have such as “ are *deep,* and *penetrate* the  
 “ heart.” THERON being now satisfied, that  
 there was nothing in the gospel that could give  
 any reasonable disgust to his righteous disposition ;  
 and not being willing to remain unprepared for  
 any of the blessings to which his friend had as-  
 sured him he was already intitled to by it, very  
 obligingly inquires, “ What method would you  
 “ advise me to use, in order to get these convic-  
 “ tions impressed on my heart ?” ASPASIO, sen-  
 sible of the difficulty there was of finding matter  
 for conviction in the heart of so good a man, in  
 order to his being furnished with the first requisite,  
 directs him to several prerequisites ; which, I  
 think, may be distinguished into four. 1<sup>st</sup>, As  
 THERON could not readily find himself guilty by  
 any rule he was already acquainted with, in order  
 thereto,



thereto, it behoved him to study more law; *2dly*, Examine himself in the most impartial manner; *3dly*, Implore the divine aid, or that of the enlightening Spirit, to assist him in this business; *4thly* and *lastly*, Keep a diary: As if one could reap any spiritual benefit from studying the divine law, or know how “pure, how extensive, how sublimely perfect it is,” before he knows Christ, the end thereof for righteousness; — as if such a one could judge of his spiritual state impartially; — as if one could pray for the Holy Ghost, before he believes the truth, whereof he is the Spirit; — as if a diary, kept by such a one in the manner directed, did not naturally serve to administer more delicate food for his pride.

I AM apt to wonder what business ASPASIO had to urge, in the manner he does, the *imputed righteousness*, upon one who had little or no occasion for it. Methinks he acts below the majesty of the sacred theme. The gospel was never intended to improve the righteous, and elevate them to a higher condition; but to relieve the wretched. Had ASPASIO no dissolute youth, no gray-headed sinner, within the circle of his acquaintance, to whom the news of forgiveness might have been acceptable; and whose story might have been much more encouraging to the guilty, than to hear of so well accomplished a gentleman as THERON, obsequiously performing every thing requisite to intitle him to all the comforts of the gospel? Or did ASPASIO imagine,  
in



in so late a period of the world, he might at last make the imputed righteousness bear a lovely appearance in the eyes of fine gentlemen? Would it not be more agreeable to the scripture, if one asks directions for his improvement, to tell him, in a word, *Be perfect*; keep the commandments, and thou shalt live? To tell the wretch, who despairs of improvement, that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness? To lay open to all men the deceits of the popular doctrine, both as to conviction of guilt, and faith? To ask them, Is it true that they have sinned or not? If it stand true in their conscience, that they have; this is conviction. If they have sinned, this is enough to damn them, whatever sense they have of their sin: And this is preparation enough for mercy. To ask them again, Is the gospel true or not? If they hold the gospel to be true, this is faith. Then, let every man shew by his works of what sort his faith is; or what he understood in his heart by the gospel, when he affirmed it with his mouth to be true; seeing there is only one truth which can save men, and not any meaning that men may please to affix to the words of the gospel.

But my wonder at the rules and directions given to THERON, for his attaining unto righteousness, is abated, when I hear ASPASIO declaring his own experience, near the end of *Dialogue XIV.* and assuring THERON, that he has “ trod every  
 “ step in the way which he recommends to his  
 “ beloved friend. He has made the trial, and can  
 “ set his *probatum est* to every expedient which  
 “ he



“ he advises : And may very truly say, with his  
 “ divine Master, *We speak that we do know\**, and  
 “ testify that we have experienced; or, with the  
 “ evangelical prophet, *This is the way*, the way of  
 “ peace, of holiness, and of joy, *walk ye in it †.*”  
 ASPASIO then hath found out a path, by walking  
 wherein the guilty may confidently hope to ar-  
 rive at righteousness at last. He assures us, that  
 he himself, by carefully walking therein, followed  
 after righteousness, and attained it. And his friend  
 must follow him, upon the faith of his success.  
 But how greatly does his experience differ from  
 that of PAUL, both as to himself and all his con-  
 verts? By the ministry of PAUL, the nations were  
 converted. But what account does he give us of  
 their conversion? He assures us, *That the nations,*  
*which followed not after righteousness, have at-*  
*tained to righteousness.* We must say, then, that  
 righteousness was brought unto them, when they  
 were not seeking after it, but following a quite  
 opposite course. And thus the prophet, in the  
 passage above referred to, foretels the case was to  
 happen, *Thine ears shall bear a word behind thee,*  
*saying, This is the way.* Not the way to righte-  
 ousness; for the word heard from behind, even  
 the word of faith which the apostles preached,  
 brought righteousness nigh, or home to them.  
 Righteousness itself, then, is the way; and the  
 point to which it leads, is a glorious resurrection  
 from the dead.

The

\* John iii. 11.

† Isaiah xxx. 21.



The voice from behind brings men righteousness, and places them on the way. So that to be entered the first step on the way, to attain unto righteousness, and to hear and understand the voice, are all one and the same thing. Jesus Christ says, *I am the way*; and, *Whoso findeth me, findeth life*; and “he is found of them who seek him not; for he came to seek and to save that which was lost.” Again, PAUL says to such as had believed on Christ, so had attained to righteousness, *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*. He would have them to walk in the way into which they had been already introduced, and proceed therein, unto the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls, counting all things loss to attain unto the blessed resurrection of the dead. And thus he illustrates to us the words of the prophet, *This is the way, walk ye in it*.

Shall we think it safe, then, to attend to ASPASIO's experience, in proof of which we have no more but his most confident assertion? Or shall we not judge it safer to hear the voice of the divine Master, whom it well become to say, *We speak what we do know*? Especially, seeing we have the divine *probatum est*, or the highest demonstration from heaven, in his resurrection from the dead, ascertaining the truth of all that he knew or spoke? Shall we not hearken to PAUL, preaching the word of faith, which brings nigh the divine righteousness, and declaring to us what he uniformly experienced and observed, throughout the course of his ministry, not only in him-



himself, but in many thousands beside? Or shall we hearken to ASPASIO, who, not unlike a Jewish doctor, stands up before us, holding forth his diary in his hand, prefaced with manifold directions, teaching us how to follow after righteousness, and calling aloud to us to follow him, and saying, in language too daringly borrowed, *This is the way, walk ye in it.*

Let us now observe the effect of the foregoing rules and directions on THERON'S mind. Having diligently applied himself to the work enjoined him by his friend, he obtains the desired convictions of guilt, and by degrees the other requisites also. Yet after all, by the continued representation given us of his case, one is apt to be struck, rather with the idea of *virtue in distress*, than that of the *remorse of a criminal*. And the reason is plain; because his convictions are acquired by the exercise of piety. And indeed it would seem, that no small exercise of piety was needful, to find guilty so good a man as THERON. Yea, ASPASIO himself seems to be affected with much the same idea; as appears by the many congratulatory replies, and soothing commendations, wherewith he endeavours to animate the drooping spirits of his friend. Yea, he frequently takes occasion to illustrate the divine beneficence, faithfulness, and compassion, by reminding him of instances of the similar virtues in himself; and these not as uncommon, but as the ordinary occurrences of his life.

THERON having expressed his convictions in Letter II. ASPASIO replies, in the beginning of  
Letter



Letter III. thus. “ Though all your Letters  
 “ give me pleasure, none was ever so highly  
 “ pleasing as your last. I look upon it with the  
 “ same secret joy, as a compassionate physician  
 “ observes some *very favourable* symptoms, in  
 “ the crisis of a beloved patient’s distemper.”  
 What THERON says in Letter IX. is thus taken  
 notice of by ASPASIO, in Letter X. (*vol. iii. p.*  
*149.*) “ When you mentioned the past indolence,  
 “ and the present fervour of your prayers, I  
 “ could not forbear reiterating my praises to God  
 “ on your behalf. This is a proof, my dear  
 “ THERON, that you are going in the way ever-  
 “ lasting,” &c. Near the beginning of Letter XII.  
 ASPASIO addresses his friend thus. “ Why this  
 “ *dejected* air in your temper? Why those *pensive*  
 “ strokes in your Letter? — Let me anticipate  
 “ your reply, and make answer to myself. This  
 “ gloom, I trust, is a sign of approaching day.  
 “ Another favourable presage is, that you take  
 “ the direct and certain way to obtain substantial  
 “ comfort. The righteousness of our Lord Jesus  
 “ Christ, after which you inquire, about which  
 “ you are solicitous, is a never-failing spring of  
 “ consolation.” And near the end of the same  
 Letter, “ This sorrow, of which you complain,  
 “ may be the seed of spiritual and eternal conso-  
 “ lation.” Here I cannot forbear wishing, that  
 ASPASIO had rather rebuked THERON’s solicitude,  
 as an attempt to establish his own righteousness,  
 in a new shape, under the deceitful notion of  
 working his way toward that of Christ. For it  
 is the same thing, whether we talk of obtaining



righteousness by the law of MOSES, by the light of nature, or by Christ, if any solicitude of ours be held needful to obtain it. Yet men have always been disposed to put the change upon themselves in this matter, by shifting words and names.

As the instances occur more frequently in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth *Dialogues*, of ASPASIO'S taking notice of such favourable symptoms in his friend's case, as distinguish him for one of those peculiarly respected by the divine promises; I think I need not spend time in quoting them at large; especially as I have already pointed at some of them, and may have occasion to touch upon them further in the sequel. Nor shall I insist much on the other requisites, connected with the conviction of guilt, which are described in *Dialogue XV.* in language like this. \* "The  
 " sacred privileges of the gospel—are to be en-  
 " joyed by *every one* that unfeignedly esteems  
 " them, and earnestly seeks them," —that " longs  
 " for them," —that is " willing to receive them in  
 " the appointed way," —" whose heart is awaken-  
 " ed into habitual and lively desires after the salva-  
 " tion of Christ." Such are encouraged in the following manner. " What is this but, in the  
 " spiritual sense, to thirst? To you therefore the  
 " promise is made, to you the riches of this be-  
 " nign dispensation belong." But I have better ground to say, that every one who unfeignedly esteems the divine law, is awakened into habitual  
 and

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\* Page 254, 255, with page 239. vol. iii.



and lively desires after its purity, and is willing to receive life in the way appointed therein, shall assuredly find it to be “ a never-failing spring of consolation ;” so needs not be pushed on, by any perplexed commentary on the gospel, to undergo the twofold fatigue, of first getting the bias of his heart changed from all evil, to all that is good, so acquiring a righteousness of his own ; and then humbly denying that he has any, in order to what is called closing with Christ.

ASPASIO is often straitened how to illustrate his twofold doctrine. And he had been much more straitened, had THERON only continued to press him with a few more pertinent objections, not difficult to be found. I am apt to wonder, why he does not mention charity or love among his requisites, seeing he makes them to consist of its leading branches or affections. For do not unfeigned esteem, longing, lively desire, willingness to comply, belong to love ? Yea, does not love comprehend every good disposition whatever ; seeing love is the fulfilling of the law ? But perhaps some difficulties attended the saying broadly, and in as many words, that love is a requisite in order to justification : For many noted preachers, beside the apostles, have said, that love is the fruit of faith.

WE may now proceed to observe, that the popular preachers, while they shew no small regard to distinctions devised by themselves, or their predecessors, and delight to range the scrip-



tures according to them, are very unmindful of the plain simple distinctions left us by the apostles, to guide us in the understanding of their doctrine. Many voluminous controversies have arisen, and much confusion has taken place, through the neglect of the plain distinction made by PAUL, in these words, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity.* Though PAUL, as well as the other apostles, always establishes an inseparable connection betwixt *faith, hope, and charity, or love*, he would have us to remember, that any one of these is not the other, but that they are still THREE. When he affirms, that we are justified by faith, he would not have us to think, that we are justified by any the least motion or degree of hope, or of love. This point must be carefully attended to, because, as there have been from the beginning many counterfeits of faith; so it will be found, that every man's hope and love are of the same nature with his faith. The capital question then must be, What is the faith by which men are justified?

The apostles used the word *faith* or *belief* in the same sense we do to this day in common discourse. We are properly said to believe what any man says, when we are persuaded that what he says is true. There is no difference betwixt our believing any common testimony, and our believing that of the gospel, but what arises from the very nature of the testimony. For thus the apostle JOHN states the matter, 1 John v. 9. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater;*



*greater*; so must produce greater certainty or firmness of persuasion.

When once a man believes a testimony, he becomes possessed of a truth; and that truth may be said to be *his faith*. Yea, we have no idea of truth, but with reference to its being believed. The question about faith must be set aside, when the inquiry turns upon, How a man is affected by a testimony which he believes? His passions and affections are set in motion, according to the nature of the thing testified, or according as the testimony brings him matter of joy or grief, hope or fear.

Now, we often become possessed of truths bringing us pain or pleasure, when it would be ridiculous to say, we contributed any thing to the obtaining of them. If the alarm-bell brings me pain, or if the great guns of a neighbouring castle, intimating some public occasion of joy, bring me pleasure, at unawares; I am not conscious, that my pain or my pleasure was of my own procuring, unless some nice reasoner should say, I became possessed of the sad or of the joyful truth, by performing the duty of hearing.

As the whole efficacy of faith flows from the nature and importance of the thing testified, he who is justified by faith, is justified by what he believes. He has peace with God; not conscious of any difference betwixt himself and others; but hearing that Jesus is the Christ, or that he hath fulfilled all righteousness, which now becomes to him a truth, so his faith. As Jesus Christ and



the apostles often speak of FAITH and THE TRUTH indifferently, or to the same purpose; we may just point at a few instances. John i. 17. *TRUTH came by Jesus Christ.* Gal. iii. 23. *But before FAITH came.* ver. 25. *But after that FAITH is come.* John xvii. 19. *That they also might be sanctified through the TRUTH.* Acts xxvi. 18. *Which are sanctified by FAITH that is in me.* John xvi. 13. *The Spirit of TRUTH.* 2 Cor. iv. 13. *The Spirit of FAITH.* John xviii. 37. *Every one that is of the TRUTH.* Gal. iii. 9. *They which be of FAITH.* Acts vi. 7. *Obedient to the FAITH.* 1 Pet. i. 22. *In obeying the TRUTH.* 2 Tim. i. 5. *The unfeigned FAITH that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also.* 2 John ver. 2. *For the TRUTH's sake that dwelleth in us.* 3 John ver. 3. *The TRUTH that is in thee.* I might likewise take notice of many other phrases, where the stile is somewhat varied, but which still carry the same meaning; as where PAUL, Rom. v. speaks of being *justified by faith,* and *justified by his blood;* by both which, it is plain, he means the same thing.

EVERY one who believes the same truth which the apostles believed, has equally precious faith with them. He has unfeigned faith, and shall assuredly be saved. If any man's faith be found insufficient to save him, it is owing to this, that what he believed for truth, was not the very same thing that the apostles believed, but some lie connected with, or dressed up in the form of truth.



truth. So this faith can do him no good; because, however seriously and sincerely he believes, yet that which he believes is false, and therefore it cannot save him. There is but one genuine truth that can save men.

To illustrate this matter, let it be remembered, that the saving truth which the apostles believed was, that *Jesus is the Christ*. The apostles had one uniform fixed sense to these words, and the whole New Testament is writ to ascertain to us in what sense they understood them. Every one who believes that *Jesus is the Christ*, in a different sense from the apostles, or who maintains any thing in connection with these words subversive of their real meaning, believes a falsehood; so his faith cannot save him. In the days of the apostles many affirmed along with them, that *Jesus is the Christ*, who yet meant very differently from them. The far greater part of Christendom will affirm in like manner; yet we shall not easily find many who, when they come to explain themselves, have the same meaning with the apostles. — Let us then lay aside all questions about faith, or how a man believes; and let the only question be, What does he believe? What sense does he put on the apostolic doctrine about the way of salvation?

It may likewise be observed, that a difference often takes place betwixt the confession of the mouth and the belief of the heart, which time only can discover. We cannot have a proper view of this difference, by observing, that many preachers in both our national churches solemnly



declare their adherence to the public standards of doctrine, from which they widely differ in their sentiments; because their dissimulation is, generally speaking, easily discerned. But a man may so explain himself about the way of salvation, as to leave no reasonable ground to suspect that he has any different meaning from the apostles; yet some future trial of his faith may shew, that what he spoke with his mouth, was not the persuasion of his heart: And though it may not appear, that he had any intention to deceive others; yet it may appear to his own conscience, as well as to others, that he had been deceiving himself, and retaining false sentiments, clothed with sound words. It may be added, that many never discover this mistake through the whole course of their life, but go down to the grave with a lie in their right hand: Yet we have no other way of judging what a man believes in his heart, but by what he confesses with his mouth, and the influence it has on his practice.

Though the lives of many are very opposite to their declared principles; yet what a man believes in his heart, will certainly influence his conduct in life. God bare witness to the apostles, as having unfeigned faith, as influenced by the spirit of it in their lives, and as proper judges how far others by their words and actions appeared to be possessed of the same genuine truth or unfeigned faith with them. Every one, while he appeared to agree with them, was considered as having the same unfeigned faith with them, and as a brother for whom Christ died. Accordingly some corrupters  
of



of the Christian doctrine are said to have *swerved* from faith unfeigned ; and others are charged with *denying* the Lord that bought them. And PAUL, describing a heretic, says, Titus iii. 11. *He that is such, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.* He is unhinged as to the Christian doctrine, or turned off from the foundation of the apostles and prophets ; and he sins against the authority of the Christian revelation, to which he professes subjection, so is self-condemned ; that part of the truth which he himself professes to hold, serving to condemn him as to his error.

To illustrate what has been said, we may observe what PAUL means by one's *believing in vain*, 1 Cor. xv. 2. Speaking of the gospel which he preached, he says, *By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.* Some of the Corinthians denied the resurrection of the dead, while yet they affirmed along with the apostles, that Christ arose from the dead. On which the apostle says, ver. 13, 14. *If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen ; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is vain.* To believe in vain, then, is to hold, along with the truth, some error which undermines it, makes it void, and of no effect. And the same apostle shews us at large, in his Epistle to the Galatians, that however zealous Christians we may be, if we add to Christ's death any requisite whatsoever in the matter of acceptance with God, Christ shall profit



us nothing, Christ is become of no effect unto us. — In general, the apostles ascribe every opinion or practice which they condemn to some error in faith, or a *lie* held in place of the *truth*, 1 John i. 8. and ii. 4.

Among those who appear to have the same faith with the apostles, we are not allowed to make any difference, till some event make that difference appear. Some are said to believe only for a time, while others believe to the saving of the soul. Though, during the time that the former are said to believe, we can by no means distinguish them from the latter; yet Jesus Christ plainly intimates to us, that there is a real difference, even at the first instance, betwixt the faith of the former and that of the latter. The only use, then, that this intimation can serve for, while appearances are good, is to lead every man to examine himself, and prove his own work. The real difference I speak of, is pointed forth in the parable of the sower, *Matthew* xiii. In distinction from all who believe only for a while, so believe in vain, he who believes unto the saving of the soul, is thus described, ver. 23. *But he that received seed into the good ground, is he that heareth the word, and UNDERSTANDETH IT, &c.* Those others may appear to men to understand the word of faith as clearly as this last. Their faith may have the same marks with his of being genuine. It may be attended with the same signs of repentance, with the same expressions of desire and joy, or the same appearances of hope and love; while yet they do not understand  
stand



stand the word of faith as he does. They do not understand how the bare word of faith, or Christ's death alone, can give them peace with God, without some pious requisite or other, which they secretly either hope to attain, or presume they have already acquired. Some secret notion of the necessity of some difference betwixt themselves and others, is lodged in their minds along with the knowledge they have of the truth. And though the new knowledge they have got may make many warm and kindly impressions on their hearts, and shew itself in many amiable appearances in their lives; yet the little old leaven which is still retained, however much it may lie hid for a time, will, by degrees, leaven the whole lump. Their whole religion will become subservient to the darling reserve made for their pride; and it will require only a proper temptation to lay them open.

To have a more full view of this matter, we may take notice of some facts recorded in the gospel-history. Luke iv. 16—30. In the synagogue of Nazareth, on the sabbath-day, Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah these words: *The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, &c.*; adding, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.* The effect of his address to the people, is described in these words: *And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. — And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said,*



*said, Is not this Joseph's son?* From this animated description, we see what lively impressions of divine grace filled the minds of all the people. Their eyes were fastened on him; they all bare him witness, heartily approving the application of the prophet's words, and so acknowledging him for the Saviour of Israel: Yea, moreover, wondering at the grace which flowed from his lips, so as they could scarce believe their own eyes, that he was JOSEPH's son, who had been brought up from his childhood in their city.—Had one of our popular preachers beheld this audience, he had certainly pronounced them all converted. But Jesus perceived a mistake about divine grace hinted in their question, *Is not this Joseph's son?* This mistake he unfolds, and opposes, in the following words: *Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: Whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years, and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land: But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet: And none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.*

No mistake about the gospel can appear to us more natural, than the sentiment of the people of Nazareth. They fondly imagined, that seeing  
their



their fellow-citizen, who had proved a very acceptable neighbour, growing up among them from his childhood in favour with God and man, had now turned out to be the Saviour foretold by all the prophets, they had some natural claim upon him ; and that it would not be equal and reasonable, or suitable to the love of one's country, that others should be benefited by him, and they neglected, they who had grown up with him, and mutually exchanged many kind offices during their long acquaintance. Yet so great was their awful respect, that they durst only insinuate their sentiment in the most distant manner in the question, *Is not this Joseph's son?*

Jesus perceives their meaning, and speaks it out for them : *You will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself.* And the first check he gives them is in these words : *Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.* He who, being endowed with extraordinary powers from above, speaks and acts for the Deity, must look above all the particular ties by which any one part of mankind is connected together, and distinguished from the rest ; and therefore must be more especially unacceptable to those of his own neighbourhood or country, who will naturally claim the chief benefit of the abilities he is endowed with. Then he proceeds to remind them, in what manner, and how, contrary to all human expectations, the divine favours were distributed in the days of ELIJAH and ELISHA. In the days of the former, though many widows were in Israel, a Canaanish woman receives



receives the distinguished favour. In the days of the latter, though many lepers were in Iſrael, only the captain of an hostile prince's army is cleansed.—All the while, he takes no notice of what devout people now would call their eager looks or acts of faith, fastening upon, or taking hold of Christ, the lively sense they had of their need of him, the rapturous impressions of grace, or yet their ardent longings to enjoy him with all his benefits, except it be in the way of repulsing them.

It is time now to observe how the audience was affected when Jesus had thus explained himself, *And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill (whereon their city was built) that they might cast him down headlong.* How soon is the fervent piety of these people changed into mortal spite? Yet nothing but our inattention can make us think their case any way singular or extraordinary. For it is a very common sight at this day, to see people of the first reputation for piety, who can weep very devoutly at hearing their favourite sermons, and talk for hours together of the impressions that grace has made upon their hearts, very forward and zealous in shewing their contempt and spite against the doctrine of the true grace of God.

I shall close my view of this passage with observing, that Jesus, *passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum; where he preached for some time, and healed many;*



many ; and thence proceeded in like manner through the other cities of Galilee. Thus he gave evidence to his own disciples of his divine power to rescue himself from death, and disappoint all his enemies. And thus he continued to distribute his favours among those who were considered by the wiser or more enlightened part of the nation as sitting in darkness, and under the shadow of death. And thus he foreshewed, how he would withdraw his favours from the Jewish nation, who claimed a relation to God beyond others, and bestow them freely on the Gentiles, who were not looking for them. Thus ended the long acquaintance which had subsisted betwixt Jesus and his fellow-citizens of Nazareth. For we do not hear that he ever visited them any more.—So fatal is a mistake about the divine grace ! And in such dismal consequences does it issue !

LET US NOW consider a little the account given us of the ten lepers that were cleansed, *Luke xvii. 11—19.*

If by the cleansing, which was common to all the ten, we understand, that *escaping the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, which is common to those who understand the truth, and those who believe for a while ; we shall then perceive the difference betwixt these two sorts of believers properly pointed out to us, by the different behaviour of the nine from that of the tenth.



All the ten uttered the same prayer, *Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.* They were all cleansed\*. But one of them comes to be distinguished from the rest, in the following manner: *And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole.* Hence it is evident, that this stranger, as Jesus designs him, when he takes notice of his thankfulness, had a very different notion of mercy from the other nine. The other nine were Jews, so judged they had a nearer and more natural claim than strangers upon any merciful dispensation which God exhibited in their nation. And as they received only the same favour that was as freely bestowed on a stranger, even

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\* In HENRY'S commentary on this place we find the following curious note. "As they went they were cleansed, and so became fit to be looked upon by the priest, and to have a certificate from him that they were clean. Observe, Then we may expect God to meet us with mercy, when we are found in the way of duty. If we do what we can, God will not be wanting to do that for us which we cannot. Go attend upon instituted ordinances, go and pray, and read the scriptures; *Go shew thyself to the priest;* go and open thy case to a faithful minister: And though the means will not heal thee of themselves, God will heal thee in the diligent use of those means." In this note we see verified the old saying, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh:" For however fit the note may be to provoke some readers to smile, it would seem the author was very grave when he wrote it.



even the worst of aliens, a Samaritan, as on them, they did not think very highly of the matter. Their hearts were not filled with such gratitude as his, who could think of no reason for his being cleansed, but *mere mercy* properly so called. So this last receives the countenance and approbation of Jesus, in opposition to the other nine.

Jesus reads to us the very same lesson, from the comparison which he makes betwixt SIMON the Pharisee, with whom he dined, and the notoriously sinful woman who anointed his feet; which he illustrates by the parable of the two debtors, *Luke vii. 36.* — The intended instruction is summed up to us in ver. 47. where Jesus points at the evidence and proof of the woman's having received forgiveness: *Her sins which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.* And from the whole passage taken together, it evidently appears, that he to whom little is said to be forgiven, so loveth little, has good ground to fear lest he be found at last not to be forgiven at all: Even as he who, by breaking, and teaching others to break, the least of the divine commandments, runs the risk of being called *the least in the kingdom of heaven*, plainly runs the risk of being excluded the kingdom of heaven altogether. The more closely we consider the sayings of Jesus Christ, the greater difference shall we perceive betwixt the spirit of Christianity and that of the books most universally approved among us. Mr RICHARDSON,  
VOL. II. E in



in a work \*, where the professed design is, “to  
 “ inculcate upon the human mind, under the  
 “ guise of an amusement, the great lessons of  
 “ Christianity,” says, near the end of the *con-*  
*clusion*, which is supposed to be written by Mr  
 BELFORD, a reformed libertine, “Happy is the  
 “ man who, in time of health and strength, sees  
 “ and reforms the errors of his ways!—But how  
 “ much more happy is he who has no capital and  
 “ wilful errors to repent of! How unmixed and  
 “ sincere must the joys of such a one come to  
 “ him!” I shall only observe here, what every  
 one of his readers will readily perceive, that this  
 quotation contains the spirit and substance of all  
 that this author has writ; but how far agreeable  
 to Christianity, every lover of the New Testament  
 may easily judge.

Let us next learn from the words of Jesus,  
 how infants at the beginning of life, and how  
 condemned felons at the end of it, enter into  
 the kingdom of God. Thence we shall see how  
 little account the Deity makes of all the mighty  
 bustle of our thoughts throughout the busy scene  
 of life.

The first case is set before us *Luke xviii. 15—*  
*17. And they brought unto him also infants, that*  
*he should touch them: But when his disciples saw*  
*it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto*  
*him, and said, Suffer little children to come unto*  
*me, and forbid them not: For of such is the king-*  
*dom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever*  
*shall*

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\* CLARISSA HARLOWE.



*shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.* One great advantage we have by the gospel history, is, that we find the same mistakes about the kingdom of God, which were afterwards to take place among the professors of Christianity, arising in the minds of the first disciples, so as to be taken notice of by their Lord, and rebuked by him, for our instruction. As to the present case, we find the disciples thought it impertinent to bring infants to Jesus, seeing they could not give heed to his word, nor have their souls exercised about sin and righteousness, nor profess faith and repentance like themselves. By the like reasonings do some of our devoutest Dissenters forbid little children to be brought to Christ to be blessed of him in partaking of the *one baptism*, which the scripture plainly shews to be the common privilege of the *one body* of the *one Lord*, or of that heavenly kingdom to which the infants of believing parents are declared to belong. Jesus rebukes the disciples, and gives them plainly to understand, that if they did not enter into the kingdom of God on the very same footing with infants, or if they imagined they could contribute any thing to their entrance more than they, they should be forever excluded thence.

The other case is described to us in the account which *Luke*, chapter xxiii. 39—43. gives of one of the malefactors crucified along with Jesus. This is the noted passage on which the far greater part of preachers discover their disaffection to the divine grace, and consequently to the salvation of



mankind. This may be considered as a principal touchstone of the regard men profess to the sacred truth. Here the fashionable and the popular preachers take one another by the hand in a friendly manner. And in general it may be said, that though these two sorts of men do not choose to walk long in company together, yet they meet as it were by instinct, without any material difference, on all the most important occasions. Their different schemes resemble our old and new made roads in some parts of the country; which though they frequently take different courses for a considerable way, the one shorter and the other longer, do yet now and then intersect each other, and are sure to coincide at the end of every remarkable stage.

My quarrel with the Archbishop, whom I formerly quoted on this subject, is very moderate. He was a moral philosopher, and it would seem that it was chiefly in compliance with the rites of his country, that he gave any place to the name of Jesus Christ in his scheme of religion. For his scheme would suffer no great loss by the want of that name. The like may be said of Mr LOCKE, and many other philosophical Christians. My principal quarrel is with those who give out themselves for preachers of Christ, and of salvation only through his name. How often do they tell us, that we have but one instance of a hardened sinner finding mercy at the close of life? And they insist upon it in such a manner, as if they deeply grudged mankind the benefit of that one instance. But happy is it for mankind, that that

one



one instance cannot be overthrown, but will stand unshaken, to the eternal confusion of all who bear any grudge against it. Might they not also tell us, that we have but one instance of Christ's dying for the sins of men, that that day is past long ago, and that the like will never happen again? Perhaps it would surprise us to hear any preacher talking at this rate; but how great must our surprise be if Mr FLAVEL were the person? Mr FLAVEL, who has long been considered as an eminent *master* in what is called *our Israel*, in a treatise called *The fountain of life, Sermon xxxii. on Luke xxiii. 43.* amidst a great deal to the same purpose, has the following words. "And there  
 " is this one instance in the text, and no more,  
 " that gives us an account of a person so called.  
 " Such a conversion as this may not be ordinarily  
 " expected by any man, because such a time as  
 " that will never come again: It is possible if  
 " Christ were to die again, and thou to be crucified  
 " with him, thou mightst receive thy conversion  
 " in such a miraculous and extraordinary way;  
 " but Christ dies no more; such a day as that  
 " will never come again."

Thus the preacher leaves no room for any such sinner as the thief on the cross to hope for salvation, unless Christ were to die again, which is acknowledged to be impossible.

But stay, let us see what he is afraid of. He is afraid lest men delay their conversion at present, in the hope of being converted at last. For all men are supposed to be desirous of being converted some time or other before they die. What then



shall we understand by *conversion* here? If by *conversion faith* be meant, shall we say, that men harden themselves at present in judging any testimony to be false, by living in the comfortable hope of holding it true at last? This will never do. By *conversion* then we must here understand the changing of a sinner's heart to love righteousness and hate iniquity, even that change with which the promise of life is connected in *Ezekiel xxxiii.* This change, or some pretence to it, is the same thing with what is called *repentance* by all those who declaim largely on the inefficacy of a *death-bed-repentance*.

Now, seeing the hope of the guilty is made to take its rise from the consciousness of this change, the preachers certainly do well to warn their hearers by all means to take special care, that this change be as early, and as sincere as possible: "For, alas! How little is it that a sick and dying man can do in such a strait of time?" Whereas a healthy young man may easily be persuaded that he can do a great deal in this matter; and moreover, that he has no such occasion to blush before his Maker, or question his friendly concurrence, as an old sinner, who has delayed his efforts to the last. All the while, I do most heartily agree with the preachers, in maintaining, that he who does not find himself disposed at present to forsake all evil, and fulfil all righteousness, has no reason whatsoever to expect that ever he shall find in himself that disposition in any future period of his life, not to mention his dying hour.

However, it is granted, that the happy change,  
which



which is supposed to be the source of good hope, was wrought in the heart of one dying thief in a miraculous and extraordinary way. And while this is granted, we are warned not to imagine, that in an ordinary way any ground of hope remains for dying criminals now, seeing it is not every day that the Saviour dies. We are left to conclude, then, that the ordinary way of attaining good hope, is by endeavouring to make our hearts beat time to the moving addresses of a fervent preacher. Yea, we have got arguments framed to our hand, which lead us to infer, from the old extraordinary cases, much more probability of success in the ordinary way. According to the sentiments of a noted preacher, whom I formerly quoted near the end of my Third Letter, we must reason thus. “ If Christ was anciently  
 “ found of them that sought him not, even of  
 “ them that followed not after righteousness,  
 “ how much more will he now be found of  
 “ them that seek him according to the directions  
 “ given in Sermons ?” Mean while it gives me some satisfaction to perceive, that these gentlemen are themselves conscious, that there is a real difference betwixt the ancient and the modern, or betwixt the extraordinary and the ordinary conversion ; though I have not the satisfaction of finding that their knowledge of this difference does them any good ; while I see them making use of the divine conduct of old as a prop to support their modern inventions. To have a proper view of this matter, we must conceive it thus : God brought sinful men into favour with



himself of old in a miraculous and extraordinary way. He acted then beyond and above the course of nature, raising the dead, and calling into being things that were not ; choosing the naughty, the weak and base things of the world, and leaving the mighty to glory in their abilities. But now all things move in their natural channel. Now men are justified in a plain, ordinary, and natural way. It was indeed extraordinary and miraculous, to see men who had no righteousness of their own, made happy by the knowledge of the divine righteousness revealed to them ; but it is quite ordinary and natural to see men glorying in a conceit of their own.

I formerly quoted Mr BOSTON on this subject, declaring, “ It is unreasonable to think, that it  
 “ should fare at the last with those who have  
 “ had means of grace all their days, and despised  
 “ them, as it may do with those who never have  
 “ such means till they come to die.” I shall give a few more of his words from the same Sermon. “ This conversion of the thief, doubt-  
 “ less, was a perfect surprise to him, a thing he  
 “ was not looking for. What is his example  
 “ to thee? Is it rational for thee to expect that  
 “ favour which one has sometimes been surprised  
 “ with, and got when he was not looking for it?  
 “ —The conversion of the thief on the cross was  
 “ an extraordinary manifestation of our Lord’s  
 “ power, made for special reasons. And there-  
 “ fore, though it shews what the Lord can do,  
 “ it does not shew what ordinarily he will do.—  
 “ It was done in such a juncture of time, as the  
 “ like



“ like never was, and the like never will be again;  
 “ namely, when the Lord of glory, the Saviour  
 “ of the world, was actually hanging upon the  
 “ cross, paying the ransom for the lost elect  
 “ world,” &c. To this I shall add one other  
 quotation, from the close of *The afflicted man's  
 Companion*, written by Mr WILLISON, whose  
 books are in great repute with thousands of devout  
 people. “ The scriptures contain a history of  
 “ more than four thousand years; and yet during  
 “ all that time we have but one example of a  
 “ man that truly and sincerely repented when he  
 “ came to die: And in this man's case there was  
 “ such an extraordinary conjunction of circum-  
 “ stances, as never happened before, and can  
 “ never fall out again to the end of the world.  
 “ This man had the happiness to die close by the  
 “ newly-pierced side and bleeding wounds of a  
 “ crucified Jesus, when he was lifted up in the  
 “ height of his love, drawing sinners to salvation;  
 “ which was a juncture that can never have a  
 “ parallel.—Again, the man never had any offer  
 “ of Christ, nor day of grace, before now; he  
 “ surrendered himself upon the very first call;  
 “ and his faith in Christ at this time was truly  
 “ singular and miraculous.—Besides, your way  
 “ of sinning differs vastly from his. He was not  
 “ guilty of presumption, as you are; he did  
 “ not slight Christ's calls and offers in the day  
 “ of his health, and delay his repenting and  
 “ closing with them, in hopes of an opportu-  
 “ nity for them at the hour of death, as you  
 “ do.” According to this reasoning, it may well  
 be



be said, Wo to the *afflicted man*, if the sense of his own *merit* utterly fail him at the hour of death !

Never could PROTEUS assume more shapes, or change them with greater dexterity, than these men do, in order to evade and oppose the revelation of divine grace. From these two quotations we have a lively view of their dexterity this way. In the present case we are given to understand, that divine grace was stretched beyond its natural extent, to an extraordinary height. And, agreeably enough to this, we are taught to think, that the atonement had then an extraordinary merit and virtue. “ The sacrifice for sin was then bleeding, “ his side newly pierced, and he was lifted up in “ the height of his love.” But these are not all the extraordinary circumstances we are reminded of here. The pardoned sinner had extraordinary merit, namely, of the negative kind ; for when all are allowed to be sinners, he who is least guilty, is supposed to have most merit, as having least demerit. Now, this sinner, in comparison with wicked sinners, who harden themselves in sin with presumptuous hopes, had no guilt, no demerit at all. Moreover, we must think, that he had within him a very lively spark of goodness, which, though hitherto smothered by bad company, needed only to get air, in order to blow up into a vigorous flame. For he surrendered himself upon the very first call. And then, his faith in Christ at this time was truly singular and miraculous, and therefore justly deserved to be taken notice of, and rewarded in a very singular and  
and



and miraculous manner. Thus all the extraordinary circumstances here conjoined, tally together in the most agreeable manner. Extraordinary mercy was, upon an extraordinary occasion, shewn to extraordinary worth. But in ordinary cases, men would do well to expect only ordinary mercy. For as the eminent prelate whom I formerly quoted, hath told us, “ We are not like to  
 “ suffer in the company of the *Son of God*, and  
 “ of the Saviour of the world. And if we could  
 “ do so, it is not certain, that we should behave  
 “ ourselves toward him so well as the *penitent*  
 “ *thief* did, and make so very good an end of so  
 “ very bad a life.”

The popular preachers could not have chosen a more proper place to shew their real sentiments, than within view of the very cross of Christ, and the transactions that happened there. The appearance of divine grace, pouring contempt on all boasted human worth, is so striking here, that it is no wonder to find them stumbling at it. And here it is indeed that they lay themselves open. Methinks, from their doctrine on this head, we may get hold of some idea of their *faith*, which they labour so much to cover with mist, and hide in the dark. The idea of it, that will best correspond with their doctrine, on this part of sacred history, stands thus. *Faith*, we must say, is a *pious resolve* to become better men than we were before. It is a *little green bud*, which must be put forth in the spring, in the prospect of blossoming all summer, and ripening into fruit in the autumn, before the winter of old age, or of  
 sickness



sickness and death, arrives. In this view of matters, their doctrine becomes so far quite plain and intelligible. For what regard, in an ordinary way, is to be paid to a dying criminal resolving to reform? Are his resolutions to be trusted? Can he expect to be treated on a footing with one who has time before his hand to put them in practice? “With what face can he apply himself to God in this extremity, whom he hath so disdainfully neglected all the days of his life? And how can he have the confidence to hope, that God will hear his cries, and regard his tears, that are forced from him in this day of his necessity?” Whereas the pious resolves, the prayers and tears of a blooming young man, must no doubt bear a very different consideration. But then a question naturally arises here, that would require a very able casuist to determine: How shall a healthy young man, resolving at sun-set to reform, do it in hopes of acceptance, or be assured that he shall see the light of the next day, that he may have an opportunity of shewing the sincerity of his resolves, by putting them in practice? Perhaps it will be readily answered, that his resolves may be accounted sincere, who makes them in perfect health, out of pure hatred of sin, and love of righteousness, un-compelled by the fear of sickness, death, or future judgment\*.

But

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\* An author, who himself knew no better cure for a guilty conscience than *pious resolves*, has however written some lines, which I think may be pertinently quoted here.



But here again, more difficulties occur than we have time to mention. The popular doctrine, then, however plain and natural some parts may seem, will not lead us far straight forward ; and no sooner does it oblige us to turn the first corner, than it leads us into darkness and confusion.

We must then either grope in the dark, along with the popular doctrine ; or we must follow the scripture, and say, that all who receive the kingdom of God, receive it on the same footing with infants and dying criminals, and find mercy in the same miraculous way with them ;—that all who believe the gospel, find in it a righteousness sufficient to recommend them to the divine favour, at all events, whether they live or die, without seeing the least difference betwixt themselves and any dying malefactor.

To

Of man's miraculous mistakes, this bears  
The palm, " That all men are about to live,"  
For ever on the brink of being born.  
All pay themselves the compliment to think,  
They, one day, shall not drivel ; and their pride  
On this reversion takes up ready praise ;  
At least, their own ; their future selves applaud ;  
How excellent that life they *ne'er* will lead !

All *promise* is poor dilatory man,  
And that through every stage :

At *thirty* man *suspects* himself a fool ;  
*Knows* it at *forty*, and reforms his plan ;  
At *fifty* chides his infamous delay,  
Pushes his prudent purpose to *resolve* ;  
In all the magnanimity of thought  
Resolves ; and re-resolves : Then dies the same.

*Young's Night-Thoughts.*



To ease the popular preachers of any further trouble with *this one instance*, which they have so long gnawed upon, of a hardened sinner finding mercy at the gates of death, a gentleman of distinction in the church of Scotland, the late Dr WISHART, hath contrived a method to account for the salvation of the thief on the cross, in a natural way, without any miracle at all. This he has done in a discourse, called, *An Essay on the indispensable necessity of a holy and good Life to the happiness of Heaven ; shewing, that this necessity, according to the plain tenor of the Gospel, is without any reserve or exception.* He ought also to have said, that the holiness necessary to begin our happiness, must be without any reserve or exception ; for, according to the scripture, none enter happiness but they who are *perfectly* righteous. In this discourse, he undertakes to shew it to be “ a thing impossible, that “ a man should go on in a vicious course to the “ last, and then obtain the salvation of his soul,” *p. 9.* To prevent mistakes about words, it may be proper to observe, that, by *the last*, he all along means the time when one is confined to his deathbed, especially the latter part of that time, or when a criminal is led forth to execution. In the preface he says, “ The chief matter contained in the following paper appears to me, “ after a long and deliberate consideration, to be “ the truth of God, plainly declared in his word.” “ This publication stands in need of no apology. “ I have, indeed, been long and strongly prompted to it by my own heart, as the best service I “ could



“ could think it in my power to do, for the  
 “ honour of God, and the greatest good of my  
 “ fellow-creatures.” And he has a rebuke ready  
 prepared for such as shall “ impute to bad or  
 “ finistrous designs, what (*says he*) I know to be  
 “ written with the most honest purpose.” So that  
 whatever come of the gospel, we are not allowed  
 to make any reflections against the integrity and  
 holiness of this author. And no doubt it would be  
 the more rude to do so, as the leading sentiment  
 in this *Essay* is still warmly espoused by not a few  
 preachers \*.

One

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\* On this sentiment we have the following improvement in Mr  
 MACKNIGHT'S *Harmony of the four Gospels*, Pag. 192. Paraphrase.  
 “ Matth. xxvii. 44. *The thieves also which were crucified with him,*  
 “ *cast the same in his teeth.* LUKE says, that only one of them did  
 “ so. The other exercised a most extraordinary faith \*, at a time  
 “ when our Lord was deserted by God, mocked by men, and hang-  
 “ ed upon a cross, as the worst of malefactors.”

The note is. \* “ It has generally been thought, that this grace  
 “ was begun in the thief, and raised to perfection, all of a sudden,  
 “ and on the present occasion too, when every circumstance con-  
 “ curred to hinder him from believing. Yet it is far from being  
 “ certain, that either his faith or repentance were the fruits of this  
 “ particular season. He was acquainted with our Lord's character,  
 “ before he came to punishment, as is plain from the testimony he  
 “ bare to his innocence, *This man hath done nothing amiss.* He may  
 “ therefore have often heard our Lord preach in the course of his  
 “ ministry, and may have seen many of his miracles ; and from the  
 “ consideration of both joined together, may have been solidly  
 “ convinced that he was the Messiah. Nay, it is possible, that he  
 “ may have been a good man, as well as a professed disciple of  
 “ Christ. For his untimely and misfortunate end might be occasi-  
 “ oned by a single act of gross wickedness, of which he sincerely  
 “ repented, and into which faints themselves may fall, through  
 “ the strength of temptation, consistently with their being in a  
 “ state of grace : Witness DAVID'S adultery and murder. The  
 “ thing I say is possible. And therefore those who encourage  
 “ them-



One thing is very evident in this *Essay*, that the author labours much to possess our minds with an idea of the former life of the criminal pardoned on the cross by Jesus, very different from that given us by LUKE, or any other of the evangelists. Whether LUKE or he wrote with the best design, or the greatest regard for the honour of God, and the good of mankind, is a question proper to be considered by such as read them both. Were we left entirely to form no other notion of that criminal's character, but what arises to us from the words of LUKE, we should think of him neither more nor less, but that he was a *thief*. On the other hand, if we are disposed to form our notions of him from the *Essay*, we shall conclude, that the infamous expression under which LUKE sums up all he has to say of his character, denotes only a single blemish in one of the best of lives, long ago wiped off by repentance and amendment. The author of the *Essay*, after noting LUKE's words, says, *p.* 87, 88. "He might, for all that, have  
" been

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" themselves in sin from this example, as if it was an instance of  
" a late accepted repentance, proceed upon suppositions, which  
" though they may have existed, yet no man can be certain of ;  
" while, in the mean time, the matter is of such undeniable  
" importance, that it loudly demands the exclusion of every  
" doubt."

In this age of refinement on the gospel, we are not to be surprised, if we soon hear our preachers of first note gravely remarking, that the honest thief well deserved to find mercy ; and that, in reference to the well-known parable, it was but natural and rational, that the *good* publican should go down to his house justified, rather than the *wicked* Pharisee. See the ingenious turn which this commentator gives to this parable !



“ been an *early* saint, and a very good man in  
 “ the main ; and have led a very good life in his  
 “ former days, for the most part : He may, for  
 “ any thing we are told, have been surpris’d  
 “ through weakness, or tempted by want, to the  
 “ crime he committed ; and have met with his  
 “ just condemnation for the *first*, and the *only*  
 “ instance of it he had been guilty of.” And a  
 little after he proceeds thus. “ It may, for any  
 “ thing we are told, have been a long time since  
 “ he was guilty of the crime, before he suffered  
 “ for it ; during *all* which time, he may have  
 “ been going on in a course of sincere repentance,  
 “ and thorough amendment.” Our author is  
 not content with suggesting, that thus the case  
 might be ; but he urges us to think it really was  
 so, by the following argument, backed with an  
 awful reproof to such as shall adventure to think  
 otherwise. “ And if it *may* be so, for any thing  
 “ we are *here* told ; then it is plain, we have no  
 “ ground *here* given us to reckon it was other-  
 “ wise ; and what *other* ground can we have for  
 “ it ? And if we will take the liberty to *supply*,  
 “ or add to any passage of scripture, from our  
 “ own fancies [*pertinently spoken by our author*]  
 “ or traditionary prejudices ; we may easily, that  
 “ way, *wrest to our own destruction*, any passages  
 “ of *scripture* whatsoever, even the plainest and  
 “ most *easy to be understood*.” Having thus straitly  
 charged us not to contradict a word of the history  
 of this criminal’s former good life, now for the  
 first time published, because no evangelist has  
 writ a particular confutation of it ; he proceeds,



in *p.* 89. to offer us a proof of it, from his behaviour on the cross. “ We can observe nothing  
 “ in the whole of his behaviour like the *contrition*,  
 “ sorrow, or fears of a man *conscious* to himself,  
 “ that hitherto he had been going on in a sinful  
 “ course; and pierced with the *conviction*, that  
 “ to this moment he was in a most dangerous  
 “ state; but rather like the *confidence* of an *im-*  
 “ *proved saint*, of a man conscious to himself that  
 “ he was in a good state, had been early convert-  
 “ ed, and had brought forth *fruits meet for re-*  
 “ *pentance* long ago. Here is no coming trembling  
 “ with the *jailor*, no downcast looks with the  
 “ *publican*.”

If one, after reading this modern *Essay*, should look into the gospel-history, must he not be surprised, why LUKE gives no hint of a difference in the characters of the two thieves; especially seeing the interests of virtue and holiness are so much at stake here; and seeing the circumstances attending the death of Jesus, were likely to be very often considered among Christians? But then, his surprise will be either quite removed, or else greatly increased, if he shall take time to read over LUKE and the other evangelists, where he will find many incidents related of the life of Jesus, exceedingly confounding to the patrons of virtue and holiness in that age, and withal very encouraging to the more dissolute part of mankind; yea, where he will find such accounts of divine grace, and such distributions of divine favours, as quite break through and supersede all the rules of equity and proportion maintained  
 among



among us. If one of our patrons of virtue were the reader, he would very readily take umbrage at the contrast stated betwixt the Pharisee and publican, in Luke xviii. 9—14. ; unless some ingenious commentator were at hand to inform him of some circumstances, omitted in the gospel-history, which yet are not formally and particularly contradicted there : As, that the publican was in reality a very good sort of man, and that, being of a very scrupulous conscience, he was ready, through his great humility, to call himself a sinner, and ask mercy ; — that the Pharisee was a gross hypocrite, a lying slanderer, very covetous, and a great smuggler ; so had a great contempt for honest tax-gatherers, and looked on all they took from him as injustice and extortion ; that accordingly, when he was at his prayers, and provoked by the sight of one of these officers of the revenue, he gave vent to his ill-nature, accusing him falsely of the most scandalous vices, and no less falsely ascribing to himself the opposite virtues : That, to enforce all, it could not otherwise have been said in the text, agreeably to nature, and the interests of virtue and holiness, that the publican *went down to his house justified rather than the other*. Thus, by the help of a little dexterity, many difficulties in the gospel-history, that have proved very stumbling to the ancient and modern guardians of holiness, might be entirely removed.

All the while, I do most heartily agree with the author of the *Essay*, in affirming, as in p. 7,



and 8. “ That there is no promise nor instance,  
 “ in the whole word of God, of that repentance  
 “ being accepted of him at last, or availing to  
 “ obtain the happiness of the other world, which  
 “ comes not till the last moment or hour of life ;  
 “ far less which is purposely deferred till then.”  
 I likewise agree with his account of that repen-  
 tance which has the promise of acceptance with  
 God, in *p.* 70. “ *If the wicked turn from his*  
 “ *sin, and do that which is lawful and right ; if*  
 “ *he walk in the statutes of life, without commit-*  
 “ *ing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not*  
 “ *die.*”

But to bring our remarks on this *Essay* to a close : Though the preface will not suffer us to suspect the integrity of the author, yet methinks those who are confessedly the guilty part of mankind, have some reason to complain of his want of generosity. If he and his fellows, after having duly qualified themselves, can boldly take their seat as the *children* of the kingdom, and claim all the blessings thereof ; why should he grudge to let fall one crumb to the *dogs* under the table ? Might not a few lines of the gospel, relating the happy end of one worthless fellow, be suffered to remain in the simple form wherein they were writ, to serve as the *dernier* resource of poor dying criminals, to whom at first sight they seem to belong ?

LET us now attend to the words of the evangelists. Mark xv. 27, 28. *And with him they crucify two thieves ; the one on his right hand,*  
*and*



*and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors.* Jesus, before he was betrayed made mention of the same prophecy to his disciples, as yet to be accomplished in him, *Luke xxii. 37.* Thus we see, that special notice is taken of this memorable circumstance, which stands, among many others, foretold of his death, in *Isaiah liii.* The last words of that chapter run thus: *He hath poured out his soul unto death: And he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.* Jesus seems to point to the same passage, when he says, *The Son of man came to give his life a ransom for many.*

As the death of Christ was intended for a ground of hope to men in the most desperate cases; so the circumstances attending his death were wisely adapted to serve that grand purpose, which so well becomes divine mercy: *The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.* If the least shadow of respect to human worth had been shewn here, then nothing but despair had remained for the utterly worthless, the only persons for whose relief the grand remedy was provided.

Had Jesus, at his death, been numbered with men of equal repute with NOAH, DANIEL, and JOB, he had certainly, in all propriety of speech, been numbered with *transgressors.* But then, what encouragement had remained for those, who are not only self-condemned, but have also forfeited all title to the esteem of their fellow-



creatures? What ground of hope had remained for those in the most desperate circumstances, where divine mercy delights chiefly to interpose?

But happy was it for men, that the holy One and the Just suffered in the character of the *worst* of mankind. He was numbered with such as all the world agree to call *transgressors*, with such as have always been thought unworthy to live. He was deemed unworthy to live by his own nation, who interceded for, and obtained the releasement of BARABBAS.

When the just One was thus numbered with transgressors, and crucified betwixt two of them, who had been led forth with him, so had access to observe what passed on the way, as well as what happened after they were nailed to the cross, one of the two being given to understand, by what he heard and saw, what for a person he was who hung crucified betwixt him and his fellow-transgressor; and, on seeing what was done in the *green tree*, fearing what might befall the *dry*, so dreading a far greater punishment in the other world, than he was presently suffering in this, dissents from, and rebukes his fellow for joining with the Jews, and presents his supplication to Jesus. And thus he shews us what his faith was.

The rebuke runs thus, *Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: But this person hath done nothing amiss. He hath done nothing amiss, spoken no blas-*



blasphemy in calling himself the Son of God, and affirming, that God delighted in him. And it is no objection to this, that he neither seeks to save himself nor us from this condemnation. He is, in this very suffering, pleasing his Father, by doing his will; while he suffers most unjustly from the hands of men that punishment which is the due reward of our deeds. Dost not thou fear that God whose delight is in him, and whose wrath is pointed against all who oppose him? Though all the world do presently agree with thee in despising him, will this screen thee from the wrath of the Almighty? He is indeed a king, as he said, while yet he hath done nothing amiss against Cesar. Nor is it any objection to his majesty, that he thus suffers death; for by this very path he goes to take possession of his kingdom above with his Father.

Then he addresses himself to Jesus, and pays him the highest worship that mortal can pay to ought that is called God; while he presents to him his last and dying prayer about his eternal concerns, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* Jesus answers him with that majesty and condescension which alone became the Lord of the highest heaven; *Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* And thus he approved, ratified, and confirmed the faith of the transgressor.

Let us then observe what was the faith of this transgressor, as it appeared in the expression of it. No difference filled his mind, or took place in his thoughts, but that immense one betwixt himself,



a sinner of the vilest class, and the perfection of righteousness shining forth in a person of the highest dignity, under the severest trials. This is the proper point of view at which sinful men come to the knowledge of the true God. To this point was PAUL, that eminent guardian of virtue and holiness, reduced, when he became a Christian. And thus he beheld the grace which relieved him to be *exceeding abundant*. After giving a list of sinners, unholy, profane, murderers, whoremongers, &c. he lets us know his own rank, when he points to the gracious truth which relieved him, *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am THE CHIEF.*

It is evident, that he who prayed to Jesus on the cross, saw no difference betwixt himself and his fellow-criminal. The above-mentioned immense difference alone occupied his mind. And it is remarkable, that, in order to his finding mercy, he is no way concerned to see this difference lessened. As we do not find the publican in the parable envying the excellency of the Pharisee, or wishing to be made like him, that he might be better prepared for mercy; so neither does this criminal pray for any gracious change to be wrought in him to distinguish him from his wicked companion, that so he might be a more meet object for the compassion of Jesus. His prayer proceeds wholly on the persuasion, that the righteous One was able to befriend in the other world him who had no prospect of retrieving matters in this. And this is *the prayer*  
*of*



*of faith*, that never yet failed of an answer in peace, or to be attended with a sense of the divine favour in the conscience of the supplicant.— Had this sinner been instructed by such famous preachers as I have seen attending criminals led to execution, he had no doubt first of all prayed for a *new heart*, strength to act faith, or some such requisite to justification.

From this part of sacred history, then, we find, that Jesus was not only so numbered with transgressors, as to sustain the character of the *worst*\* of them; but he was also so numbered with them unto death, as that the *worst* of them might be numbered unto life with him. It was necessary, that the Saviour should thus be numbered with transgressors, that all the redeemed of the Lord might see the divine grace in the same point of view.—Let every man then choose his own company. Let him who is ashamed of such low company as this, by all means keep his proper distance. Let him follow the ancient and modern patrons of holiness, who will furnish him with a Deity according to his taste.—He who hopes to be saved on any other footing than the thief on the cross, or who hopes to stand on more honourable terms with his maker than he, must be saved by another kind of grace, so by another

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\* Though in one respect it may be said, that there is a sort of impropriety in using such comparative expressions on this subject; yet, in setting forth the divine grace in its true light, there is a manifest necessity for using them; because it is constantly imagined among men, that the Deity regards them according to those distinctions by which they regard one another.



another God, a God who delights in such a character as is highly esteemed among men, and who has no grace to bestow but on such a character.

To shew what a vast difference there is betwixt the divine character, and what is worshipped by the popular preachers, I would have it observed, that such mercy as was shewn to the thief on the cross, is characteristic of the true God, and is made use of to exhibit to us the grandest view of the divine majesty and glory. See that notable prophecy concerning the kingdom of the Messiah in Psalm cii. 16, to 21. *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. This shall be written for the generation to come; and the people which shall be created, shall praise the Lord. For he looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth; TO HEAR THE GROANING OF THE PRISONER, TO LOOSE THOSE THAT ARE APPOINTED TO DEATH; to declare the name of the Lord in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem.* This is one of those sublime passages on which it would be difficult to give any commentary without defacing it.—But I may be bold to say that it is full to my purpose.

These passages of scripture we have been considering may suffice to shew, how the saving grace of God revealed in the gospel was known and distinguished from all counterfeits, by those whose apprehension of it was approved by the Lord and Saviour.

WE



WE may now proceed to take notice of the capital absurdity of the popular doctrine. It leads us to read the New Testament backwards. It sets before us the several effects or fruits of faith, or rather certain operations of its own, under the sacred names of these effects; and then prompts us to work our way to faith, by first attaining or feeling these effects. Hence it is, that we have so many treatises describing to us the previous steps necessary to be taken in order to conversion. Long and dreary indeed is the path which they prescribe to us. So that, while men continue obsequious hearers of this doctrine, they may indeed be "ever learning, but they shall never be able to come to the knowledge of the truth." The writers of these treatises do in one respect often resemble the writers of romances\*. The latter, when, after various difficulties, they have at length got the hero and his damsel married, have generally little more entertainment to give us. The former exhaust their genius, in leading the serious soul to the wished-for period of what they call conversion, and after that they give us little more than insipid repetition.

The matter stood quite otherwise with the apostles and their converts. The apostles, in their first addresses to men, declared the saving truth. Some believed, others contradicted and blas-

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\* If the comparison above made be thought to need any apology, I must frankly acknowledge, that I look upon the first-mentioned sort of writings as much more hurtful to mankind than the last.



blasphemed. The history of the apostolic converts begins with their believing, or coming to the knowledge of the truth. Then the apostolic care of them commenced. Then we find them separated from the world, and remarkably exposed to their hatred. We find them joined together in a peculiar union and affection among themselves. We find that union and affection marvellously supported in the midst of various kinds of opposition. Every part of their history is new and interesting. By the heavenly light which now shined among them, the corruption of human nature, in its whole alienation from the life of God, was drawn forth, exposed to view, and reprov'd by the apostles, who carefully watched over them, exhorting them to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;" and thus to "give all diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, or to make their calling and election sure." In these interesting matters the far greater part of the apostolic writings is occupied.

The popular preachers reverse the apostolic method: They ply their hearers with the various exhortations by which the apostles nourished and confirmed the faith of believers. And thus they would animate men to work out their own justification before God, by diligently following after righteousness. And then, what else can the faith be which they are thus wrought up to, but the persuasion, that they are much more right-



righteous and worthy of the divine favour than others ?

I know some people are ready to say, that this breach of order is of no great moment ; that it matters not whether faith or works take place first, provided a connection in any shape be still maintained betwixt them. But these are people who have seldom or never thought seriously on the matter, and who content themselves with sounds instead of things. For it is evident, that the order of the apostolic doctrine cannot be broken without worshipping another God, yea and meaning quite other things than they did by all the sacred words of the gospel.

THE popular preachers are not insensible, that the absurdity would appear too glaring, should they directly oppose the apostolic order : Therefore, instead of plainly establishing the reverse, they choose rather to throw the apostolic order into confusion, and cover it with mist, so as the cheat may not readily be discerned. For they always do their business most successfully in the dark — They so confound the distinction betwixt faith and love, that it is difficult to say what fixed uniform notion they have of either. In words they agree with the apostles, in maintaining, that men are justified by faith, and not by love : But then, when they come to explain themselves, they hold it necessary, that love first perform its office, before faith is at liberty to make its conclusion. But stay, I must not say they insist on the previous necessity of love ; that would be too flat :



flat: They only insist on the necessity of the humility, esteem, desires, longings, and every thing that belongs to love, but its proper name. For both as to faith and love, we shall find, that the popular doctrine is all deceitful circumlocution from the one end to the other. Therefore I am willing to think, that Mr E. ERSKINE forgot himself a little, when he said, “What “ is faith, but love trusting and confiding in “ the beloved object \* ?” Because it is very seldom that such preachers betray themselves so plainly.

To avoid the absurdity of saying we are justified by ought else but *faith*, they commonly divide faith into as many different acts or motions as will serve all their purposes. Hence we hear of the various acts of faith, direct and reflex. Hence the faith of reliance, affiance, assurance, the act of flying, and the act of trusting, a believing application, appropriation, &c. Mr BOSTON, I think, divides saving faith into four acts. And others again choose to assure us, that **one** single act of faith is sufficient to save our souls for ever; but then that single act must be properly qualified. In the same view many epithets are given to faith; as a true, sincere, lively, manly, generous, triumphant faith, &c. Here I am ready to express my wish, that ASPASIO had carried his aversion to the terms and phraseology of the popular doctrine much farther than he has done. The

*Dialogues*

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\* In a Sermon, intitled, *God is love.*



*Dialogues* are far from being sufficiently purged of them.

It would be tedious to take particular notice of all these forms of expression. But one thing in the general may be freely said, that where the faith necessary to justification is described, every epithet, word, name, or phrase, prefixed or subjoined to FAITH, not meant as descriptive of the truth believed, but of some good motion, disposition, or exercise of the human soul about it, is intended, and really serves, instead of clearing our way, to blindfold and decoy us; to impose upon us, and make us take brass for gold, and chaff for wheat; to lead us to establish our own, in opposition to the divine righteousness; even while our mouths and our ears are filled with high sounding words about the latter. — In vain shall we consult catechisms, confessions, and other publicly authorised standards of doctrine; for direction here. These are framed by the wisdom of the scribes, and disputers of this world. We can receive no true light about this matter, but from the fountain-head of true knowledge, the sacred Oracles of divine revelation. Thence it will appear, that justification comes by bare faith. Ask a Christian, What is his faith, the spring of all his hope? And he answers you in a word, The blood of Christ. Ask a proficient in the popular doctrine the same question, and he immediately begins to tell you a long-winded story, how grace enabled him to become a better man than he was, and this he calls *conversion*. Thus we see what a wide difference there



there is betwixt the false and the true grace of God.

WHILE the popular preachers, in conformity to their several acts of faith, distinguish the human heart into the understanding, will, and affections, they address themselves in an especial manner to the will and affections of men, in order to work them up to some ground of hope from thence. For from this quarter their first ray of hope and comfort arises. All serious souls, though labouring under the greatest complaints of impotency, are still supposed to have a will to be better. Have you but the will? say the preachers; Christ will give you power; Christ will do all for you. But then what shall be done if the will be averse? Still the preachers are not discouraged, but being determined, like true sons of the spirit of self-dependence, to blow up the pride of men at any rate, they subdivide or multiply the human will, and suppose their hearers to have an inclination to have their will changed and made better. Then they exhort them thus, "Put your unwilling will into Christ's hands, and the work is done:" For there is no jargon either so absurd or so impious, but these men will confidently utter, and their hearers will greedily swallow, while the pride of both is so strongly interested\*. In opposition to  
all

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\* How fondly these men exercise themselves in tickling the religious pride of their hearers, may be clearly seen in many passages of their writings; of which the following may serve as a specimen.



all this vile jargon, the scripture plainly shews,  
that

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Mr BOSTON, in a Sermon on Luke xiv. 23. called *Gospel-compulsion*, says, “Nay, is not Christ’s hand at the hearts of some just now? Do not some of you find a moving of the iron gate of your heart, towards an opening of it to Christ? Have you not felt something within working to compel you to come in? Are not some *almost* in already? Thrust forward. There is no safety till ye be not only *almost*, but altogether Christians.” Dr DODDRIDGE, in a Sermon on John vii. 37. called *Christ’s Invitation to thirsty Souls*, taking care to acquaint his audience with the dignity of the preacher, in these words, “My friends, I have a message from God to you,” addresses them thus: Do you, my friends, feel any such holy breathings? Can you adopt these pathetic words of DAVID, [*Psal. lxxxiv. 2.* and other Psalms], as expressive of the inward sentiments of your soul? Blessed be God they are not hopeless desires — I would address myself to those who are now thirsting for the blessings of the gospel. I hope, through grace, there are some such amongst you; some whose thirst is excited by what hath now been spoken, and are borrowing the words of DAVID, in a sublimer sense, than that in which they were originally intended; *O that one would give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem* — You may consider the thirst which you feel as a token for good. The generality of mankind despise these blessings: And why do you desire them? Surely you may consider these desires as of a heavenly original. It is the voice of Christ that is now speaking; it is the Spirit of Christ that is now pleading with your heart; so that I may say to you, as was said to the blind man in the gospel, who was earnestly begging a cure, *Be of good comfort, rise; he callth thee.* What can therefore remain, but that you should immediately apply yourselves to him? Go directly, and plead the case with him. Prostrate thyself, O humble penitent, prostrate thyself before his throne, and say, Blessed Jesus, thou that knowest all things, knowest that I thirst after the blessings of thy gospel. Thou seest that I most ardently long for the pardon of sin, the favour of God, the influences of thy Spirit, and the glories of thine heavenly kingdom. I am fully persuaded, that, with regard to all these, thou art able to do for me abundantly above all that I can ask or think. And wilt thou not relieve me? Wilt thou not give me to drink? Wherefore then are thine invitations published in the gospel? Wherefore didst thou proclaim those gracious words which have been this day so frequently repeated in thine house? Why does thy Spirit even now work upon my heart, and raise there this fervency of desire?—



that all who are relieved by the gospel, so are born of God, are born not of the will of man in any shape wherein that will can be considered.

The

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“ *Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*—If but one soul return  
 “ from the assembly with these sentiments, and these resolutions,  
 “ all the labours of this day, and many former days, will be abun-  
 “ dantly repaid ; for that soul will surely be relieved, and God in  
 “ Christ be glorified and exalted.”

And thus proceeds Mr WILLISON in his *Sacramental Directory*,  
*Direct.* 10. “ O then stir up yourselves to take hold of Christ, when  
 “ he is so near and in your offer : Strive earnestly while there is an  
 “ ark prepared, and a window opened in the side of it, and the  
 “ hand of mercy put forth to pull in shelterless doves, that can find  
 “ no rest elsewhere ; I say, strive to come near by the wings of faith ;  
 “ *make your nest* (at least) *beside the hole’s mouth* : Be not found hover-  
 “ ing without, lest the flood wash you off from the sides of the ark,  
 “ and ye perish miserably.—Plead the communicativeness of his  
 “ mercy to others.—Plead his compassions towards the finally ob-  
 “ stinate and impenitent, such as Jerusalem over which he wept,  
 “ *Luke* xix. Lord, did thy heart melt with pity to such ; and wilt  
 “ thou not pity a humbled sinner, that confesseth his sin, and would  
 “ fain be reconciled to God ? Is not mercy the work thou delightest  
 “ in ? *Micah*. vii. 8. Lastly, Labour for a sense of the misery of a  
 “ Christless state, of your great need of Christ, and of the happiness  
 “ of being *found in him* ; and, in a sense thereof, look to Christ, and  
 “ make a mint to take hold of him. Stir up yourself to it, and rest  
 “ your soul on him, as you can ; and God will help you, and com-  
 “ municate strength. He will not fail to notice and encourage an  
 “ honest mint : *Jer.* xxx. 21. *Who is this that engageth his heart to*  
 “ *approach to me ?*” [Not to interrupt the preacher, this is evidently  
 “ *spoken of the Messiah.*] “ He will pity and help such. Try, O poor  
 “ soul, if you can get a grip of Christ ; especially upon a sacrament-  
 “ occasion, when you are nearer him than at other times. If you  
 “ cannot apply Christ to yourselves, and say, *He is mine* ; yet apply  
 “ yourself to Christ, and say, *I would fain be thine* ; yea, I am re-  
 “ solved to be thine. Go forth to Christ with all the faith you can  
 “ win at : Say with the poor man, *Lord, I believe, help thou my un-*  
 “ *belief.* You must not sit still and do nothing, but use all means in  
 “ your power ; for it is in the use of these that God works faith :  
 “ Hoise up the sails, and wait for the gales.”

Such men are our most renowned promoters of piety ! And seri-  
 ously speaking, I consider them as the fittest men to have weight and  
 influence among the populace.



The conveyance of the salutary truth to them for their relief, as much prevents every motion of their will, as did the sending of the Saviour into the world to die for men; yea, as did the divine gracious purpose before the world was.

THE popular preachers do indeed admit something like the scriptural notion of believing into a corner of their account of faith, under the title of *the assent* of faith. But then it lies in so remote and so dark a corner, as scarcely to be seen. And if it be at all thought of, it is made little or no account of: Yea, it is often marked with dishonourable epithets. Hence it is that we hear some talking of the vanity of an *historical* and *speculative* faith: Yet, if the gospel-history be true, every one who believes it shall be saved. For is it not enough to distinguish the belief of this history from the credit we give to men, that God himself is the historian, and that the divine character is stamped on this history, and so clearly shews who is the author? Even as we distinguish the writings of men by the style, temper, and genius of the writer? And the gospel-history cannot be believed on any other footing. Moreover, where is the profane person, who admits among the speculations which he believes, that notion of divine grace which the whole gospel is written to establish, and aside from which it cannot be understood? Yea, we may safely affirm, that he who admits no other speculation about the divine grace, but what arises from that history, is a child of God, and an heir of eternal life. How-



ever common a thing the belief of the gospel-history may be supposed to be, yet if we attend to things instead of unmeaning words, and think of the same gospel which the apostles believed and taught, we shall find that there is as much room for ISAIAH'S complaint now as formerly : *Who hath believed our report ? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ?*

Many of the popular preachers are sworn enemies to the belief of the truth as the sole ground of hope. For instance, Mr E. ERSKINE says \*, “ Christ is offered particularly to every  
 “ man ; there is not a soul hearing me, but, in  
 “ God’s name, I offer Christ unto him as if  
 “ called by name and surname. Beware, my  
 “ friends, of a general, doubtful faith, abjured  
 “ in our *national Covenant, as a branch of Popery.*  
 “ A general persuasion of the mercy of God in  
 “ Christ, and of Christ’s ability and willingness  
 “ to save all that come to him, will not do the  
 “ business: No; devils and reprobates may, and  
 “ do actually believe it. There must therefore  
 “ of necessity be a persuasion and belief of this,  
 “ with particular application thereof unto a man’s  
 “ own soul.” The doubtful faith he complains  
 of, is that which admits of a doubt concerning  
 one’s own state. Now, a man may have some  
 doubts about this, who is very firmly persuaded of  
 the truth of the gospel : Yea, PAUL calls upon  
 some whom he himself looked upon as believers,  
 to “ examine themselves, whether they were in  
 “ the

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\* Sermon on Luke ii. 28. called *Christ in the believer’s arms.*



“ the faith ;” and he exhorts others, about whom he observed the surest tokens of their being true Christians, to give all diligence to remove every doubt concerning their state ; plainly intimating, that they could not warrantably be assured of their happy state by any exercises of mind, without the fruits of faith, or the self-denied works of obedience.

The more we search into the doctrine of the popular preachers, the more will our inquiry resemble EZEKIEL’S digging through the wall. We shall still see greater abominations. I am sorry to see ASPASIO so much carried away with their dissimulation. He points out to THERON his danger and remedy in the following manner :  
 “ If you fail in *one* point, or in *any* degree, you  
 “ are guilty of *all*. If your conformity be not  
 “ *persevering* as well as *perfect*, you incur the  
 “ penalty, and are abandoned to the curse,” unless you find mercy by what Christ hath already done : No ; but “ UNLESS, renouncing all your  
 “ *personal* performances, you place all your affi-  
 “ ance on a SAVIOUR’S atonement, and a SAVI-  
 “ OUR’S righteousness \*.” Now, it is not easy

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even

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\* Vol. ii. p. 304, 305. Letter I. This good conduct of ours, by which we are said to escape the curse, is more broadly expressed by Mr BOSTON, in a Sermon on Heb. xi. 28. intitled, *The best security against the day of wrath*. The doctrinal observation on which the whole Sermon turns, is expressed thus.

“ *Doct.* The believing management of the sacrament of Christ’s  
 “ body and blood, is the best security for a sinner against the day  
 “ of wrath.” And this gentleman would gravely persuade us to  
 consider this Sermon, which is all of a piece with the leading ob-  
 servation,



even for one who is assured of the truth of the gospel, to provide himself with a satisfying answer to the query made by THERON near the beginning of Letter II. “ Where that firm and joyful *re-*  
“ *liance* on CHRIST JESUS, in any degree pro-  
“ portioned to his infinite merits and inviolable  
“ promises?” And if I cannot find acceptance with God, but in being conscious of perfect conformity to this new law, then I am in as great danger as before, whenever I fail in one point, or in any degree ; and unless I be conscious that I have arrived at the degree of *affiance* or *reliance* proportioned to Christ’s merits, I can never have peace in this way. Again in Letter V. \* ASPASIO says, “ This righteousness is from *faith to faith* ;  
“ held forth, as it were, by an offering God,  
“ and apprehended by a believing soul ; who,  
“ first, gives a firm *assent* to the gospel, then  
“ cordially *accepts* its blessings. From a conviction that the doctrine is true, passes to a persuasion that the privileges are his own.—When  
“ this is effected, a foundation is laid for all happiness ; a principle is wrought to produce all  
“ holiness.” It is largely and fully maintained  
by

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servation, as a message to us from the Lord. For he closes the Sermon with these words : “ Thus I have delivered my message to  
“ you from the Lord, as that which I judged is God’s mind and  
“ call to you at this day. I desire to venture myself for time and  
“ eternity on this bottom ; and it is my request to you, that ye will  
“ take this method this day for your security against the day of  
“ wrath : And if I should never have another occasion of this  
“ nature to speak unto you, I would leave it with you, That this,  
“ and this only, is the way to be secured against the day of  
“ wrath.”

\* Vol. ii. p. 367, 368.



by ASPASIO elsewhere, that there can be no true holiness till once faith, or this principle, be wrought. Yet are we not led to think of THERON, as advancing in holiness all the way from the time he begins to keep his diary, till he obtains this faith? Yea he is so far advanced in holiness, that ASPASIO sees his title clear to every heavenly blessing, long before he has courage to act what is called *faith*, or that without which faith cannot be. THERON'S righteousness at bottom lies in his diligence to obtain faith. For faith is all along supposed to be thus acquired. So ASPASIO says near the close of Letter XI. \*

“ Let us then be diligent to obtain, and careful  
 “ to increase faith in Jesus Christ.” The gospel-history gives us no instance of an unbeliever diligent to obtain faith, while it gives us many instances of believers careful to maintain and increase their faith or knowledge of the truth.

In *Dialogue V.* † THERON says, “ If Christ  
 “ has done all, and we are intitled to his whole  
 “ merits only by believing; to be saved must be  
 “ the *easiest* thing in the world: Whereas the  
 “ Bible represents Christianity as a sharp *warfare*,”  
 &c. I wish ASPASIO had told him for answer, that if he attempted to do any thing, easy or difficult, under the notion of an act of believing, or any other act, in order to his acceptance with God, he only thereby heaped up more wrath against himself. But let us hear him.

“ ASP. A *speculative* assent to all the principles  
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\* Vol. iii. p. 194.

† Vol. i p. 205--207.



“ of religion, is, I acknowledge, a very easy  
 “ matter. It *may*, it *must* exist, whenever there  
 “ is a tolerable capacity for reasoning, and a due  
 “ attention to evidence. But the faith, which,  
 “ far from resting in speculation, exalts the desires,  
 “ regulates the passions, and refines the whole  
 “ conversation;—this truly noble and triumphant  
 “ faith is no such easy acquisition. This is the  
 “ gift of an infinite Benefactor,” &c. In the next  
 “ page we are told by what exercise this faith is  
 “ acquired\*. The exercise of this faith I would  
 “ not compare to an active gentleman, rising  
 “ from his seat; but rather to a *shipwrecked*  
 “ mariner, labouring to gain some place of safety.  
 “ —He espies a large *rock*, that rears its head  
 “ above the boisterous flood. To this he bears  
 “ away, and to this he approaches; but whirling  
 “ winds and dashing waves drive him back to an  
 “ unhappy distance.—Exerting all his strength,  
 “ he

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\* I have said, *the exercise by which faith is acquired*; because I know not well how to find a better form of expression. The difficulty is this: ASPASIO calls this exercise, when first begun, the *exercise of faith*. Yet this exercise must be continued painfully and assiduously, with many struggles, before it arrives at Christ, or before it attains what is essential to faith. Methinks, however, I may be excused, if I find some difficulty in unravelling distinctly every branch or form of that doctrine, which its authors probably intended should never be unravelled. But perhaps the difficulty may be removed thus, namely, by supposing, that the quotation referred to, describes the exercise by which some sort of preliminary faith must labour and struggle before it can assume the form of justifying faith. In this view we may consider THERON as possessed of the preliminary faith, as soon as he takes the diary in his hand, and as exercising this faith in all his subsequent labours, till he arrives at the appropriating act. This preliminary faith then must be the persuasion, that if he labour and struggle well, he shall succeed the better.



“ he advances nearer still, and attempts to climb  
 “ the desirable eminence ; when a sweeping surge  
 “ interposes, and drenches him again in the rolling  
 “ deep.—By determined efforts he recovers the  
 “ space he had lost. Now he fastens on the cliff,  
 “ and has almost escaped the danger : But there  
 “ is such a numbness in his limbs, that he cannot  
 “ maintain his hold, and such an impetuous swell  
 “ in the ocean, that he is once more dislodged,  
 “ and plunged afresh into the raging billows.—  
 “ What can he do ? His life, his precious life,  
 “ is at stake. He must renew, still renew his  
 “ endeavours. And let him not abandon himself  
 “ to despair. The MASTER sees him amidst all  
 “ his fruitless toil. Let him cry earnestly, LORD,  
 “ *save me ! I perish !* and HE who commandeth  
 “ the winds and the waves, will be sure to put  
 “ forth his hand, and rescue him from the de-  
 “ vouring waters.

“ Such, my friend, so *painful*, so *assiduous*,  
 “ are the struggles of faith, before it can rest in  
 “ peaceful security on the *Rock of ages*, CHRIST  
 “ JESUS.”

My expectations were greatly raised by the beautiful and affecting description of the *royal stag-chace*, in *Dialogue IX.* till I saw that the application issued in Mr BOSTON’S faith; till I saw the sinner’s relief described as coming to him by means of such conflicts and struggles as are represented above, in the case of the shipwrecked mariner, and not like that of the desperate stag, which comes by the royal clemency alone.

As



As the similitude of the mariner glances at a passage of scripture, we may here take some notice of that passage. Jesus instructed his apostles by many miracles how he would afterward support and encourage them in the course of their public ministry; as is more especially evident from what he says to them on the miraculous draught of fish, and his sending them forth without money and without scrip. So in his saving PETER when ready to sink, after he had in great confidence of faith begun to walk upon the water, he shewed him how he was to be supported unto the end; not by the consciousness of any attainment he had already arrived at, but by what he believed; and that without his constant interposition his faith would fail, or his attention be decoyed away from the truth, as it was at present by his seeing the wind boisterous, *Matt. xiv. 30.* PAUL, who knew as much of "joy and peace in believing" as any mortal, fought the good fight of faith to the last, not only against the daily opposition he met with from his own natural propensities, but also against the constant opposition he met with from the popular preachers of his day. And he animates his fellow Christians to the same conflict which they saw and heard of in him. The Christian warfare then begins where the popular doctrine brings it almost to an end. The apostles wrote no treatises to animate unbelievers in their pious efforts to obtain faith, but they shewed much concern to encourage believers in keeping the  
faith,



faith, and in fighting the good fight thereof unto the end.

Accordingly, as Christians were exposed to many temptations, wherein they were apt to waver in their minds, or to call the truth in question, we find the apostles animating them, under these temptations “to the full assurance of “faith;” not the *faith of assurance*, which our preachers talk of, but the steady and assured belief of the truth. Such as were taught by the apostles to keep the bare truth, and to live by it alone, so came to be conscious, that it alone was the spring of their life, by its supporting them in all those circumstances wherein their hearts must otherwise have died within them; such, I say, received the additional witness of the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, bearing witness with their spirits, that the truth alone was the spring of their joy, and the ruling principle of their lives. Thus they had in themselves an experimental confirmation of the truth, according to the words spoken by Jesus to those who believed on him, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* Thus they went forward unto the *full assurance* of hope unto the end. Thus they knew their interest in Christ’s death, by the effect that his death had upon them. Thus they knew that Christ in his death loved them, and gave himself for them. Every one who can say with PAUL, *I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: Nevertheless, I live; yet*



*yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God ; may also safely add, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God.*

It is now time to inquire into the reasons, why the simple truth believed, is so much set at nought by the popular preachers, and judged unfit to be the sole ground of hope ; why now, as formerly, it is esteemed weak and little, even as a grain of mustard seed, so as men see not what comfort or benefit can arise from it.

It gave no small encouragement to the first believers, who had been pressed with the impossibility of hope on every side, that they had now found *a truth* by which they *might be justified*. On every other side they beheld certain inevitable ruin; as knowing, that “ by the works of the law, “ or by any thing that men can do, in obedience “ to any divine precept whatsoever, shall no flesh “ be justified.”

The divine truth affording hope to the vilest transgressor, that he may be justified, that he may escape the curse, and find favour with God, is lightly esteemed, because men imagine a possibility of escape otherwise: Or, which comes to the same thing at last, they imagine, that something beside the bare *truth* may contribute more or less toward their escape.

This imagined possibility, and the neglect of the revealed possibility of deliverance, are founded on ignorance of the divine justice, and contempt  
of



of the divine sovereignty. From these two sources did the ancient Jewish disaffection to the gospel flow. Therefore PAUL, in his Epistle to the Romans, where he labours to shut up every door of hope but that of faith alone, makes it his business, in an especial manner, to establish and set forth, in the strongest light, these two divine perfections, and to repel every objection that can arise in the mind of man against them.

The justice and sovereignty of God are pretty openly opposed by all our preachers of best fashion, and who are esteemed to be men of the best sense, as speaking most agreeably to what is called *Nature*; that is, if we attend to the scripture, most agreeably to human pride. But those who have the greatest ear with the people, play with both hands: Their doctrine is double. In formally stating the articles of their creed, in opposition to heretics, they seem to acknowledge these divine perfections, as held forth in scripture; but in their addresses to the people, they effectually overthrow them. So that whatever way they maintain these perfections, it plainly appears they do not love them: For the main tendency and issue of their doctrine is, to set them aside. Thus they arrive, at last, at the same port with the above-mentioned gentlemen of sense and fashion, though with the trouble of much perplexed circumlocution to themselves, and the expense of much anxiety to their hearers. Yet their hearers are encouraged to sustain the expense, by reflecting, that hereby they arrive  
at



at a pitch of sanctity, far beyond the followers of those who are called mere legal or moral preachers.

As to the first-mentioned of these perfections, the *divine justice*, the popular preachers set it aside, while, after they have declared men to be guilty, helpless, and under the curse, they persuade them, that there is not only a *possibility*, but also a *probability* of their escape, by their exerting their utmost endeavours to please God. All their *advices to the unregenerate* proceed upon this plan. Mr BOSTON, having hinted several such advices, and expostulated with his hearers upon them, says\*, “These things are within the  
“ compass of *natural abilities*, and may be prac-  
“ tised where there is *no grace*.” Near the same place, he says, “Ye may and can, if ye please,  
“ do many things that would set you in a fair  
“ way for help from the Lord Jesus Christ. Ye  
“ may go so far on, as to be *not far from the*  
“ *kingdom of God* †, as the *discreet scribe* had  
“ done,

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\* See *human nature in its fourfold State*, near the end of *State 2*.

† Thus it would seem, a man may discreetly go so very near the kingdom of God, as to need only to be helped by the hand over the threshold. And no doubt, we must think it would scarcely be discreet, to send a man back again disappointed, who had been at the trouble of travelling the far greater part of the way.—But there is a mistake here. The person above referred to is, in the sacred text, neither called a *discreet scribe*, nor is it said, that he had gone so far on, as not to be far from the kingdom of God. The words of MARK run thus, *And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.* Jesus often put the question, or propounded the matter in hand, in such a manner, to his adversaries, as to extort discreet answers from them.—A man may be  
very



“ done, Mark xii. 34. though (it would seem)  
 “ he was destitute of *supernatural* abilities.”  
 Again, near the same place, “ If success *may be*,  
 “ the trial *should be*. If in a wreck at sea, all the  
 “ sailors and passengers had betaken themselves,  
 “ each to a broken board for safety ; and one of  
 “ them should see all the rest perish, notwith-  
 “ standing their utmost endeavours to save  
 “ themselves : Yet the very *possibility* of escaping  
 “ by that means, would determine that one still  
 “ to do his best with his board. (2.) It is *probable*  
 “ this course may succeed. God is good and  
 “ merciful,” &c.

As THERON'S conversion evidently proceeds upon the same plan, I need not spend time in adducing quotations : But I cannot forbear taking notice of ASPASIO'S words, in *vol. I. p. 23.*  
 “ Is any one convinced of *guilt*, as provoking  
 “ heaven, and ruining the soul ? Let him ask  
 “ *Reason* to point out a means of reconciliation,  
 “ and a refuge of safety. Reason hesitates, as she  
 “ replies, *The Deity* may, *perhaps*, *accept our*  
 “ *supplications*, and *grant forgiveness*. But the  
 “ scriptures leave us not to the *sad uncertainty* of  
 “ con-

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very *near* the kingdom of God in point of argument, who is very *far* from it in every other respect. The scribes and Pharisees, who maintained the necessity of obedience to the law, wanted only one step to the kingdom of God ; they needed only to know where that obedience was to be found : Nevertheless the publicans and harlots went into the kingdom of God before them. They who, in answer to Jesus, said, that the Messiah was the son of DAVID, wanted only one step or two more, that is, to know that Jesus was he, and to understand how the Messiah was both DAVID'S son and lord.



“ conjecture. They speak the language of clear  
 “ assurance. God *has* set forth a propitiation: He  
 “ *does* forgive our iniquities: He *will* remember  
 “ our sins no more.”

Reason is here said to hesitate in her reply, because she only asserts a possibility of safety. Had ASPASIO said, Let the guilty person ask his *pride*, and it will whisper to him, “ The Deity  
 “ may perhaps accept our supplications, and  
 “ grant forgiveness;” I had frankly agreed with him. What ASPASIO admits for *reason*, is indeed very agreeable to the first reasoning against revelation, *Ye shall not surely die*, or it may be otherwise. He appears here very modest, and loth to offend the dignity of *Reason*, while he admits her suggestion, that the Deity may relent at our cries. But why did he not shew the same complaisance to the sacred truth? What provoked him to interpose the boldest negative against any manner of advantage arising from the bare persuasion of it, by confidently saying, *No, surely?* The answer is plain: He had already given the prize to *Reason*, so nothing remained for the Truth.

Thus far, then, I understand, and agree with him. So long as any man hearkens to his reason, whispering to him, that God *may*, in any event, or on any consideration whatsoever, abate the rigour of his law; I freely own, he can reap no manner of advantage from the bare persuasion of the truth of the gospel. He may indeed be a very proper disciple for the popular preachers: But the gospel relieves only the desperate, even those  
 those



those who are at an utter impossibility of hope from every other quarter. And to all such it proves indeed a very comfortable refreshment; and the more so, that it opens a door of hope, without invalidating our natural notions in the least: For these must always be preserved in force. Yea, if these be set aside, no revelation can evidence itself to us as coming from the God who made us. If, then, nature can teach us that God *may* be gracious, so as to forgive sin, it must at the same time teach us, that he may be just in so doing. Justice, with the greatest profusion of kindness in that channel, is our primary notion of the divine character; and had we not departed from our duty, there had been no occasion for pardoning mercy to appear as any part of the character of our almighty Lawgiver and Judge. I insist upon it, then, that from whatever source we learn that God may be gracious in forgiving sin, we must also learn how he may be just in so doing. Now, this is the very place which the scripture assigns for the atonement. PAUL assures us at large, that it was exhibited for this very purpose, to declare the justice of God, *that he might be just*, in justifying the ungodly, and receiving them into favour.

It must be in conformity to the above-mentioned rational possibility, that the note at the foot of *p. 202. vol. ii.* in complaisance to the ancient and modern philosophers, leaves it as a question undecided, “Whether those who during this life  
 “ know not God, or if they know him, glorify  
 “ him not as God, shall obtain mercy? Or which



“of them shall be objects of divine clemency?” Though the scripture expressly declares, that *the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that KNOW NOT God*; and though it be no less evident from the scripture, that *all whom God will have to be saved, he will have to come to the knowledge of the truth*.

Whatever people may choose to mean by *reason*, this one thing we may safely affirm, that the proper distinction betwixt man and other animals, lies in his natural knowledge of God and his law. The written law is the public authentic standard of that knowledge: To love God and our neighbour, as it directs, will be approved by every conscience of man round the globe, at first hearing. The more improved, then, or the more perfect any man's natural knowledge is, the nearer will it come to the authentic standard. Now, what did the written law serve for in the consciences of those who understood it best? PAUL tells us, *By the law is the knowledge of sin. — The law worketh wrath*. Therefore the more perfect any man's natural knowledge of God is, the more miserable must he find himself, or, in other words, the more just sense or feeling he must have of his real condition.

If, then, we might be allowed once more to use so much freedom with words, as to call that knowledge which distinguishes men from brutes, by the name of *reason*, we must say, that the more justly one reasons, the more unhappy he finds



finds himself; we must lay it down for a maxim, “That to reason justly, is to despair\*.”

Before we leave this topic, it may be proper to observe, that many noted preachers, pretending to enlarge our ideas of the wisdom and power of God, plainly discover their own ignorance of his justice, while they tell us, that God, if he had pleased, might have devised some other method of taking away sin than by the sacrifice of his Son: On this it may suffice to say, that had there been such a possibility in the Deity, it had without all peradventure taken place, in answer to the supplication of Jesus: *O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.—O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done †.*

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\* Philosophers themselves are very sensible of the force of what is above maintained; as appears from their common complaint of the weakness of what they call *reason*, when opposed to the strong propensity in our nature to dread some invisible power. They have indeed very solid ground for their complaint: For daily experience shews them, that nature at last overcomes art. They are sensible, that the presumptions of pride, however artfully devised, however ingeniously adjusted, are, upon many occasions, not to mention the last and most important one, found too weak to resist, too light to overbalance the natural language of conscience, or the voice of God within them.

On this occasion, I cannot forbear acknowledging, that when I read the writings of philosophers, it gives me some satisfaction to find, that even they, by their utmost efforts, have not been able wholly to *unlearn* that knowledge, which the Deity has taught the human race, and by which he has distinguished it from every other species of animals. Thus it is evident, that even they are intitled to a share of that honour which the scripture calls us to pay to all men.

† I shall here take notice of this passage, which exhibits the  
highest



HAVING briefly pointed at some of the methods by which the popular preachers set aside the *divine justice*, so as to render the sacred truth of little or no value in the eyes of men ; let us next observe how they set themselves in opposition to the *divine sovereignty*.— And we shall find, that for every jewel they rob from the crown of the  
 Most

highest view of the unparalleled obedience and submission of Jesus Christ ; and the rather, because his behaviour on this occasion has been thought by many to stand in need of something very like an apology ; as. (*Dialogues, vol. i. p. 135.*), “ that his “ sufferings were so great, so terrible, that his nature, being “ *human*, could not but *recoil* a little, and be *startled* at their approach ”

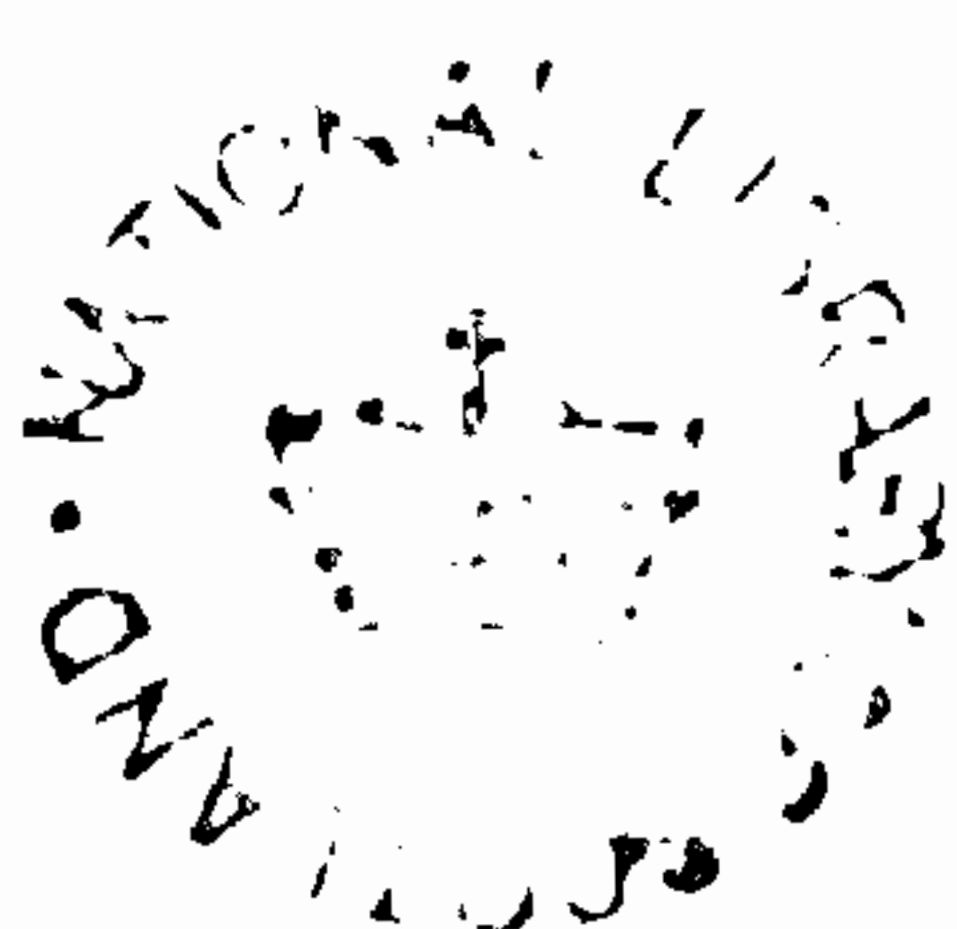
These prayers are referred to in Heb. v. 7 where it is said of Christ, *when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard for his reverence [or piety].* In these prayers, he offered up the perfection of obedience in full confidence of acceptance.— The more holy any person is, or the more fervently he loves God, and delights in his favour, so much the greater aversion and reluctance he must have to his displeasure, or the hiding of his face ; or, to say the same thing in other words, the less any man loves God, the less disquiet will he feel at the want of the sense of his favour — Jesus Christ loved the Father with a perfect heart, and therefore he had the utmost insupportable aversion to his displeasure, when he felt it. This was death to him. So when he began to be sorrowful, and very heavy, on the hiding of the Father's face from him, he signified to his disciples, that he knew this sorrow would kill him ; *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death* : Yet to that misery, to which he was as averse as he was holy, he submitted, for the glory of his Father, and the salvation of his people. Here then we see manifested such perfection of love to, or delight in God, and withal such perfect and unparalleled submission to his will, as equally became a divine person. And his aversion is expressed in no stronger terms than were necessary to shew us the greatness of his submission. Both are strongly marked to us in these words: *Not my will, but thine be done.* All the words, then, which Jesus uttered in his agony, equally conspire to manifest a disposition truly divine, and that he who uttered them was a divine person.



Most High, they plant a feather in the crest of human pride.

They are disaffected to the simple belief of the gospel as the sole ground of hope, because it leaves a man even in the full assurance of faith, or when the truth is most present to his thoughts, entirely at the mercy of God for his salvation; or because it leads him to the greatest reverence for, and submission to the divine sovereignty, without having any claim upon God whatsoever, or finding any reason why God should regard him more than those who perish. Hence it is, that in leading their hearers to faith, they constantly instruct them how to qualify themselves so as they may be in a condition to advance some claim upon the Deity, and treat with him on some rule of equity; or so as they may find some reason why he should regard them more than others, and accordingly grant the favours they desire of him. They maintain indeed, that men can obtain no benefit from the Deity but in the way of *grace*; yet it is evident, that grace obtained in the way they direct, is improperly so called, at least it is very different from the apostolic notion of the divine grace.

PAUL, when speaking of the sovereignty of the divine choice of men to salvation, as proceeding upon grace, in opposition to every notion of *desert* in those who are chosen, distinguishes that grace in the following manner: *And if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace: But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.* If





this one text were well understood, the whole body of the popular doctrine would fall to the ground at once. Here we see how different the divine choice is from that of men, who choose what is best, and reject what is worst. God, in blessing men, or choosing them to blessedness, has no regard to any distinction among them. All the objects of his favour are such as deserved equally to be rejected. According to the apostle's reasoning, when God blesses any man of grace, he has no regard to any work, requisite, or motion of his will, by which he excels another: For if he had, then the grace thus said to be bestowed would be no more grace, but rather the respect due to worth, or the reward belonging to the work. Again, if God chooses or blesses any man on account of any work or good motion by which he excels others, then it is plain grace cannot take place here. For if we should suppose it did, then "work is no more work;" or we lose entirely the proper notion of working, and its connection with reward. — In like manner, the same apostle, Rom. iv. 4—6. says, *Now to him that worketh, is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt: But to him that worketh not, but believeth on HIM that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.*

If then we say with the apostle, that the faith of him who worketh not "is counted for righteousness." we cannot affirm with ASPASIO, "That faith is a work, exerted by the human  
" mind;



“ mind; is equally certain \* ;” unless we should understand the apostle to mean, that righteousness is imputed to men, not working after the Jewish manner, but working according to the directions of Christian teachers, exerting the acts of faith, and acquiring the requisites described by them. I know ASPASIO is ready to tell me, that grace, or the gift of righteousness, is the cause of justification, and the ground of comfort to him that exerts the act of faith. But what does this amount to? It only leads us to say, that grace and comfort are bestowed on him who worketh. Thus all the notions of grace and work given us in the scripture are entirely confounded.

No doctrine in scripture wears a more amiable and inviting aspect to the self-condemned, than that of the divine sovereignty, as described by PAUL in his Epistle to the Romans, especially chapter ix. This removes every cause of despair to the most wretched of mankind. For who can be led to despair by the view of any deficiency about himself whatever, who knows, that none but the utterly deficient are chosen of God to salvation? As no doctrine is more encouraging than this to the miserable, so none is more provoking to the sons of pride, who want to stand upon their distinctions before God, and are not yet reduced so low as to be entirely at his mercy for their salvation. Though this doctrine is not yet erased out of the standards of either of our national

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\* Vol. ii. p. 62.



onal churches, yet it is generally opposed, and held in great contempt both by Clergy and Laity, as well as by the Dissenters. Many declaimers about the divine benevolence, with open mouth shew their spite against the divine goodness preached by PAUL. Many zealous disputers against Deists and Infidels, with great arrogance renounce the Sovereign of the universe. And if we observe the artifices of the popular preachers, we shall find them likewise denying THE GOD THAT IS ABOVE. Yet this hated article of the sovereignty of the divine choice, will ever be held most sacred by all who love the ancient gospel. To them it is highly acceptable, because they know, that there was no occasion for such sovereignty to appear, but that grace might be shewn to the worthless. They know, that otherwise all mankind without distinction had perished, according to every rule of equity.

The popular preachers are greatly disgusted at this doctrine, because, according to their own stile, “ here is no visible ground for faith to rest upon.” — Here no man’s pride is flattered ; no man can find any ground to presume, that the Deity regards him more than others. Therefore, while they are busy in stimulating their hearers to the exercise of faith, they are at great pains to keep this doctrine as far removed from their thoughts as possible. But when once the hearers, by their assistance, have prepared some ground for faith to rest upon ; then they are freely allowed to solace themselves with the doctrine of election, because they have now acquired some reason  
why



why God in his choice should respect them more than others.

This is a very nice part of the popular doctrine. Here the preacher finds use for all his artifice, and is obliged to employ his utmost dexterity in shifting hands. Here, to throw a veil over the eyes of the people, they distinguish betwixt the *word, promise, call, or testimony*, and the *purpose* of God; as if this last wore a more forbidding aspect than the former: Whereas it is very evident from the scripture, that the divine word, promise, call, or testimony, leaves it as much a secret who shall be saved, as the doctrine of the divine purpose or election does. Yea, so idle and ill placed is their distinction here, that we find the scripture commonly intimating the divine purpose of making a distinction among mankind in the very bosom of that testimony which must be believed for justification. When we read in the New Testament such words as these, *And thou shalt call his name JESUS; for he shall save his people from their sins*; do we not see a distinction among mankind, according to grace, plainly intimated in this summary of the faith? And it would be easy to produce from the scripture many other summaries of the faith intimating the same distinction. — In a word, so closely is the doctrine of *election* connected with what men believe for righteousness, that there is no disjoining of them, nor can the one be understood aside from the other.

The preachers, speaking of election, represent the Deity as keeping secret his gracious intention

as



as to particular persons, and yet at the same time revealing his gracious intentions to the same persons in his word and promise. And while they are busy prompting their hearers to exert the appropriating act of faith, they shew no small fear lest the devil tempt them to think of election ; and accordingly are careful to guard them strongly on that hand. Let us hear Mr RALPH ERSKINE, who preaches in the same spirit with his brother EBENEZER. In a Sermon on 2 Cor. v. 18. called, *The fountain-head of all Blessings*, he says, p. 38. “ 2. But what ground  
 “ have I to think he is reconciled to me ? *I*  
 “ *answer*, If the word of reconciliation be sent  
 “ to you, upon that ground you may believe that  
 “ he is reconciled to you. Now, he hath com-  
 “ mitted to us the word of reconciliation, and  
 “ charged us to preach the gospel of reconciliation  
 “ to every creature, to every soul among you :  
 “ And he that hath obliged us to proclaim to  
 “ you how he is reconciled in Christ, and hath  
 “ all things to give in and through him, he  
 “ obliges you to believe that he is reconciled to  
 “ you.” —

“ 3. But how can this be, seeing he hath not  
 “ a secret purpose of reconciliation to all, and  
 “ therefore perhaps not to me ? *Answer*, O ! what  
 “ a malicious devil is tempting thy unbelieving  
 “ heart to look to what God designs, before you  
 “ look to what he declares, to look to his pur-  
 “ pose before you look to his promise ? How can  
 “ you see his purpose, but in the glass of his  
 “ promise ? How can you know his heart, but  
 “ by



“ by his word ? But in the glass of his promise,  
 “ you may see his purpose of grace to you ; for  
 “ the promise is to you. And in his word of re-  
 “ conciliation, you may see his reconciled heart  
 “ toward you ; for to you is the word of salvation  
 “ sent, to you is the word of reconciliation sent.  
 “ And if thou, man, woman, lass, lad, canst  
 “ believe that his kind word is to thee, and thee  
 “ in particular, then thou shalt see, that his  
 “ kind heart is toward thee, and thee particu-  
 “ larly.”

Mr EBENEZER, in his Sermon on *Luke ii. 28.*  
 called, *Christ in the Believer's arms*, says, *p. 14.*  
 “ I do not say, that the first language of faith is,  
 “ that Christ died for me, or I was elected from  
 “ eternity. No. But the language of faith is,  
 “ God offers a slain and crucified Saviour to me,  
 “ and I take the slain Christ for my Saviour ; and  
 “ in my taking or embracing of him as offered,  
 “ I have ground to conclude, that I was elected,  
 “ and that he died for me in particular, and not  
 “ before. I shall only add, that this appropriating  
 “ act doth inseparably attend the knowledge and  
 “ assent before-mentioned : And that they are all  
 “ jointly comprised in the general nature of saving  
 “ faith ; which I take up as an act of the whole  
 “ soul, without restricting it to any one faculty,  
 “ or distinction as to priority or posteriority of  
 “ time.” It were easy, you know, to produce  
 many quotations to the same purpose ; but these  
 may suffice.

If we inquire, how God's gracious purpose or  
 design is signified to any person in the word of  
 promise ;



promise; Mr BOSTON, and the two brothers above-mentioned, have another artifice in readiness to amuse us with. They tell us, “That  
 “ God hath made a *grant* or *deed of gift* of  
 “ Christ and all his benefits to sinners of man-  
 “ kind, especially to the hearers of the gospel, or  
 “ more especially to those who are members of  
 “ (what they call) the *visible* church.” But when we inquire into this again, we find it turns out to be a gift of benefits to multitudes who are never benefited thereby. In such manner do they proceed, venting their own fancies about the Deity, and trifling with mankind in the most sacred matters.

I PROCEED now to take notice of another notable artifice, by which they set aside the divine sovereignty. They urge the hearer to believe, that Christ is as *willing* to save him as he is *able*. This, at first view, seems somewhat plausible; and the hearer is led to think it would be impious to move any objection. But here it must be considered, that so soon as any man knows that Christ is willing to save him, he knows that he shall infallibly be saved, seeing it is simply impossible that the divine will can be frustrated. Here the preachers, who seldom fail to find some subterfuge or other, are ready to extricate themselves, by giving us to understand, that Christ is willing to save him, whose will is previously well disposed to accept of him in all his offices, so is ready to obey all his commandments. Thus the divine willingness to save him, which  
 the



the hearer is called to believe, and which is displayed before him with many high-sounding words of divine grace, turns out to no more account than the above-mentioned grant or deed of gift. And it might, with equal propriety, be said, that there is a grant of life made in the law, and that the divine willingness to bless men is therein expressed, "Keep the commandments, and thou shalt live."

In *Dialogue XVI.* ASPASIO addresses his friend thus. \* "Have you not sometimes, THERON, been overtaken by the dark and tempestuous night? When, chilled with cold, and almost drowned in the rain, you arrived late at the house of some valued friend, was you not *willing* to gain admittance? Perhaps you thought every moment an hour, till the hospitable door opened; till you exchanged the dismal gloom, and the driving storm, for the chearful light, and the amiable company within.—The adored IMMANUEL professes himself *equally* willing to come unto you, who hearken to his voice, and consent to his overtures; *equally* willing to make his abode with you, to manifest his glories in you, and communicate his merits to you." When I first read this passage in company, one of your fondest readers, who sat by, and who had not been able to refrain from tears of satisfaction, at a variety of the foregoing pages, on hearing the words now quoted, interrupted with some vehemence, saying, *It is not of him that willeth,*  
*nor*

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\* Vol. iii. p. 274.



*nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.*

LET us now observe what faith is approved of in scripture, and what respect is had to the divine sovereignty therein. It is acknowledged, that as the miracles of healing were signs of Christ's power to save his people from their sins; so the faith of those who were healed, serves as a pattern of believing to the saving of the soul. Now, we see what faith Jesus called for in the two blind men who followed him, Matt. ix. 28. When he said unto them, *Believe ye that I am able to do this?* Upon their simply answering, *Yea, Lord;* we find him approving their faith, in ver. 29. *Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you.* The like approbation is given to the faith of the leper, which is expressed in these words, Matt. viii. 2. *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.* For Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, *I will, be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.* The leper, like the two blind men, was fully persuaded that Christ was able to relieve him. Yet, as he had no claim upon him, he referred his request entirely to his sovereign pleasure. In the full assurance of faith he was at Christ's mercy, who was no way obliged to apply his healing power to him. And by this faith he was healed: For Christ said, *I will, be thou clean.* But to him that said, Mark ix. 22. *If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us;* Jesus answered, *If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.*

This



This man knew, that Jesus, and his disciples likewise, had cast out devils, and cured many ; but as he brought his son to his disciples, and they could not cure him, he did not know if Christ's power extended to this grievous case. So the defect of his faith lay in his doubting Christ's ability, as Christ's answer plainly intimates. Thus, in the sense now explained, I am ready to own, that this man's faith was deficient for want of *particular application* to his own case, his own present necessity; were it not, that I hate the shadow of the distinctions coined by the popular preachers. For who can doubt the all-sufficiency of Christ to save him, in the worst condition wherein he can find himself, without doubting the common salvation, swerving from the common faith, and calling in question Christ's ability to save to the uttermost?

The same faith with that of the leper appears in the prayer of the publican, *God be merciful to me a sinner*; and in that of the thief on the cross, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*. The same faith appeared in the centurion, who addressed Jesus thus, *Speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed*; having said before, *Lord, I am not worthy*. On this occasion, Jesus utters these remarkable words: *Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel. And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into utter darkness: There shall be weeping and*



*and gnashing of teeth.* Here it is plainly intimated, that many of the idolatrous Gentiles, who were afar off, and aliens from God, should be introduced into his heavenly kingdom by the like faith, bringing all who have it into submission to the divine sovereignty; while those who imagined they had any claim upon God, or nearer relation to him than others, so had their faith vitiated, by a fatal mistake contained in the bosom of it, should be rejected.

The faith approved by Jesus, well corresponds with the grace by which men are saved. When the world was ripe for condemnation, God sent his Son, not to condemn, but to save. Sovereign grace interposed, providing a righteousness for the guilty world. And it reigns by that righteousness preventing the will of men unto their salvation. Faith answers to the grace revealed, as the impression to the seal. When once the gift of righteousness is made known to any man, the character of God therein manifested is ratified and ascertained in his heart. *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the record in himself,—the record that God gave of his Son.* In the promise to ABRAHAM, that he should be a father of many nations, when it was impossible, according to nature, that he could be a father, God proposed himself as able “to raise the dead, and call into “being things that were not.” So ABRAHAM’S faith is described as (*κατεναντι*) *answerable to him whom he believed, God quickening the dead, and calling those things which be not as though they were.* In like manner, all his children in the  
faith



faith believe the divine word for righteousness, without perceiving any shadow or symptom of it about themselves, without feeling or being conscious of any thing about themselves, to concur with the divine word, to make out their righteousness, or bring them nearer to it, or any way make them fitter than others for justification.

To set aside the sovereignty of divine grace, and lead us deceitfully to establish our own righteousness, the popular doctrine has in readiness two artifices, serving to confound our notion of works, and their connection with reward. By the first we are led to do so many things, which we are taught to consider as of a dubious or middle nature betwixt *works* and *no works*. By the second we are taught to think, that, supposing these things to be works, yet they are so wrought as not to be intitled to reward.

As to the first of these, ASPASIO says, in *Dialogue X.* \* “ Christ performed whatever was required by the covenant of works, both before  
 “ it was violated, and after it had been trans-  
 “ gressed. But neither *repentance* nor *faith* were  
 “ comprehended in this institution.” But may not men establish their own righteousness in the way of acting faith and repentance, as well as any other way? And will not that law which Christ came to fulfil, the law which requires love to God with all the heart, condemn all who by their unbelief make God a liar; and all who, *after*  
 VOL. II. I *their*

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\* Vol. ii. p. 59.



*their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?* Does not the Spirit of God convince all whom he brings to the knowledge of the truth, of sin, because they believe not on Christ? In fine, is there any thing contrary to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God, not condemned by the divine law? See PAUL's first Epistle to TIMOTHY, first chapter.

I have no concern with the distinction betwixt the covenant of *works* and the covenant of *grace*, on which our systems are formed; as it serves to set aside, obscure, and confound the capital distinction set before us in the apostolic writings, betwixt the *old* and *new* covenant, or betwixt the covenant ratified by the blood of bulls and goats, and the new covenant in Christ's blood; which is the same with the distinction betwixt *flesh* and *spirit*. The scripture seems to make sacrificing, or the shedding of blood, necessary in the covenants God makes with men. But this is not a place for enlarging on this subject. It may suffice at present to say, that, in the New Testament, the obedience of Christ, with its effects, is contrasted with the sin of ADAM, and its effects; and that the *new* covenant is contrasted only with the *old* one made with Israel.

As a proof how much the scriptural distinctions are set aside, to give place to those framed by the wisdom of the scribe, it may be observed,  
that



that these covenants, which PAUL expressly calls *two*, and in many respects opposes to each other, are boldly affirmed to be but two dispensations of one and the same covenant, by many Christian teachers who are very fond of the above-mentioned systematical distinction. By this means they have in a remarkable manner “ taken away the “ key of knowledge,” and misled many in the understanding of the scriptures. What strange use has been made of the systematical distinction which has been adopted to the setting aside and confounding of the scriptural one, may be seen in a book much esteemed by many popular preachers, called, *The marrow of modern Divinity*, which is largely supplied with notes by a well-known preacher, who takes the name of PHILALETES IRENÆUS.

As I have mentioned this book, I shall take this occasion to observe, that the doctrine contained in it was a good many years ago condemned by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, to the no small satisfaction of the more open enemies of the gospel ; with whom I have no intention of taking part while I oppose the popular doctrine, of which this book may perhaps be considered as one of the most refined systems. I am sensible, that many despisers of the popular doctrine, are men whose religion consists chiefly in pronouncing handsomely the words *virtue* and *benevolence*, *candour* and *decorum*, and in throwing out some fashionable reflections against the narrow way of thinking ; that is, the *narrow way* commended by JESUS of Nazareth



to his disciples. And thus, at an easy rate, they gain the reputation of men of good sense and enlarged sentiments. They are likewise friends to the social virtues, I mean such of them as promote good fellowship, and may be subservient to their reputation and worldly interest. But if we want to see those virtues, whose exercise requires self-denial, we must look for them among people of the narrow way of thinking. Yea, if we compare the friends of the popular doctrine with their fashionable antagonists, we shall find the former much more remarkable for the practice of morality and decency of character than the latter. So that the charge of licentiousness, as commonly laid by the latter against the doctrine of the former, is evidently invidious and unjust.

I am ready to agree, then, with the author of a late *Essay on Justification*, who, to shew the falshood of this charge, appeals to the lives of those commonly called the *stricter sort*. In which class, I think, he comprehends all who maintain the necessity of imputed righteousness to justification, however much they differ about faith. Though this author has undertaken the defence of the popular doctrine in general, and it must be owned reasons justly against his fashionable adversaries; yet if we observe his private sentiments, which are sufficiently hinted, we shall find him very unpopular in his own notion of faith. For he seems to have the same notion of it with the apostles. If this author shall proceed to study the scriptures, and observe mankind, keeping a  
steady



steady eye on the first principle from which he sets out, consequently less apprehensive of being “*infnared and exposed to censure,*” he will probably find more adversaries than he is presently aware of.

I PROCEED to consider the second artifice used to confound our notion of *works*, and their connection with *reward*. The popular doctrine, in order to avoid saying, that justification is procured by our works or endeavours, tells us, that all the qualifications necessary to the appropriating act of faith, are bestowed on men, and wrought in them by the Spirit of God, and so are properly to be considered as his works, and not theirs: That accordingly they in whom these qualifications are wrought, must not be supposed to be thereby intitled to any reward. But if we look into the scripture, must we not say, that all the good works which shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just, are produced by the influence of the divine Spirit dwelling in the hearts of those who believe? Yet such is the connection betwixt every good work and its reward, that, according to the scripture, the justice of God, not to say his grace, is concerned to make it good: Heb. vi. 10. *God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love.* Jesus did not account the question unreasonable, when his disciples said, Matt. xix. 27. *Behold, we have forsaken all and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?* But he gave them a very satisfying answer. And, Mark ix. 41. he says, *Whosoever shall give you a*



*cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.* Justice, as well as grace, will appear in the last judgment; then due regard will be had to every man's works. But in the justification of finners, God has no respect to any man as better than another. He considers men, when he commends his love to them, as ungodly, and without strength, that is, without any will to be better. And all who find mercy, are brought to view themselves in that same point of light wherein God beheld men when he gave his Son to die for them. They do not find themselves prepared, or made fitter than others for mercy, by any work of the divine Spirit on their minds; but they find their first taste of comfort by hearing of him, *who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God.*

However much the qualifications held necessary to introduce saving faith, are on some occasions denied to be proper works, or intitled to reward; yet we find the person who is seriously exercised in attaining them, often commended on account of them, and encouraged to draw no small comfort from them. In *Dialogue XV.* \* on THERON's expressing his sense of guilt, his friend replies, "I am truly glad that we are sensible of our demerit. Here our recovery begins." I know a devout person, who, on hearing of the death of a personal enemy, with some emotion broke forth into these words:  
 "Truly

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\* Vol. iii. p. 250.



“ Truly I am sorry for it!—But how glad am I  
 “ that I feel myself sorry? By this I know that I  
 “ have forgiven him.” How easily do people get  
 into a habit of imposing on themselves? And in  
 nothing more readily than as to their convictions.  
 In the same *Dialogue*, p. 140. THERON is alarm-  
 ed with the account of the man who was found  
 without a wedding-garment. His friend replies,  
 “ The man without a wedding-garment, denotes  
 “ the specious superficial professor, who is called  
 “ by CHRIST’S name, but has never put on Christ  
 “ Jesus by faith. — Shall I tell you more plainly  
 “ whom this character represents? You yourself,  
 “ my dear THERON, was some months ago in  
 “ the state of this unhappy creature, when you  
 “ trusted in yourself, and thought highly of your  
 “ own, thought meanly of your Saviour’s righte-  
 “ ousness. I congratulate my friend on his  
 “ happy deliverance from so dangerous a condi-  
 “ tion.”

In the same *Dialogue*, p. 253. THERON says,  
 “ Thus much I may venture to profess in my own  
 “ behalf, that I long for this blessing.—I pray for  
 “ this blessing.—But I cannot see my *title* to this  
 “ comprehensive and inestimable blessing clear.”  
 ASPASIO replies, “ I behold it perfectly clear and  
 “ ascertained by your own confession,” &c. —  
 Instead of quoting any more of ASPASIO’S words  
 at present, I shall produce a passage to the same  
 purpose from *The marrow of modern Divinity* \*.  
 NEOPHYTUS says, “ And truly, Sir, you have so

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\* Twelfth edition, p. 206. et seq. chap. 2. § 3, 5.



“ declared and set forth Christ’s disposition to-  
 “ wards poor sinners, and so answered all my  
 “ doubts and objections, that I am now verily  
 “ persuaded that Christ is *willing to entertain*  
 “ *me* ; and surely I am *willing to come unto*  
 “ *him*, and receive him : But, alas ! I want  
 “ power.”

EVANGELISTA replies. “ But tell me truly,  
 “ are you resolved to put forth all your power  
 “ to believe, and so take Christ ? NEOPHYTUS.  
 “ Truly, Sir, methinks my resolution is much like  
 “ the resolution of the four lepers which sat at  
 “ the gate of Samaria ; for as they said,—2 *Kings*  
 “ vii. 4. even so say I in mine heart, If I go back  
 “ to the covenant of works to seek justification  
 “ thereby, I shall die there ; and if I sit still, and  
 “ seek it no way, I shall die also. Now, there-  
 “ fore, though I be somewhat fearful, yet am I  
 “ resolved to go unto Christ ; and if I perish, I  
 “ perish.

“ EVANGELISTA. Why, now I tell you, the  
 “ match is made ; Christ is yours, and you are  
 “ his : This day is salvation come to your house,  
 “ (your soul I mean) : For what though you  
 “ have not that power to come *so fast* to Christ,  
 “ and to lay *such firm hold* on him as you desire ;  
 “ yet coming with such a resolution to take  
 “ Christ as you do, you need not care for power  
 “ to do it, inasmuch as Christ will enable you to  
 “ do it.—Yet let me tell you, to your comfort,  
 “ that such a resolution shall never go to hell :  
 “ Nay, I will say more, if any soul have room  
 “ in



“ in heaven, such a soul shall ; for God cannot  
 “ find in his heart to damn such a one. I might  
 “ then with as much true confidence say unto  
 “ you, as faithful JOHN CARELESS said to godly  
 “ JOHN BRADFORD, Hearken, O Heavens, and  
 “ thou, O earth, give ear, and bear me witness  
 “ at the great day, that I do here faithfully and  
 “ truly declare the *Lord's message* unto his dear  
 “ servant, and singularly beloved JOHN BRAD-  
 “ FORD, saying, JOHN BRADFORD, thou man so  
 “ specially beloved of God, *I do pronounce and*  
 “ *testify unto thee, in the word and name of the*  
 “ *Lord* JEHOVAH, *that all thy sins, whatsoever*  
 “ *they be, though never so many, grievous, or*  
 “ *great, be fully and freely pardoned, released,*  
 “ *and forgiven thee, by the mercy of God in Jesus*  
 “ *Christ, the only Lord and sweet Saviour, in*  
 “ *whom thou dost undoubtedly believe. As truly*  
 “ *as the Lord liveth, he will not have thee die the*  
 “ *death ; but hath verily purposed, determined,*  
 “ *and decreed, that thou shalt live with him for*  
 “ *ever.*

“ NEOPHYTUS. O Sir, if I have as good  
 “ warrant to apply this saying to myself, as sweet  
 “ Mr BRADFORD had to himself, then I am a  
 “ happy man.

“ EVANGELISTA. I tell you from *Christ,*  
 “ and under the hand of the Spirit, that your  
 “ person is accepted, your sins are done away,  
 “ and you shall be saved : And if an angel  
 “ from heaven should tell you otherwise, let  
 “ him be accursed. Therefore you may (with-  
 “ out



“out doubt) conclude, that you are a happy  
“man,” &c. \*

Here we have represented to us in a lively manner, to what extravagant heights spiritual pride will sometimes elevate the popular preachers. And here likewise we plainly see, that their ground of acceptance with God, or first spring of good hope, is the very same with that of their antagonists, the fashionable preachers, to wit, the *pious resolve* we took notice of before. This is the key held forth on all hands, as powerful to open for men the gates of heaven, and shut those of hell. However, a devout wish is often allowed to serve in its stead.

Moreover, the popular doctrine supposes, that unbelievers may be seriously engaged in praying for the Holy Spirit to help them to faith, and exhorts them accordingly; which is as absurd as to suppose that a man may be desirous of being influenced by the spirit of a truth, which at present he neither believes nor loves. For I reckon it must be granted, that no man loves the gospel before he believes it; and likewise, that the Spirit  
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\* Perhaps, by some such example as this, ASPASIO has been emboldened to address the yet diffident THERON in the following manner. “This you do, THERON: [*fly to Christ*]; I know you do. “Therefore, as surely as God is true, as certainly as God exists, “they [*the blessings*] are all your own. I would humbly, yet boldly, “apply to my friend, what the great JEHOVAH speaks by the “prophet: *As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee “with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a “bride doth.* I appeal to all my perfections, for the truth of this “sacred engagement: And let every one of my adorable at- “tributes witness against me, if I am worse than my word.” Vol. iii. p. 305.



of God acts as the soul, sense, or meaning of the words wherein the gospel is delivered.

Much has been said and written in defence of supernatural grace, or the agency of the divine Spirit influencing the hearts of men, in opposition to those reasoners who doubt of or deny any such influence: And many things have been said on this head, serving to give us false notions of the divine grace and Spirit.—This much the scripture will support us in saying, that when any man is influenced by the Holy Spirit, some point of knowledge is conveyed to his mind; he learns something of the truth of the gospel which he knew not before; or what he knew before is seasonably brought to his remembrance; or his mind is kept steady in the persuasion of the known truth, his love to it cherished, and his hope enlivened. The apostles said, *God hath given to us the Spirit of power and of love, and of a sound [or sober] mind.* So that whatever they affirmed, whatever they practised under the influence of the holy Spirit, they could give a sober and solid reason for it. If they confidently declared their faith, they had the clearest evidence to produce. If they fervently expressed their love, they had the most amiable objects to describe. If they joyfully made mention of their hope, they had the grandest enjoyments in prospect.

The holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Truth, as also the Spirit of Grace. He speaks and breathes only the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. When a man then comes to know the  
gospel,



gospel, or to receive this Spirit, he thinks of no other grace but what appeared in Christ's tasting death for men ; no other truth but what was manifest in " Christ, the end of the law for " righteousness." This differs not a little from what the popular doctrine leads us to think of ; namely, " the truth of grace in the heart."— When our systems describe faith to us, as a saving grace bestowed on us, by which we make use of Christ for salvation ; are we not led to think of some grace necessary to our salvation, beside what appeared when Christ, by the grace of God, tasted death for the sins of men ?

If we consider faith as appearing in the profession of it, we find the apostles accounting the influence of the holy Spirit necessary to enable a man to make such a profession of the faith as was to be admitted by Christians: *No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost.* As soon then as it appeared by any man's profession, that he had heard and believed what the apostles preached, it appeared at the same time that he was influenced by the holy Spirit.

There is no separating the agency of the holy Spirit from the knowledge of the truth. " To " know the truth is life eternal ;" and this life is begun and supported by the Spirit of Christ. On the other hand, all who resist the truth, and do not admit its evidence, are expressly said to resist the holy Ghost. We ought not then to imagine, with the popular preachers, that the gospel can in any respect be considered as a dead letter, or destitute of divine power. For being the voice  
of



of God, it is unchangeably powerful to save all who believe it, and to destroy all who oppose it. —Believers are said to *grieve* the holy Spirit when they neglect to hearken to the words of the gospel, and their consciences are answerably *grieved* when they are brought to repentance.

Jesus Christ, speaking of the Spirit, says, *When he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself. He shall glorify me.* And in another place, *He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.* When we hear one describing to us how he first obtained peace with God, if we find him taking pains to inform us of the influences of grace he felt in his heart, and the operations of the Spirit leading him on to conversion, we may safely say, This is a spirit that speaks of himself; this is not the true grace of God. So we can be at no loss to see what sort of conversion he has undergone.—If we hear another telling us, that, after manifold pious labours, as he thought, he found, that in them all he was only doing the abominable things that God hates; that he could never find true rest, till he heard, that “Christ through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God;” we may safely say, This man speaks by the influence of the holy Ghost. And though we cannot speak to him in the stile wherein EVANGELISTA addresses NEOPHYTUS: Yet we may warrantably “commend him to God, and to the word of his grace,” which he has professed; assuring him, that that word is able  
to



to save him, and will save him, if it abide in him, if he continue to love and obey it from the heart; otherwise he shall have his part with hypocrites and unbelievers: Even as Jesus said to those Jews which believed on him, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*—But I must reserve what I have to say of the influence of the gospel on them that believe it, to another Letter.

I MIGHT now consider ASPASIO's use of similitudes in describing his faith; and the rather, because peoples minds are often more readily swayed by these, than by any other kind of reasoning.—Not to be tedious, I shall only take some general notice of the *ship-wrecked mariner*, labouring hard to gain the wished-for rock\*; and of the *summer-house*, to which the two friends found it necessary to betake themselves for shelter from the storm, as being sensible, that otherwise their knowing where it was could be of no service to them †. The popular preachers use many similitudes to the same purpose.—They seem to forget that Christ is in heaven, and we on the earth, by their manner of urging us to take hold of, betake ourselves to him, and close with him. They represent Christ indeed as condescending greatly, and stooping very far down; but still they leave distance enough to employ the utmost activity of the hearer.—They seem to forget, that  
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\* Vol. i. p. 207.

† Vol. iii. p. 301.



the only way wherein we can receive benefit from Christ, is by the report concerning him conveyed to our ears. And how shall we lay hold on a report, but by holding it true? If we believe it not, we let it go for a falshood. Besides, how can we lay hold on any truth, till its evidence take hold of us?

Their way of speaking does indeed proceed from a very natural principle in man's heart. They cannot understand how a guilty person can be justified without contributing something thereto. PAUL supposes, that men professing Christianity with their mouths, would be apt to say in their hearts, *Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above :) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead :) that they would be apt to say in their hearts something importing, that Christ had not already come down from heaven to fulfil all righteousness, or that he has not already ascended, in testimony of his having finished his work ; and so be ready still to cry for powers from above to help them to do something in this matter, be it called closing with Christ, or by any other name. In opposition to all this, the apostle in the same place declares, that the word by which men are saved, is very nigh to every one who holds it true ; yea so nigh, that it is in the heart of him who believes it, and in the mouth of him who confesses it. He also tells us what that word is : *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be**

*be*



*be saved.*—Whenever our preachers find *the heart* made mention of in any text, they immediately dream of *heart-work*. So in this text, they oppose the belief of the heart to some speculative faith, which they lodge in the head, or to the assent of the understanding; whereas the apostle states no such opposition, but only distinguishes betwixt the confession of the mouth, and the belief of the heart; and supposes, what very ordinarily happens, that what a man confesses with his mouth, may differ from what he secretly says in his heart.

Moreover, our preachers in their use of similitudes seem to forget that man is happy or miserable according to his knowledge, or what he is conscious of. He is miserable, and filled with great perplexity, when he knows that he has sinned, and is persuaded that there is no loosing of the connection betwixt sin and its wages. He must then be greatly relieved from his perplexity, when he comes to know that he may be justified, and yet that connection remain in its full force. He, then, to whom this knowledge is conveyed, finds immediately a covert from the *storm*, and his feet set on a *rock*. His relief prevents all his endeavours.

But if we should take these similitudes to refer to the Christian race, wherein all that believe are called to run; then I own there is some propriety in them. He that believes, on hearing the voice of Christ saying, *It is I, be not afraid*; will be ready to reply, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*—*Bid me come unto thee upon the water*; I  
am



am bound to give obedience at all hazards. If now we understand by the *storm* the wrath that is to come, the believer, knowing that Christ hath done enough to deliver from it, loves him, takes hold of him, or flies to him, in obeying his commands, and frequenting every mean of correspondence with him; according to the word that Jesus left with his disciples, while he should be absent from them: *If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* Accordingly we find BARNABAS exhorted those at Antioch in whom he saw the grace of God, “that with purpose of heart they would cleave  
“unto the Lord.” The consequence of which was, they assembled together in the appointed church-order, and denied themselves in sending relief to their brethren in Judea. Such were the acts of faith among those who were first called Christians. Here is room for every pious wish, purpose, and resolve, for the whole exercise of godliness both in mind and body. See what effect the knowledge of Christ had on PAUL, and what was his steady purpose: *Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made*



*conformable unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead: Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press forward to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

LET us next observe what use the preachers make of the scriptures in support of their acts of faith.—As PAUL had reason to complain of many in his time who corrupted the word of God, so may we find many now who tarnish almost every text they breathe upon. And I am sorry to find ASPASIO unwarily adopting their glosses in too many instances. In *Dialogue XVI. vol. iii. p. 277.* he addresses his friend thus: “ Since you  
 “ are sensible of your impotence, beware of the  
 “ *contrary* extreme. Because you cannot by your  
 “ own strength exercise faith, let not this occasion  
 “ a tame resignation of yourself to infidelity. You  
 “ must endeavour, diligently endeavour, to be-  
 “ lieve; and wait and pray for the divine SPIRIT.  
 “ Though it is his office to testify of CHRIST,  
 “ *and bring near the REDEEMER’S righteousness*;  
 “ yet his influences are not to supersede, but to en-  
 “ courage our own efforts.—*Work out your own*  
 “ *salvation with fear and trembling*; here is our  
 “ duty: For it is God that worketh in you both to  
 “ will



“ *will and to do*; here is our encouragement. And  
 “ O! what a glorious encouragement, to have the  
 “ arms of omnipotence stretched out for our sup-  
 “ port and succour!

“ You was once, THERON, a zealous advocate  
 “ for good works. Now you seem to have a-  
 “ bandoned your clients. Remember, my dear  
 “ friend, what our *Lord Jesus Christ* says, *This*  
 “ *is the work of God*, of all works most ac-  
 “ ceptable and most honourable to the divine  
 “ Majesty, *that you believe on him whom he hath*  
 “ *sent.*

“ *Ther.* The true belief, according to your  
 “ notion, ASPASIO, is so refined and exalted a  
 “ virtue, that I very much question whether I  
 “ shall ever be able to attain it.

“ *Asp.* If you are unable to attain it, is the  
 “ *Lord* unable to give it? *Our sufficiency* for this,  
 “ and every good work, is not in ourselves, but  
 “ in GOD. And to him difficulties are easy.  
 “ Before him mountains are a plain. You will  
 “ please to remember, that sinners are said to  
 “ *believe*, not through their own ability, but  
 “ through the aids of *grace.*” Is it not surprising  
 to see men daily finding fault with the Jewish  
 teachers for interpreting the Old Testament in  
 favour of justification by works, and yet at the  
 same time gravely employed themselves in thus  
 commenting on the New? As there are two texts  
 made mention of here, which are constantly used  
 in Sermons to the same purpose, we may take  
 some particular notice of them. PAUL, reminding  
 the Philippians of the character of Jesus Christ,



exhorts them thus, chapter ii. 12. *Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence; work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings, and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, &c.*

The application of any words in this passage to acts of faith in order to justification, is so foreign to the whole context, yea to the whole Epistle, that I am half ashamed to offer any confutation of it.—Does not PAUL consider them as having already experienced consolation in Christ, the comfort of love, and the fellowship of the Spirit? Is he not commending their obedience to the gospel, and encouraging them to go forward, as they had begun? Was not that salvation which comes by faith promoted in them, while their faith wrought by love? While they grew in love, did they not enjoy more of the comfort thereof? While they grew in likeness of temper to Christ, did not their consolation by him abound? PAUL tells them, that their patient obedience was to them an evident token of salvation, and that of God, as well as of perdition to their adversaries. And he animates them to steadfastness, by the same argument that gave birth to their obedience: *For it is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do, (ὅτι ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς ἡ ἐνδοξία) because of the good pleasure; because he is well pleased in his beloved Son.* This is the grand persuasive to obedience so often urged



urged in the New Testament, now in more copious, then in more concise terms. Thus the same apostle prays for the Thessalonians, whose faith already grew exceedingly, and whose charity abounded, *that God would fulfil among them all the good pleasure of goodness, and the work of faith with power.* The work or effect of faith resembles the good pleasure of divine goodness which is revealed and believed. So the apostle prays, that the grand argument might ever be present with them, and have its full effect among them; that, like what they believed, they might be full of all goodness, abounding in the fruits of righteousness. By this argument God worketh in them that believe, both to will and to do, not any thing in order to justification, but all those things wherein their salvation consists, and is evidenced.

The apostle, taking notice of the works of love among the Hebrews, says, *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation.* Better than what? Even better than the highest things that could be talked of in the way of illumination, which might take place, and yet not accompany salvation; yea, which might be experienced by those who might notwithstanding fall away irrecoverably.

Moreover, in the beginning of the Epistle to the Philippians, PAUL declares himself confident, that he who had already *begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.* As these words are constantly used in Sermons to



the same purpose as those in chapter ii. it may be proper to quote the passage: chapter i. 3—9. *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, (always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy) for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more, &c.* Hence it is evident, that the good work begun in them was the work of that charity which never faileth, appearing among them, not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth, in their liberal and constant (*κοινωνία*) fellowship or contribution for the gospel; and more especially in their care of the apostle himself, who was then a prisoner for its sake, and at a great distance from them. So he prays, that their love might still abound.

Where this work or effect of faith, this ministering love appears, there, we may say, the grace of God is bestowed on men: *We do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, how that, &c.* Where this serving grace appears, there we may say the grace of God is known in truth; even the grace that appeared in Christ's death. — Did we at-

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tend more to the scriptures, we should give less heed to what we hear in Sermons about saving graces.

Let us now consider the other text mentioned by ASPASIO, John vi. 28—30. The Jews inquired, *What shall we do, that we may work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.* The Jews were plainly inquiring, how they might be qualified to do the works God requires in his law, in order to justification. The answer of Jesus plainly imports, that they would become possessed of the whole work God required, in knowing that God sent him to work it, without their working less or more. For if we could separate from *believing* the idea of some confused laborious exercise, which has been affixed to it, the answer of Jesus would readily found thus to us: “This is the work of God; “to know that he hath sent me to work it\*.”

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\* If common prejudices have hindered some from attending to the natural and easy sense here given of Christ's memorable answer to the Jews, about the ground of acceptance with God, it might at least be expected, that a tender regard to the scriptures should have led them to consider it as a difficult text, which they did not well understand, rather than to give it a meaning quite opposite to the whole tenor of his discourse on that occasion, yea of all his other discourses; and also the writings of his apostles, who certainly understood his doctrine better than any modern commentator. Does not PAUL say, *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness?* Yea, does he not constantly oppose faith to works, to all works whatsoever, in this matter? Is it then a fair way of reconciling the scriptures, to talk to us of some ambiguous work, exerted by the human mind in the matter of justification? Let us either have works properly so called, or no works at all.



His answer was, at least, better understood by the Jews, than it is commonly among us. They had no notion of any difficulty in believing what they understood : But they did not understand who Jesus was, or what he was working. So their reply to Jesus is thus set before us in ver. 30. *They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe THEE? What dost thou WORK?* Accordingly the whole reasoning at large turns on, who he was, and what he was to work. The case was, our jargon about *acts of faith* was not then invented. And it would still appear as ridiculous as ever, on any subject but religion. If a friend of mine should see me chearful, on hearing something new, and I should tell him, I was comforted by an act of faith ; would he not say, I trifled with him, and readily ask, what good news I had heard, that he might partake in my satisfaction?

Faith, with its effects, is in scripture often signified by one expression, and accordingly connected with salvation ; as when it is said, *Who-soever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* Now, though we cannot say, that a believer is saved on account of his prayers ; yet we may safely say, that he is saved on account of what he believes, and by which he is encouraged to pray. It is easy to see love and hope expressed in all the prayers of faith recorded in the scripture ; yet it would be absurd to infer from thence, that prayer, love, and hope, or any other effect of that knowledge which is faith, are requisites in order to justification : For if we agree with  
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the apostles, we must still maintain, that justification comes by faith, and not by works, not by any thing we do in obedience to any law whatsoever.

The observation just now made, contains the substance of what I have to say against the use the popular doctrine makes of the scripture, in describing faith. The scripture uses several expressions equivalent to *believing*, and several others which include and presuppose faith, and so describe it with its effects. It is not my business to distinguish these expressions in the many passages where they occur : But this much may be said in the general, that if by any of them more be understood than the simple knowledge or persuasion of the truth, then something more than faith is understood, something more than is necessary to justification.

The scripture points forth the common misery of men by various images, as of thirst, hunger, nakedness, &c. It describes them as labouring, heavy laden, blind, weak, &c. Many preachers are fond to extract, out of one or other of these expressions, some distinguishing qualification, to which they may apply the promises ; especially if they can find any of these expressions likewise used in scripture, to point forth the fervency of love, wherewith the promise of blessedness is indeed connected. For instance, the common unhappiness of men, occasioned by sin, is set forth under the notion of *thirst*. All men are labouring to find something to quench this, some one way, some another. If the popular preachers find  
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men disposed to quench it, in following their directions, they freely apply the promises to them, and pronounce them blessed. And they suppose they are encouraged so to do, because Jesus says, *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness.* Whereas those spoken of by Jesus, are plainly classed with the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and sufferers for his sake, whose reward in heaven is great. The thirst, then, which Jesus here speaks of, is no other than the noble purpose expressed by PAUL, which was formerly cited from Philippians, chapter iii. We cannot then imitate our preachers here, without manifestly punning on the scripture.

The popular doctrine takes the promises made to those who believe and obey the gospel, and applies them to such as are carefully acquiring the requisites to faith; such as, Rev. iii. 20. *Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.* Now, Jesus, the great shepherd, distinguishes his sheep from others, by their hearing his voice, and following him. And Luke xii. 33—37. calling his disciples to lay up their treasure in heaven, by giving to the poor, he adds, *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their Lord, when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them*



*them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.* Instead of all this, the preachers incline to talk to us, about some “opening of the “door of the heart,” which neither they nor their hearers well understand, and which neither benefits the opener, nor any body else.

If the scriptures point forth the freedom of divine grace, to the setting aside of all human distinctions, in such language as this, *If any man will come after me;—If any man will be my disciple;—Let him that heareth, say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely;* our preachers immediately put an emphasis of their own, a very impertinent one too, on the expression *will\**, and accordingly go about to limit the divine grace to the better disposed part of mankind. But it would be endless to trace them in all their glosses on the sacred scripture. In a word, when they read the various effects of faith recorded in scripture, they persuade their hearers to labour to attain some shadow of these in their hearts,  
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\* The deceit and falshood of all such glosses on the scripture will readily appear to us, if we can only attend to the meaning of one plain passage, wherein Jesus addressed the woman of Samaria thus: *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.* The knowledge here spoken of is saving faith. And this knowledge, which was never yet acquired by human endeavours, never yet sought, or in the remotest manner wished for by any unbeliever, is the only spring of all willing, wishing, desiring, asking, of every motion of the heart that is agreeable to God, and attended with a sense of his favour. This knowledge influencing the mind is, in scripture, called the *new heart, the right spirit, new man, &c.*



and then to work out faith as a prop to them all. They lead men to begin their fabric at the top, and to proceed building downward to the foundation. And indeed the more seriously we consider the popular doctrine, we shall find the more reason to conclude it to be a castle in the air.

YET, reflecting how readily their glosses are adopted in the *Dialogues*, I am content to consider a few more of them. If the scripture describe believers as pilgrims and strangers on the earth, as running the Christian race, denying themselves for the sake of the heavenly inheritance, and accordingly *flying for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them*; our preachers, ever mindful of their acts of faith, are ready to exhort us to put forth the acts of *flying to Christ*, and *laying hold on him*, in order to our justification. If BARNABAS exhorts those in whom he saw the grace of God, *with purpose of heart to cleave unto the Lord*, after the example of the believers who were said to be *added to the Lord*, when they were added to the society of his disciples, keeping his commands; then we are told, that justifying faith is *cleaving to Christ*. ASPASIO says, (*vol. ii. p. 68.*) “ Faith is stiled *a receiving of Christ*: “ *As many as received him, to them gave he power,* “ or granted the privilege, *to become the sons of* “ *God.*” He might have likewise quoted the words immediately following, *even to them that believe on his name*. If, then, ASPASIO means no more by *receiving* but *believing*, I am ready to agree



agree with him: For I can easily understand how a man may be said to receive a testimony, when he admits the truth of it; or how he refuses it, when he rejects it as false. But ASPASIO tells us in this page, that it is the office of faith, “to take and use the inestimable gift.” If in this, or any other part of the New Testament, more be meant by *receiving Christ*, than knowing him, or believing on him; then I am ready to shew, that more than *faith* is meant, namely, faith with its fruits and effects.

In the next page, ASPASIO says, “Faith is represented as *laying hold* on God our Saviour, *leaning* upon our Beloved, *cleaving* to the Lord.” It is somewhat strange, to find descriptions of faith, drawn to us from passages where there is not the least mention of it. The first of these three acts of faith, refers to Isaiah xxvii. 5. *Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me.* ASPASIO ought, before he made use of this text, first to have inquired, *Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other man?* For the context, as it stands in our English Bible, seems to point rather to the Messiah, than to any other. The words immediately following are, *And he shall make peace with me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, &c.* — The second refers to Cant. viii. 5. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* The use made of this text needs, I think, no remark. — The third refers to the exhortation of BARNABAS to the believers at Antioch, which  
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we have considered already. Thus the whole Bible has been ransacked for almost every expression of activity, in order to describe that faith, which yet is said "not to contribute its quota," or to do nothing toward our justification. Was ever any subject so deeply buried in ambiguity as this!

But the ambiguity seems most difficult to be shaken off from those expressions which point more directly to the operations of the mind, and have least of the metaphor in them, as trusting, relying, &c. All these expressions have respect to the goodness and excellency of what is believed, and serve to express our attachment to it on that account. For let me be ever so firmly persuaded of bad news; this persuasion or faith may well be the foundation of grief, fear, aversion, &c.; but it can never be the foundation of trust, joyful expectation, or reliance. If a testimony persuades me of the reality of excellent things, utterly unknown to me before, and assures me of good things to come; this persuasion or faith may justly be called, *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*. It may be called the ελεγχος, the argument, evidence, proof, or conviction of invisible things; and the υποσασις, the substantial ground, or solid foundation of hope. The faith of the gospel is indeed the basis of trust, courage, confidence, boasting, and glorying; the center of esteem, desire, gratitude, and love. It is the foundation and center of every vigorous and every kindly affection of the mind, of every happy and every grateful sentiment. So soon as men believe

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lieve the truth, hope is the benefit they receive by it. And love or grateful affection immediately becomes their natural propensity toward what gives them happiness, as well as their indispensably commanded duty.

All this is agreeable to the scripture, which, speaking of the revealed character of God, says, Psalm ix. 10. *They that know thy name will put their trust in thee*; even as the natural knowledge of God in the mind of unbelievers, fills them with fear, distrust, and alienation. If one approaching to a frozen lake or river, over which he has occasion to pass, tells me, that he has been assured, by good information, that the ice was sufficiently strong to support him; and yet, after all, proves timorous, and averse to make the trial, by venturing his person freely upon it: I plainly perceive he has no faith in the report he heard; because he does not trust in it; or, which is the same thing, he cannot trust, rely, confide in, or venture himself on the ice.

Accordingly, if one tells me, that he believes the gospel, and yet proves averse to risk his interest or reputation in the world for the sake of it; I immediately perceive, that whatever he speaks with his mouth, he does not in his heart believe the gospel, because he puts no trust in it. PAUL directs TIMOTHY to give the following charge to such rich men as professed to believe the gospel. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: That they do good,*  
*that*



*that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate ; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* From this, and many like passages, we may easily see what the scripture means by trusting, relying, leaning, waiting, cleaving to, laying hold on, and many other expressions, which our popular preachers, as averse to the self-denied obedience, as to the simple belief of the truth, have thought fit to press into their service for describing their acts of faith. If we would give a summary description of their faith, we must say, it is a wish, or a guess, or a mixture of both ; or still more comprehensively, it is any thing, every thing, or nothing.

Perhaps it has been to relieve his brethren out of their perplexity and confusion about faith, that Mr JONES, in his late *Exposition of the Church-Catechism*, has generously coined a new distinction, and acquainted his readers, that “ faith and “ belief are two very different principles.” If his brethren would only adopt this distinction, we might, in all time coming, be at no loss to distinguish betwixt actors of faith and believers of the gospel.

THE dexterity of our popular preachers, in handling the scriptures about faith, to hide from our eyes the saving truth, and its genuine effects, bears no small resemblance to the critical skill exercised by a more fashionable sort of preachers, to rob us of the truth itself, and shew us, that  
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all the passages which speak of the redemption of men by Jesus Christ, have really very little or no meaning at all. Such words as these, either in Greek or English, *εἰ εἰς ὑπερ πάντων ἀπέθανεν, ἀρα οἱ πάντες ἀπέθανον*, *If one died for all, then all have died*, would, to common understandings, import the same as, “If one hath suffered or been punished for all, then all in effect have suffered, or been punished ;” or, to take in the idea of debt, “If one hath made full payment for twenty insolvent debtors, then all the twenty have made payment.” Here the idea of vicarious suffering, or vicarious payment, would readily present itself to vulgar minds. But our doctors of refined genius, and skilled in criticism, are ready to tell us, that no such idea must be entertained, either from this, or a thousand other passages to the same purpose. For why, the word *vicarious* is not to be found in the whole scripture. And if it were to be found, we may be sure they would next tell us, that vicarious suffering did by no means import one’s suffering *instead* of another.

If the scripture describe the sufferings of Christ by all the expressions used to describe the sufferings of those who are marked out as objects of the divine displeasure; if it point him forth as bearing iniquity, smitten of God, put to grief by him, forsaken of him, having his face hid from him, wounded and bruised by him, and receiving the cup of mortal sorrow from him; if it speak of him as bearing sins his own self in his own body, of iniquity being laid on him, and of his suffer-



ing for sins, the just for the unjust ; our doctors are ready to tell us, that his suffering thus for men does by no means import his being punished for them ; and that there is a great difference between suffering pain for sin, and being punished for it.

Now, though some learned gentlemen should suffer pain in the next world, for perverting the scriptures in this, who, but people of a vulgar way of thinking, would imagine, that thereby they were punished for it ? Perhaps, it might appear in some third world, that they were only suffering pain, and not punishment. Yea, though it should appear that they were to suffer for ever, the question might remain, whether or not they were punished ? In like manner, though the scripture speak of one redeeming many from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them, we cannot, according to the mind of our doctors, say, that the curse of the law imports the wrath of God, the punishment of sin, or the reverse of his blessing. Yea, it would seem, that, to please them, we must say, that neither the curse nor the blessing of God import, either his inflicting punishment on men, or his imparting happiness to them. In short, if we would enter into the spirit of their writings, or read them with any satisfaction, we must have a new dictionary for all the notable words of the New Testament.

But stay, it will be said, better have a very perplexed meaning, or even none at all to the scriptures, than a bad one ; and that these gentlemen

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men critics are all along influenced by the best of motives, a concern for the divine character, the quiet of mens consciences, and the honour of reason. Well, how does this appear? They would have us to understand from reason, (and revelation, at any rate, must agree) that God is, to a certain degree, merciful, as well as just; that is, disposed to pardon less sins, and to punish greater ones; or to pardon the less, and punish the more guilty offenders: That as all men are acknowledged to be sinners, if all sins were punished, there would be no room for mercy; and if all sins were pardoned, there would be no room for justice to appear: Therefore that both these divine perfections may appear, it is necessary, that the one occasionally give place to the other, according as, in the judgment of wise men, proper objects for either present themselves.

“ For a good and merciful being must, as such,  
 “ pardon some offences. And when a man by  
 “ repentance ceases to be what he was, namely,  
 “ an object of punishment, and becomes what he  
 “ ought to be, namely a good man; surely such  
 “ a one is an object of mercy.—Are not men to  
 “ be encouraged to repent, as well as to be de-  
 “ terred from offending? Let the presumptuous  
 “ and obstinate suffer.” Here, for once, I am  
 ready to agree with our monopolizers of reason, in affirming, that such a penitent as is here described, shall never be miserable, yea, shall never die; and I have the divine oath to support me in this affirmation.



But I have been told, what I presume most individuals, not excepting our reasoners, incline to think, for their own sakes, that there is no man so bad, but he has some good quality, and no man so good but he has some bad one. Therefore, methinks, the half-just and half-merciful being above described, who cannot shew mercy without setting aside justice, nor justice without suspending the exercise of mercy, ought, in order to shew these two half-perfections to all the proper objects, first to punish every one for all his bad actions, and then reward him for the remainder of good ones. But then, if there should be found any among mankind, who find themselves destitute of every recommendation to the divine favour, such, I apprehend, would be glad to hear of a greater God than this; and who, being less limited in the exercise of his mercy, might be capable of shewing compassion to those who have no good qualities at all.

These gentlemen are at a great deal of pains, to shew us from the scriptures, what we had known though they had never been written, that is, that God is essentially kind to the righteous, and averse to the wicked. But they will not allow us to say, that by an atonement God is *placated* or *appeased* for sin; though the scripture declares him to be *pacified* for sin, and that his anger is turned away from the same person against whom he was wroth; and though it clearly shews, in all this, that “with God there is no  
“ varia-



“variableness, neither shadow of turning.” They tell us, that “guilt is personal, and cannot therefore be transferred or imputed to the innocent. And to punish the innocent for the guilty, is as incompatible with justice as with mercy or goodness. The innocent person may be willing to suffer for the guilty; but is it therefore just to punish him? *Volenti nulla injuria* — true; he has no right to complain: But have you a right to punish him, because he will not complain \*?”

Thus men reason about the Deity as about their fellow: *Have you a right* —! They can think of the Most High as obliged with them to love his neighbour as himself! Let them declare, if they can, who is the neighbour of the Deity! — He gave no right to the judges, or even kings of Israel, to punish the children for the parents crimes; but he claimed it as his own right, and held it thus: *All souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine. — Hath not the potter power over the clay? and, Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God!* And now when they are combating the apostolic account of Christ’s death, in their replying against God; this perhaps may lead some who have received the doctrine of atonement by tradition from the first reformers, and revered it as the *good old cause*, to consider seriously on what footing they hold it; and accordingly may draw off their attention from the laboured descriptions of faith,

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\* See *Monthly Review* for June, 1756.



by which that doctrine is daily undermined. No religious controversy can turn upon a more interesting hinge than, Is there an atonement or not? And such teachers as profess regard to it, will be much better employed, in satisfying themselves and others that they hold it on good ground, than in giving out ambiguous descriptions of heart-work. Besides, they have this advantage above its ancient friends, that they have adversaries to deal with, who profess readiness to join with them in appealing to the scriptures.

Our Christian opposers of the atonement say, "God was always good, merciful, just, kind. Christ did not *cause*, or make these attributes." Thus they insinuate, as if the friends of the atonement maintained, that it made some change in the Deity, or gave birth to some new divine attributes; or, in other words, that the Deity began to exist about the beginning of the Christian æra. PAUL, speaking of the exhibition of Christ, be it for an atonement, or in any other character, assigns this as the great end of it, *That God MIGHT BE JUST, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* Can these gentlemen imagine, that PAUL thought the Deity less just, or less in any attribute, before this exhibition, than after? Or how came they to imagine that any friend of the atonement ever thought so?

They allow that Christ died; but they have not yet satisfied us, how a person perfect in every virtue, without any stain of sin, came to endure the severest sufferings, even mortal sorrow, from  
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the hand of God, and to be delivered by his determinate counsel to suffer a painful and ignominious death from the hands of men. They tell us indeed, that “the prophecies concerning the Messiah could not otherwise be fulfilled.” But this does not mend the matter in the least. This is only such an apology as a Pagan would make for his JUPITER, That he was obliged to act as he did, for so it was written in the book of fate. But, in this case, we must inquire, how it came thus to be written in the book of fate, and who wrote it there? If there be a God who governs the world, he must be invariably just. It is incumbent, then, upon those who zealously assert the divine justice, and will not allow it to be consistent therewith to punish the innocent, to shew how it became God to make a righteous person suffer pain, and to continue his sufferings, while praying most earnestly, that, if it were possible or consistent with his will, they might pass from him; and I may add, how it became God to make him suffer, what, to all observers, bare the appearance of punishment; yea what appeared to be so by his own lamenting cry on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!*

Though the gentlemen of this class may not be fully agreed about the adapting of every part of scripture to their scheme of redemption; yet he who would have his mind quite disintangled from all notions of the necessity of atonement or vicarious punishment, that he may stand before his Maker on the footing of a good man, who



has ceased to be an object of punishment, and all this without running the risk of the odious name of an infidel, may with great satisfaction read Dr SYKES; whom I choose the rather to mention, as he is latest on the field, and has consulted the scriptures in a particular manner on this subject.

This gentleman says, “ Punishment for sin is  
 “ certainly a proper method of deterring men  
 “ from sin. But where is Christ ever said to be  
 “ *punished*? Where is he said to suffer *vicarious*  
 “ *punishment*? Now, if Christ be never said to  
 “ be *punished*, or to be *punished for others*; that  
 “ doctrine can never be said to be a scripture-  
 “ doctrine, which is not to be expressed in scrip-  
 “ ture-words.—All that is here contended for, is,  
 “ that the scriptures never say that God inflicted  
 “ *punishment*, or even *sufferings*, on Christ, in  
 “ order to, or with a view of, *detering men from*  
 “ *sin*.”

Now, it would be to no purpose to remind this writer of the words of Jesus, *Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children; —for if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?* For why, the word *deter* is not to be found in all this passage. And though it can easily be proved, that by the *green tree* and *the dry*, the Jews understood the righteous and the wicked, down from EZEKIEL’S time; yet there no is express mention made of an *innocent* person here: And though there were, the Doctor is ready to shew the reasoning of Jesus concerning the green tree and the dry to be very improper and

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and inconclusive, by the following argument.

“ And indeed it would seem a strange method of  
 “ proceeding, to *punish*, or to make an *innocent*  
 “ man *suffer*, in order to deter *sinners* from sin.  
 “ It is not agreeable to the common notions of  
 “ either *punishment* or *justice*. And perhaps the  
 “ direct contrary to what is usually inferred, may  
 “ with equal justice be *inferred*, namely, that  
 “ God’s *punishing* an *innocent* person implies his  
 “ displeasure with *innocency*, or else that he acts  
 “ *arbitrarily*, without regard to either right or  
 “ wrong.”

The apostles and first Christians were indeed so far of the Doctor’s mind, that they considered the death of Christ as a very *strange* and *uncommon* event. They never heard of the like before, and they well knew they would never see the like again. Yea, they represent it as that which would be matter of wonder and praise eternally in the mansions of the blessed. For here they beheld that miracle, which the Doctor has no notion of, the perfection of justice and the perfection of mercy shining together; and instead of impairing or darkening, illustrating each other. So that while they marvelled at this grand event, they were far from deducing his inference. So true is it, that what proves rich food to some, is poison to others; or, to use the apostolic phrase, what proves the *savour of life* to some, proves the *savour of death* to others.

Mean while I willingly join our author in opposing those who “ have asserted and maintained,  
 “ that it was Christ who rendered *repentance* of  
 “ the



“the *efficacy* which it has ;” or rather, which they have falsely ascribed to it, through their ignorance of and disaffection to both repentance and the atonement. It is meet that the arts of these trimmers should be exposed by both the friends and the enemies of the atonement. Accordingly our author’s question is very pertinent, “How often does the expression occur of God’s sending his Son ; and is there once intimated any such effect as the making our *repentance* accepted unto everlasting life, either by his life or death ?” Surely no friend to the atonement will offer to affirm, that any such intimation is made. All its true friends will readily join in affirming, that Christ came to render impenitent sinners accepted unto everlasting life by the works which he himself wrought ; and thus, by the discovery of preventing goodness, to lead them to repentance. But then it will be said, this does not agree with our natural notions. And our author is ready to maintain, that, “as to revelation, there is not one single text but what agrees with our natural notions.”

Here one may be ready to inquire, What do the enemies of the atonement mean by their natural notions ? Not to dip far into this question at present, methinks we may have a view of some notions very natural to them from one of their number, who is much respected by his fellows, I mean the author of *The church of England tried by herself*, who calls himself *a real friend to truth and the gospel*. This gentleman having, when he entered into the ministry, subscribed, and done every

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every thing the church required, before he was sufficiently acquainted with the doctrines established in the Articles, Liturgy, &c. and upon due examination seeing cause to differ from them in several points, finds himself reduced to such a strait, “ that he must *necessarily* offend, either  
 “ against *the church*, or against *truth*, and his own  
 “ conscience. And what a sad *dilemma* must a  
 “ man be under, when he can neither *speak* what  
 “ he thinks truth, with *safety*, nor be *silent* with-  
 “ out offence ?” This he represents as the *hard case of the thinking part* of the clergy, and accordingly prays for relief, by a Review of the Articles, Liturgy, &c.

The authors of the *Critical Review* for May, 1756, expressing their sympathy with this gentleman, for whom they see no near prospect of relief, say, “ In the mean while the writer may  
 “ sit down with a quiet conscience, and enjoy  
 “ the noblest satisfaction which a human heart  
 “ can feel, the satisfaction of having discharged  
 “ his duty to God and his fellow-creatures, and  
 “ acquitted himself in the task he undertook,  
 “ like a man of honour, religion, and virtue.”  
 But how or where shall he *sit down*? Shall he sit down quietly, without either eating his loaf, or repeating his Liturgy? Or may he with a quiet conscience speak what he thinks, and boldly preach against the Articles and Liturgy, in connection with which he got his living, and persist in receiving the wages of iniquity, and eating the bread of perjury, as having sufficiently exonerated his conscience, by openly declaring the sad  
 dilemma



dilemma into which his superiors have brought him, and wherein they still retain him? I have heard of a clergyman in Scotland, who, in the like dilemma, resolved himself thus: “By my faith, I must live.” Thus might the thinking part of smugglers, after openly protesting against the multiplicity of taxes, with a quiet conscience, pursue their lucrative schemes; honestly declaring, that if they could find any other business equally gainful, without perjury, they would choose it rather.

What occasions the sad dilemma is this: The thinking part of the clergy lay it down as a fundamental maxim, That their religion must be subservient to their living and interest in the world. All their natural notions serve to support this maxim, whereas the dictates of conscience prove very often unnaturally troublesome. The consequence is, a character must be found for the Deity agreeable to their natural notions. And revelation, so far as it speaks sense, must agree: For they are ready to shew how many absurd and unnatural consequences would follow on ascribing to him any other character.

*He's like themselves, or how could he be good?  
And they blaspheme, who blacker schemes suppose.*

HAVING gone thus far among the remoter allies of our popular preachers, I shall proceed only a little further, and then return. The medium of modern orthodoxy, may, I think, be found in a late *Remonstrance against Lord*  
*Vis-*



*Viscount BOLINGBROKE's philosophical religion.*

The author, who studies to express himself with more than ordinary precision, speaks thus, in *p.* 162. “ that a vicarious punishment at least  
 “ is necessary to vindicate the divine justice, was  
 “ the opinion of all those who offered sacrifice :  
 “ And it is for the sake of such a punishment,  
 “ that Christians believe, that on certain secon-  
 “ dary conditions sins are pardonable.” These secondary conditions, we may safely presume, are much the same with the primary ones of the forementioned gentlemen ; and though they are not introduced to prove directly that the gospel is fabulous ; yet to all who admit them, it is easy to see, that the gospel can be of no more benefit than fable or fiction. But I have no occasion to censure this author, for thus he himself proceeds in the same page. “ Great must their guilt be,  
 “ and strong their disbelief of the justice, truth,  
 “ goodness, and mercy of God, who treat the  
 “ gospel as a fable and fiction; dreadful must their  
 “ apprehensions be on every surmise of God’s  
 “ vindictive justice.”

Methinks our writers who frustrate the doctrine of redemption by clogging it with conditions, and those who flatly oppose it by their critical skill, and great acquaintance with the secrets of nature and reason, instead of exposing, as they do, their absurdity to the observation of common readers, would do well to follow the example given them by Mr HUTCHINSON, who hath taken care to intrench himself so deeply among new-framed ideas to Hebrew words, as  
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to make the approaches of his adversaries at least somewhat difficult and tedious. This gentleman, by one stroke of criticism on the Hebrew word for **LEST**, in *Gen.* iii. 22. hath presumed to frustrate the atonement, and overthrow the sovereignty of the Most High, and is very confident that he hath put an end to all disputes on that score\*. Now, the number of those who read Hebrew, is but small in comparison of those who have some knowledge of their mother-tongue; and I may add, even in comparison of those who can make a shift to read some sentences in the Greek New Testament. If then those learned distinguishers who would comfort us with faith † instead of truth, and those who would comfort us with a Messiah suffering pain, but not punishment, for our sin, would go down with Mr HUTCHINSON into the bottom of a mine, and thence looking upward through optics of their own making, spy figures in the clouds, or conceive new ideas to all

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\* Dr Sykes hath given us a criticism no less ingenious on the Greek word for *robbery*, Phil. ii. 6. in order to undermine the dignity of that person by whom the atonement was made.

† One may indulge me in treating these men with some freedom, when I tell him, that they have given a false direction to a pen, from which I received, and from which I hoped more satisfaction than from any other in England;—a pen that seemed far better fitted for drawing out fair the great lines of divine truth, than for copying the mazes of self-seeking men.

I shall likewise take this occasion to say, that though I acknowledge several of the reflections made against Mr HUTCHINSON and his followers by their adversaries to be just; yet I am apt to think, that not a few of their adversaries, mistaking them for real friends to the atonement, by observing some kind of zeal for it, or rather noise about it, in their writings, bear them no good-will on that account.



all Hebrew words having any relation to *faith* or *redemption*, and then publish their discoveries, methinks by this means they might secure their absurdity for some time, at least, from the observation of ordinary readers.

Or, if this method be too troublesome, they might, in order to compromise matters with unbelievers, at whose increase they are much afflicted, chime in with the *Rational Christian*, author of a late "*Dissertation*, proving the light of the gospel is the light of nature, or that true Christianity is rational religion only ;" who says, " My intention is, to make appear by scripture, that the light of God's word or gospel is in all men ; that this is that eternal life and universal light held forth by Jesus Christ and his disciples: And those who believe and obey his doctrine, spirit, or nature, are said to have Christ within them. And all the doctrines of the gospel must be built on, and coincide with this fundamental law and light of nature. What does not, is not of God.—Christ was called *the light of the world, and the Word and Spirit of God*, because he preached that light, that word, that spirit; as ANAXAGORAS was called the *mind*, because he taught that a mind governed the world. And as Christ's doctrine manifested God and his laws to men, so his disciples called the manifestation of God to men by the name *Jesus and Christ*. — The outward Christ must die, and all our dependence on him must go away, that the internal and spiritual Messiah, the mystical Jesus, intellectual  
 " light,



“light, and divine understanding, may arise and  
 “shine in our souls.—All things concerning Jesus  
 “Christ without, are but an allegory of Jesus  
 “Christ in the soul.”

Here is a notable foundation for a coalition of religious parties. And if our avowed unbelievers would only condescend to clothe their own sentiments with some words and names borrowed from the religion of their country, they also might gain the reputation of good Christians. In this quotation we may see the substance of what is at bottom meant and aimed at by many preachers of different classes, as well as by Free-thinkers; if we only set aside the adventitious tenets and forms of expression which various parties adopt, in order to give some peculiar dignity or distinguishing importance to their several schemes.

I only propose these hints to our learned distinguishers for their own credit and conveniency, as it is highly probable they will never be able to procure, by the force of reasoning, such a general compliance with any of their particular systems, as has been formerly brought about by another kind of force.—Mean time, they are very welcome, for my part, to take their own course. They may well do undesigned service, it is far beyond their power to do the least hurt to the kingdom of Christ.

If we inquire what moves them to take so much pains to oppose the notion of atonement or vicarious punishment, or, when it is admitted, to frustrate it by secondary conditions; some of them



them will be apt to reply, That they are moved with concern for the support of piety ; and that they are jealous for the interests of morality. They are very careful of the honour of the gospel ; and they would so explain it, as that it should be no way exposed to any of those objections formerly made against PAUL's doctrine. When one observes how general the pious resentment against the doctrine of atonement is, he would be apt to imagine, that perfect love to righteousness, and hatred to sin, reigned in the breasts of all, except the few fools who believe it.

In BAYLE'S *Dictionary*, in the article JAPAN, we are informed of the like zeal shewn by Father POSSEVIN, a Jesuit, against the idolatrous Japanese, who laid no small stress on their atonement. " The last fault he censures, is, that the laws of  
 " Japan declare, that, by the mere invocation of  
 " NAMUAMIDABUT, or by crying *Forenguelio*,  
 " men expiate all sorts of sins, without any need  
 " of repentance. The Japanese (continues he)  
 " make no mention of satisfactory pains or good  
 " works. They pretend, that these things are  
 " injurious to the merit of XACA and AMIDA,  
 " who have been sufficiently afflicted for the  
 " crimes of men, and have fully expiated them  
 " by their sufferings. This doctrine opens the  
 " way to sin ; for," &c. Yet the same article produces other testimonies, to shew, that those here censured by the Jesuit, for making no mention of *satisfactory* pains or good works, were nevertheless at uncommon pains to enforce the practice



of morality; and that they made one of the three principal sects of the Japanese.—It is natural on this occasion to resume the old question, “Hath  
 “a nation changed their gods, which are yet no  
 “gods?” Yet, if we turn our eyes to the New Testament, we may well say, A greater than XACA and AMIDA is here! But, leaving these general reflections, let us return to our controversy about faith.

PERHAPS it will now be inquired, Are no rules to be observed, no means to be used, no works to be exerted by the human mind or body, in order to justification? The answer is ready: Yes, very many. And they may be thus shortly summed up: “Be perfect; keep the commandments, and thou shalt live.” The obligation of the law is eternal, so can never be loosed.—But perhaps another state of the question will be demanded, and that faith should be more directly respected therein. Well then, let it stand thus: Ought not a man to be at pains to attain to the persuasion, that all the pains he takes are good for nothing, except to enhance his guilt? Here methinks we are landed at downright absurdity. For who will labour in the hopes of being convinced, that all his labour is to no purpose, unless to his hurt? Who will travel an hundred miles, in the hopes of being persuaded at the journey’s end of his folly in attempting to travel at all? Yet on some such principle we must travel, and that too with much fatigue, and in the midst of many  
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perplexities, if we will be conducted by the popular doctrine.

The question then will still remain, How is faith obtained? This I would answer by putting another question, How have the most remarkable discoveries that have served most for the accommodation of human life been obtained? Has not that providence, which continually watches over the life of man, prevented human skill and industry in giving the first hint of these? I have been told, that the polar direction of the magnet obtruded itself on the first discoverer, when he was in quest of no such thing, being occupied in some very different inquiry. Do we not owe our knowledge of the salutary virtue of the Jesuit's bark, and many other medicines, to the divine providence preventing human sagacity? Has not the chymist been often surpris'd with useful discoveries when at his wit's end, and when he thought all his labour and expense lost?

If then it evidently appears, by the frequent and remarkable escapes and deliverances of unwary men, by the daily preservation of all, and the many unexpected comforts provided for their lives, that God "hath not left himself without witness," even in the common course of nature; must we not think, that, in the distribution of supernatural favours, it well becomes divine grace to appear in a distinguished manner? There it is meet, that "the arm of the Lord should be revealed." Accordingly Jesus said to NICODEMUS, *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest*



*the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit.* No man can account for his being privileged with the knowledge of the simple truth, while he observes many of quicker understanding than himself remaining in their opposition to it. But he can give a very good account of what comforts him. He has in readiness a solid and sober reason to give for his hope; even as he who has providentially been surpris'd with some valuable discovery in any branch of art, cannot tell why he was the first discoverer, but he can give a good reason for his subsequent practice founded upon it, as having a clear notion of what has been discovered to him.

PAUL, in his Epistle to the Romans, toward the close of chapter x. informs us how faith comes. He tells us, *It comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* He then leads us to observe what in fact took place among Jews and Gentiles, as to the belief of the gospel, That many of the latter, who were living in the grossest ignorance of God, readily came to the knowledge of it; while the bulk of the former, notwithstanding their many and great advantages, continued in their opposition. As many questions might arise in the minds of men about this surprising event, the apostle prevents, and silences them, by the only answer that could be given to them. He examines, if any reason or excuse for the unbelief of the Jews, could be drawn from their labouring under any disadvantage or incapacity



city in comparison with others ; and if, on the other hand, there was any favourable symptom in the case of the Gentiles, that promised the gospel any better reception among them. So he moves the following question, on the case of the Jews, who obeyed not, so did not believe the truth : *But I say, have they not heard?* In answer to this he maintains, that the sacred oracles, compared to the heavenly luminaries, had extended their influence to all parts of the earth where the Jews were dispersed : *Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the world.*

But, then, some men may reap no benefit from what they hear, by reason of their being more unlearned or more dull of apprehension than others. Accordingly, the next question runs thus, *But I say, Did not Israel know?* To this a twofold answer is given, the one from MOSES, and the other from ISAIAH. In the first, the Spirit of prophecy intimates, that, in sacred learning, the Jews would far excel the Gentiles, who, in comparison with them, are described as having no wisdom, and as unworthy to be accounted a people ; yet declares, that these fools would obtain the right hand of them as to the true knowledge of God, and access to his favour, and so provoke them to jealousy. In the second it is declared, that this knowledge, with its attendant blessings, would be bestowed on them that were no way in quest of it. The two answers run thus: First, MOSES saith, *I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish*



*foolish nation I will anger you. But ESAIAS is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people* \*. Though the Jews then eagerly studied the scriptures, and had all the knowledge of them that the utmost of human zeal and sagacity could lead them to; yet all their knowledge only prompted them the more to gain-say and disobey the great scope and end of the law and the prophets.

The design of the passage is plainly to shew, that faith comēs not by any human endeavours, or the use of any means, even under the greatest advantages that men can enjoy, but of that same sovereign good pleasure which provided the grand thing believed. PAUL himself, while, with great heaviness of heart, he declares the rejection of his brethren who believed not, and considers them as anathematized, or accursed from Christ, is far from

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\* The like may be seen in our own time. I shall just point at a recent instance. In a late *Harmony of the four Gospels*, we can easily see the abilities of the commentator, and of the critic: But at the same time we find all these abilities employed to hide from our eyes the grand purpose for which the four gospels were written; to set aside the grand peculiarity of the divine grace, by insinuating suppositions and deceitful glosses on the facts and sayings wherein that grace most eminently shines. I have already given an instance of the author's manner of treating the *facts*, in a former quotation concerning the thief on the cross. For his manner of treating the *sayings*, see how he comments on *Matthew*, chapter xi. near the close, particularly this saying, *Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes*; and this other, *Come unto me, all ye that labour, &c.*



from glorying over any of them. For in the bosom of the sentence wherein he bewails them, he declares, that had he been left to his own former wish and choice \*, he had remained in that dreadful condition wherein he now perceives them to be.—All his former zeal and knowledge served to attach him to what he saw his brethren now with regret persisting in.

As the Christian teachers, for the most part, differ from the Jewish only in stile; so the directions given by both have the same effect on the mind of the hearer: For it is much the same whether he be prompted to exert acts of faith, or do the works of the law, in order to justification. The very nature of his exercise in either case must serve greatly to disaffect his mind to the saving truth, which shews that all his endeavours can only serve to aggravate his guilt.

Still it must be said, that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. This is the only mean God makes use of for making men

M 4

wise

\* Rom ix. 3. *Ἦυχόμεν γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐγὼ ἀνάθεμα εἶναι ἀπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ*: *For I myself was wishing to be an anathema from Christ.* Let these words be read as a parenthesis, and then PAUL's lamentation over the Jews will run easily thus: *I have great sorrow, and continual heaviness in my heart, ( ) for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.* Thus PAUL, in the bosom of his lamentation, gives the reason of it, namely, That he beheld with sorrow his kinsmen anathematized from Christ: For the reason of his sorrow is no where else intimated in the passage. And he intimates it in such a manner, as to shew, that he is far from glorying over them; —that he was as deeply guilty as any of them.—and that it was in no respect owing to his wish or choice, that he was now happily delivered from that dismal condition wherein he with sorrow beholds them involved.



wise unto salvation. And his sovereignty appears not a little in the conveyance of his word to nations and particular persons. The gospel is called μαρτυριον ιδιοις καιροις. *a testimony exhibited in his own times.* Now it shines in one region, and leaves another in darkness; then it takes its residence in the latter, and forsakes the former: And thus takes its course through all nations in different ages, as the lightening shining from under one part of heaven to the other. Wherever God purposes to save men of any nation, thither he sends his gospel in his proper time. PAUL and SILAS essayed to go into Bythinia, but the Spirit suffered them not. And they were directed by a heavenly vision to go into Macedonia, where the word of the Lord had free course and was glorified. PAUL met with great opposition when he came to Corinth, but the Lord encouraged him to continue there: *For, said he, I have much people in this city.*

In Christian countries, the people are generally taught to make the same use of the scripture as the bulk of the Jews did; that is, to learn how they may work the works of God, in order to justification. Yet it is a great blessing to mankind to have the scripture among them. By means of it, God will bring to the knowledge of the truth all whom he intends to save, in spite of all the arts of the teachers. And when any diligent votary of the popular doctrine is overcome by the evidence of the sacred truth, he will find himself, like PAUL, happily delivered from that path wherein



wherein his former zealous wish and choice led him to walk.

I would be far from refusing, even to the popular preachers themselves, what they so much grudge to others, the benefit of the one instance of an hardened sinner finding mercy at last: For I know no sinners more hardened, none greater destroyers of mankind, than they. Now, let us suppose, that one of these, after having spent half a century in perverting the gospel to the ruin of himself and his hearers, is busily employed in studying, for the usual entertainment of his audience, to accommodate some part of the gospel to his favourite scheme.—The text proves too hard for him.—He is difficulted.—He is perplexed.—He sweats in vain.—It will not do.—The glory and excellency of the work of Christ, which he had been all his life labouring to throw a veil over, arises in his view in full opposition to all the heart-work he had been preaching up.—He is ashamed and confounded; yet filled with wonder at the glorious exchange.— He comes forth to his congregation, acquaints them in the fulness of his heart, That he and they had hitherto been walking in the broad way to destruction, the blind leading the blind, &c.—What must be the effect? No less than such a revolution as happened in the synagogue of Nazareth — Yea, if the laws and manners of the country allowed, I dare say the devout people would tear him in pieces, if they did not conclude he had gone distracted.

I shall close this Letter with observing, that  
though



though the intricacies of error be endless, yet nothing is more simple than the gospel ; and its simplicity is one great reason why it is so much despised.

*I am, &c.*

P O S T S C R I P T.

THAT we may have the fewer points to attend to in the next Letter, I would here subjoin, by way of Postscript to this, some reflections on the *assurance* or *appropriation* said to be essential to saving faith.

While various terms and distinctions are coined by popular preachers on this subject, great neglect is shown to a very plain and obvious distinction which PAUL makes betwixt *the assurance of faith*, and *the assurance of hope*.

The expression used by the apostle is *plerophory*. Our translators render it sometimes *assurance*, and sometimes *full assurance*. I am content with either ; but would incline to use a single expression, as our translators have found themselves obliged to do in 1 *Thess.* i. 5. ; where, to avoid the impropriety of saying *much full assurance*, they have contented themselves with saying *much assurance*. At any rate, the apostle's expression is plainly opposed to all doubting ; yet that assurance may be deemed greatest which has the greatest trials to withstand.

There is this remarkable difference betwixt the assurance of *faith* and the assurance of *hope*,  
That



That when men first become possessed of the former, they obtain it without their using any endeavours in search of it; for it comes to them un-sent for, as it did to the Thessalonians; whereas the assurance of hope is enjoyed only by those who give all diligence to obtain it.

The first of these was called for in a man's first profession of the faith, upon his first hearing the gospel, in order to his being acknowledged for a Christian. So PHILIP said to the Eunuch desiring baptism, *If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.* To which the Eunuch answered, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* This same assurance was professed by the apostles. For when Jesus called upon them to profess their faith, they said, *We believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* However insignificant this faith be now reckoned, yet Jesus declared, that "flesh and blood had not revealed it, but the heavenly Father." And the apostles assure us, that all who agreed with them in this, had equally precious faith with them — The assurance of faith is likewise necessary to the drawing near to God in his worship. See *Heb. x. 22.*

The assurance of hope, again, is an enjoyment proposed to them who believed, and had already begun the Christian race, which they were called to follow after, and give all diligence to obtain, in the work and labour of love shewn to the name or revealed character of God, in ministering to the saints. The assurance of hope, then, holds pace, first and last, with the work and labour



labour of love. If love cools, hope languishes. If the former is fervent, the latter is joyful. There was no Christian, however eminent, in the days of the apostles, but needed the exhortation, to give all diligence for maintaining and confirming the assurance of hope; even as there was no Christian so far advanced, but he still needed to attend to the exhortation, *Follow after charity.*

Among those who professed the gospel, so were acknowledged for Christians, the apostles made it highly criminal for any man to re-examine the faith, or call in question the truth; yet they often called on men to examine themselves, and to be very cautious how they concluded that their state was changed; yea, that they ought not to conclude they were Christians on the same grounds by which others were bound to love them as such, seeing every man is best acquainted with the spring or motive of his own actions. It was a crime in their followers to examine the faith, but *their* duty to “examine whether they were in the faith.” No man, then, can be charged with the sin of disbelieving the gospel, for doubting if he be a good Christian, if Christ died for him, or if he be one of the elect; all of these having the same import. For his chief hazard lies on the other side, seeing self-conceit naturally leads every man to judge too favourably of himself. Yea, we find the apostles ready to quash the confidence of those who were too ready to conclude their state was changed, by such awful sentences as this:

*He*



*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*

Now it ought to be attended to, that no professor of the faith can form a proper judgment of his state, merely by “poring on his own heart,” and examining whether his religious thoughts be of the right kind or not: For if he is not engaged in the practice of the peculiar precepts of Christianity, or in doing those works which are the proper fruits of faith, he has no occasion for self-examination; as there is in that case no room for any doubt concerning his state. But as men may be engaged in the practice of the same works from very different motives, of which every man’s own conscience is best judge, a field is hereby opened for self-examination. And it must be owned, that it is much easier for one to form a proper judgment of his motives of action, or the springs of his habitual practice, than of those thoughts which have no immediate connection with the correspondent works: For men very readily deceive, and impose upon themselves, as to the mere thoughts or impressions that pass through their hearts. And nothing is more common, than to hear men on whose practice the gospel has very little or no influence, expressing excellent sentiments, and talking freely of the good impressions that have been made on their hearts.

There is another thing to be considered with regard to *assurance*. The apostles frequently declare their assurance of faith and of hope in the  
same



same passage. While they express their faith in Christ, they are, at the same time, confident of their interest in him. This joint-assurance they sometimes express in fellowship with all who follow their footsteps, and often in language plainly distinguishing the apostles themselves from other professors of the faith. In JOHN'S first Epistle, the apostles are often distinguished. It begins with what was peculiar to them. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, &c.* And it proceeds thus: *Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. — And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, &c. — We know that we have passed from death into life, because we love the brethren: He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death, &c. — We are of God: He that knoweth God, beareth us, &c. — Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, &c. — And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: And this life is in his Son. — We know that we are of God, &c.*

Jesus Christ said to his apostles, before he left the world, John xiv. 15—18. *If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth,*



*truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him ; but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you.* Jesus Christ declares, that the Holy Spirit already dwelt with his apostles as the Spirit of truth, even as the soul and meaning of what they confessed, when they said, *We believe, and are sure, that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.* This spirit, who was soon to be sent as the Comforter, he says, the world cannot receive ; because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, as being ignorant of, and disaffected to the truth whereof he is the Spirit. But to his apostles he says, *Ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you ;* that is, ye know him, because ye know the truth whereof he is the Spirit. He already dwelleth with you as the Spirit of truth, and shall hereafter be in you as the Comforter. The Spirit as the Comforter was not given till Jesus was glorified. Moreover, the promise of the Comforter is only to Christ's friends, doing whatsoever he commands, and patiently bearing the hatred of the world on his account.

The Spirit of the truth is at first found of them that seek him not, when men, in the course of their alienation from God, are surprised and overcome by the evidence of the truth. The same Spirit, acting as the Comforter, is given only to those who are already the friends of Christ, obeying his commands, to assure them that they are his friends. To this purpose PAUL says, Gal. iv. 6. *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth*  
*the*



*the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

THE holy Spirit then acts a twofold part, as he breathes in the gospel : He reconciles enemies, and he comforts friends. And in either case, he speaks not of himself, but he glorifies Christ \*.

In the former case, he acts as the soul of that truth, which opens at once a door of reconciliation for the most wicked of mankind, and has no respect to any difference or distinction among them. In the latter case, he acts as the soul of those consolatory friendly sayings, which Christ left behind him on the earth, before he ascended to heaven, and by which he proposed to correspond with his friends, in his absence from them. So that when men are led, by love to the bare truth, to glory in it alone before God and men, to suffer patiently the loss of all things for its sake ; yea, when they are cast off at all hands, hated of all men for the sake of Christ's name, the Holy Spirit encourages them to endure to the end. He brings to their remembrance the  
consolatory

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\* To what is above said, it may be added, that he never speaks one word or sentence to any particular person, beyond what is written in the scripture. Nor does he ever apply to any person's case, any written sentence, unsuitably to the genuine scope of all the scriptures. And who can think it incredible, that God should thus correspond with men ? May not the Deity correspond with men by means of the words of a written book now, as well as he did by various other signs of old ? Yea, nothing is more common, than for men to communicate their temper and spirit to each other by speech or writing.



consolatory words which Christ left for the comfort of his friends ; and, speaking in the person of Christ, says, *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, &c.* And thus he acts as the Comforter, according to the promise of Christ, who said, *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

The apostles assure us, from their own experience, that Christ did not fail to make good his promise: *For, say they, as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.* And they assure all believers, that the same consolation shall be enjoyed by them, in the enduring of the same sufferings.

Many, by means of some motions they say they have found in their hearts, are fond to advance their claim to the same consolation with the apostles, while yet they feel no inclination to walk in their footsteps. Many are proud to join in the triumph, who have no taste for the warfare. The apostles found it necessary to repel the too forward pretensions of many such men, even in their own days. What then shall we say of those pretenders to the apostolic consolation, whose very profession of Christianity, instead of being any loss to them, spreads their reputation for piety, and procures them esteem and reverence from the world ? -

In latter times, not a few have, from the hand of church-authority, supported by secular power, endured the same sufferings which the apostles met with from the Jews and Romans,



and accordingly enjoyed the same consolation. It was very natural for such of them as were writers, to commend the faith which thus wrought by love, and was accordingly crowned with remarkable consolation, in opposition to the dead, fruitless, and comfortless faith of their adversaries.

What if some of these, who, in the course of their suffering for Christ, were assured of their being his friends, having their eye chiefly on what they then experienced, unwarily supposed, that this assurance was in the nature of saving faith? What if, after having, at the risk of all that was dear to them in the world, maintained the work of Christ to be the sole requisite to justification, in proceeding to discourse of faith, they often chose to consider it as a principle of life and action; and accordingly studied to distinguish it from counterfeits, by describing it in connection with its genuine fruits and effects, in order to guide professors of the faith in their self-examination? And what if, not having their eye at once on all the arts by which the truth might be undermined, they did not, on every occasion, sufficiently attend to all the apostolic distinctions about faith? What is to be inferred from hence? I say. Shall we say, that these friends of Christ would have approved that assurance of an interest in him, which men now pretend to acquire by some *heart-work*, in a full consistency with their worldly ease and reputation?

Should we not consult their true honour more, in presuming, that, had their lives been prolonged,  
ed,



ed, they would have proceeded as they began, searching the scriptures, and thence arming themselves, on the right and left hand, against the various arts by which they saw the truth opposed or undermined? Yea, may we not presume, that it would have moved their indignation, to see men more forward to adopt and reverence their mistakes and inadvertencies, than to imitate the spirit and temper which breathed in their lives? It is no new thing, to see the memory of men who have been for some time dead, through various mistakes and prejudices, held in veneration, by the genuine offspring of those who undervalued and opposed them when alive.

The doctrine of justification by the works of Christ alone, did indeed lead many to fellowship with the apostles in the same sufferings and joy. But zeal for this doctrine was soon cooled, in the minds of many who professed it, by being joined together with another kind of zeal, very different from it. Some eminent teachers of this doctrine, led by such mistakes about the kingdom of God as Jesus timeously checked in his disciples, grew fond of drawing some form of their doctrine over kingdoms and states. And we know, that all zeal for national reformation, if successful, naturally tends to the worldly advantage and honour of the chief promoters thereof; and so to dazzle their eyes with the prospect of something else, than fellowship with Christ in the reward of his sufferings.

By the time that the famous controversy with ARMINIUS arose, it appears, that many were in



readiness to take part with that learned opposer of the truth. And it would seem, there were but few who opposed him on the same footing with GOMARUS, who was chiefly concerned about the ground of *acceptance* with God, as he understood it to be affected by that controversy. The greater part of disputants chose to make the controversy turn upon another hinge, contending about *grace* and *freewill*, and what influence these had in the conversion of a sinner. It may be maintained by some, that conversion is carried on by grace assisting nature; and by others, that this matter is conducted wholly by irresistible grace; and yet both sides may be equally disaffected to that doctrine, which maintains the work finished by Christ on the cross, to be the only requisite to justification. The controversy about grace and free-will, as managed by many on both sides, has as little to do with the revealed ground of acceptance with God, as the philosophical dispute about *liberty* and *necessity*. And I may add, that while many Christian teachers maintain, that no man can be eminently virtuous without divine energy, they say no more than Heathen philosophers have said before them.

But as I would judge it highly impertinent, so it is far from being my design, to burden our plea with the weight of any names, however venerable, but those of the apostles; by whose decision alone we must all be tried. I only mention this controversy, in order to introduce what I have seen observed before: That

“ The consequence of this change of the  
 “ Arminian



“ Arminian controversy, from that way wherein  
 “ GOMARUS held it, was a great alteration in  
 “ the strain of preaching, even amongst the most  
 “ zealous Calvinists. For in place of free justifi-  
 “ cation by God’s grace, through the redemption  
 “ that is in Christ’s blood, much insisted on by  
 “ the reformers against the Roman church, even  
 “ as it had been before by the apostles against the  
 “ Jews and Judaizing Christians, labouring more  
 “ in setting forth the revealed righteousness to be  
 “ believed against every thing opposed to it, than  
 “ in any descriptions of the exercise of the mind  
 “ and heart in believing ; they now began to  
 “ insist much more in their Sermons on free  
 “ electing grace, but especially on the efficacious  
 “ power of that grace in the conversion of the  
 “ elect, working unfeigned faith in them, and  
 “ turning them to God in a sincere repentance :  
 “ And when this took the place of the answer of  
 “ a good conscience toward God by Christ’s re-  
 “ surrection, as the spring of Christian religion,  
 “ it was attended with large descriptions, how a  
 “ man should find himself under the operation  
 “ of that free and efficacious grace, calling him  
 “ effectually, regenerating, and converting him  
 “ to receive Christ by a true faith, and to repen-  
 “ tance unto life ; while the things set forth in  
 “ these descriptions were not things accompany-  
 “ ing salvation, like the work and labour of love,  
 “ the fruit of faith in the blood of the Son of  
 “ God shed for the remission of sins. The effect  
 “ of this strain of doctrine, upon them that  
 “ hearkened to it, was, their seeking peace with



“ God, and rest to their consciences, by what  
 “ they might feel in themselves, the motions of  
 “ their hearts, and the exercises of their souls, in  
 “ compliance with the call to faith and repen-  
 “ tance, under that efficacious operation of grace,  
 “ which they hoped to find in using those means,  
 “ whereby they supposed it to be conveyed: Or  
 “ if they could persuade themselves that they  
 “ had found it, then they looked on themselves  
 “ as already converted, and in a state of favour  
 “ with God; comforting themselves against the  
 “ fears of losing the divine favour again, by the  
 “ inamissibility of grace, or the perseverance of  
 “ the saints.

“ But however different this be from the  
 “ doctrine of ARMINIUS, concerning electing  
 “ and converting grace and perseverance; yet it  
 “ comes to the very same thing with him at last,  
 “ as to the grand point of the justification of a  
 “ sinner before God. For whether the Pharisee  
 “ in the parable, opposing himself to the publican,  
 “ as more fit for acceptance, did thank God in  
 “ whole or in part for what he was in distinction  
 “ from him and other sinners; yet his confidence  
 “ in coming before him for acceptance, was in  
 “ what he found himself to be, and in what he  
 “ did, either by the necessary assistance of God’s  
 “ common grace, or by the efficacious operation  
 “ of his special grace working all in him irre-  
 “ sistibly. How opposite to this is the publican’s  
 “ way of coming before God, finding nothing  
 “ about himself but what makes him the object  
 “ of the divine abhorrence, and having no better  
 “ thing



“ thing to say of himself, than that he is a sinner,  
 “ and so a meet object for the divine mercy and  
 “ grace, justifying freely through the propitiation  
 “ for sin, set forth to declare the divine justice in  
 “ justifying the ungodly? He has no other ground  
 “ of confidence but that in appearing before God,  
 “ or any thing else to encourage him to hope for  
 “ his favour and acceptance with him. And so  
 “ his address to God is in these words: *God*  
 “ *be propitious to me, a sinner. Now he went*  
 “ *down to his house justified rather than the*  
 “ *other.*”

LET US now make some comparison betwixt  
 the assurance of the divine favour enjoyed by the  
 first Christians, and that assurance which is con-  
 tended for by moderns. The former proceeded  
 on the joy which men found in the simple  
 truth, while they obeyed it from the heart, and  
 patiently suffered for it. The holy Spirit, whom  
 God gives to them who obey him, assured their  
 hearts, that their joy was not the joy of the  
 hypocrite, but the beginning of eternal life. And  
 thus their joy was made full. Their love was  
 perfected by the highest enjoyment it was capable  
 of in this mortal state; and “ perfect love, says the  
 “ apostle JOHN, casteth out fear.” The modern  
 assurance again proceeds on this principle, That  
 the simple truth believed, affords no joy nor  
 comfort. The simple truth is represented as  
 comfortless, in order to shew the necessity of this  
 assurance.



Yet however lightly some talk of the bare persuasion of the truth, every man who has been thoroughly pinched with the impossibility of hope on every other side, will find therein a refreshment to his mind, far superior to all the comforts he ever tasted in life before. Will the news of a plenteous importation of corn, in the time of famine, give joy to many ready to perish, and revive even the poorest with the hope that they may be fed? Will it give new life to those suffering shipwreck, to hear that relief is hastening to them? Will the inhabitants of any city rejoice, in hearing that a great and liberal prince is to take his residence among them? Are men greatly comforted on many such occasions in life, while yet no man knows certainly but his present day may be his last? And shall it give no joy to rebels against the Sovereign of the universe, to hear that it is found consistent with the honour of all the laws of his kingdom, and the highest glory of the Sovereign, to admit even the most obnoxious among them to be his friends and favourites? Surely it will; and surely so it has done in all ages. Many, on hearing this, have become quite ashamed of their former rebellion; have been led to love the Sovereign, and encouraged to do those things that are well pleasing in his sight, and have accordingly known what it was to stand in his presence, and have their joy made full in beholding the light of his countenance.

Let us now see what this modern assurance is, that would look out of countenance the comfort arising



arising from the bare persuasion of the truth. If we attend to the description of it given by its friends, we shall find it turn out to be a doubtful, fearful, and diffident assurance. Its friends indeed often dress it out to us in a very bold attitude, and mark *assurance* on its front. But we must remember, that here, as almost every where else, their doctrine is double: For when they come to their secondary or more particular description of it, it is found to be inwardly full of doubts, fears, and diffidence. And however diffident the convert be, he is still supposed to be possessed of some degree of assurance, provided he blame himself for the want of it. As PAUL said of his popular antagonists, *Neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh;* so it may be said in this case, Neither do they who boast of this assurance, enjoy the favour of God; but they would hereby allure men, that they may glory in having them for their followers.

When we look into the professions of this assurance, which are set before us as genuine patterns of it, we shall be greatly disappointed, if we expect to find in them any thing like certainty, as to the great point aimed at. The convert must have some preacher or devout friend to draw the assured conclusion for him: Yea, it would seem it is scarce thought sufficiently modest or decent for him to draw it boldly himself. And indeed his conscience, while it retains any feeling, must be a great check to his presumption. However,



ever, people are generally ready enough to support one another by mutual flattery in this case. The profession of NEOPHYTUS, formerly quoted, ends thus: "Now, therefore, though I be somewhat fearful, yet am I resolved to go unto Christ; and if I perish, I perish." THERON likewise complains to the last of his remissness and inactivity to draw the desired conclusion, and says, "O that I may arise, and with the divine assistance shake off this stupor of unbelief!" &c. The boasted assurance, then, as it appears in the approved professions of it, turns out to be a timid resolve, joined with a fond conjecture; or we may say, it amounts to a fond presumptuous wish, greatly embarrassed with doubts and difficulties. However, the teachers are ready not only to sympathise with such converts in their remissness to believe, but also to assure them in the strongest terms of their eternal salvation, because they find them willing to do their best.

Yet we are not to imagine, that these converts, in consequence of all this, proceed leading their lives under an assurance or sense of the divine favour. Yea, the teachers, well knowing that in fact the case stands far otherwise, have various expedients in readiness to keep them from being discouraged under the disappointment. They distinguish betwixt the assurance of faith, and the assurance of sense, &c. But the most notable expedient is their doctrine of *desertions*; according to which one of their converts may live for many years together under a certain kind of assurance, that he is a child and favourite of God, and yet

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continue all the while without any sense of his favour. For, according to their manner of allusion to the scripture, he may continue twenty years betwixt one Bethel-visit and another; yea, he may die without enjoying a second. However, he always meant well; and so he is pronounced happy. — What a monstrous scene of iniquity is the popular doctrine! What a blessing were it to many to be undeceived about it!

I shall end this Postscript with observing, that when the popular preachers can find no other way of shewing their contempt of the simple belief of the truth, as the sole requisite to justification, they call it the *faith of devils*. Yet however keen the intended reproach be, it can have weight with none, but those who are swayed by sound instead of sense. For, according to the scripture, the same truth which saves Christ's people, torments the devils. So we find them saying, *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?* They believe, they hate, and yet they tremble at that truth which Christ's people believe, love, and find salvation in. With them are ranked all those of mankind, who know as much of the truth as inclines them to hate and pervert it, but not so much as to make them love and obey it from the heart: For as to all those it must be said, that the spirit which conducts them blinds their minds, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Yet so much



much of the evidence of the truth shines into the hearts of many, as to furnish matter of condemnation to them, for their loving darkness rather than the light. In this view the same truth is “the favour of life unto life unto some, and of death unto death unto others.” In this view the same truth is the object of contempt and chagrin to some, and of love and joy to others. Moreover, according to the apostle JAMES, let a man make ever so sound a profession of the faith, and talk of ever so many illuminations and experiences, if we find him seeking to pass these upon us as proofs of his being a Christian, without shewing his faith in the works of love commanded by Jesus Christ, we may safely repel his confidence, by telling him, *The devils also believe.* We ought then to keep our eye on the scripture, when we hear the popular preachers charging others with the faith of devils and reprobates, lest, in agreeing with them, we be found despising the most holy faith, and at the same time obnoxious to the awful censure of the apostle JAMES : For their acts of faith serve equally to set aside the precious faith of the apostles, and the works of love, by which that faith is evidenced and perfected.

L E T T E R



## LETTER VI.

DEAR SIR,

IT is time that I should now, in my turn, contend for acts of faith properly so called; I mean those works which Jesus Christ in his new commandment enjoins all who believe on him for righteousness, and by which he would have them known to one another, and to all men for his disciples. And I the rather hope for your favourable attention on this subject, as I have some reason to presume that you have got your bias to the popular doctrine, more from a certain air of piety running through some books, than by observing the avowed temper and conduct of those who are most influenced by it.

We are now then to consider faith as a principle of life and action. And here we must carefully distinguish betwixt all works by which men would pretend to acquire faith, and those which faith produces: For if we will contend, that justification comes by faith without works, and that there is no acceptable working but what follows upon this, and yet maintain that faith is acquired by works, we undoubtedly reason in a circle; and the justification thus obtained may justly wear the motto, *Sequiturque sequentem* \*. And however seriously and devoutly we may be occupied in this kind of reasoning, it is evident  
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\* It follows its follower.



that we are employed in nothing else but solemn trick and dissimulation; unless it may be pleaded in our behalf, that we are imposing on ourselves, by the same means by which we impose upon others \*.

Men are justified by the knowledge of a righteousness finished in the days of TIBERIUS; and this knowledge operates upon them, and leads them to work righteousness. *If ye know, says the apostle JOHN, that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness is born of him.* Faith is not acquired, but is obtained, as PETER says, (τοῖς λαχούσι) *to them who have OBTAINED*  
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\* It comes to the same issue, if we say, justification is by faith without works, and at the same time go about to shew that faith itself is some work we must perform, or that it consists in the exertion of some good disposition of mind, or sincere consent of the will. Some teachers would, at first sight, seem to reject all consideration of our own worth or goodness in justification; while, at the same time, the evident tendency of their doctrine is to cast that consideration not far away, but as it were out of the one hand into the other, mean-while changing its name, and so supposing it out of sight. In HENRY'S Commentary we have the two following notes. 1. On Rom. v. 2. "By whom we have access by faith: by Christ, as the author and principal agent; by faith, as the means of this access: Not by Christ, in consideration of any merit or desert of ours; but in consideration of our believing dependence upon him, and resignation of ourselves to him." 2. On Rom. x. 10. "Concerning faith; it is *with the heart that man believeth*; which implies more than an assent of the understanding, and takes in the consent of the will, an inward, hearty, sincere, and strong consent. It is not believing, not to be reckoned so, if it be not with the heart. This is unto righteousness. There is the righteousness of justification, and the righteousness of sanctification: Faith is to both; it is the condition of our justification, Rom. v. 1. and it is the root and spring of our sanctification; in-it-it is begun; -by-it it is carried on, *Acts xv. 4.*"



ED BY LOT *like precious faith with us.* Of two criminals justly condemned to die, if one escapes by a favourable throw of the dice, and the other dies for his crime, we see mercy in the deliverance of the former, and no injustice in the death of the latter.—Two men may be employed with equal diligence in studying the scripture, and with equal seriousness in praying for divine assistance; the one may come to know the truth, and the other may grope in the dark all his lifetime. But he who comes to know it, plainly perceives that he has found what he was not seeking after. He plainly sees, that, instead of having taken “the direct and certain way to obtain substantial comfort,” his most serious devotion was pointed in direct opposition to what now comforts him: So the new knowledge he has got, sets him to work on another plan, and furnishes him with quite other employment than he was formerly engaged in. God brings men to the faith, without any willing or doing of theirs; yet he continues to work in them by the faith, both to will and to do. Unbelievers obtain faith without working: Believers work together with God.

The sacred truth, which the apostles declared as the import of the ancient prophecies, implied not only that Christ was to be preached unto the Gentiles, and believed on in the world; but also that men would obey him, and accordingly have their joy made full; and so, by way of earnest and foretaste, receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. In both these respects the



the holy Spirit bears witness unto the truth. He bears witness to the truth, when he persuades men to believe it; and he bears witness to its genuine effects, when he comforts them who obey it. When the apostles found the gospel believed by any of mankind, they saw the arm of the Lord revealed, and glorified God on that account; because they knew it was above nature for any man to take in the notion of divine grace reigning through righteousness to save the worthless, or of God appearing just in justifying the ungodly. Again, we find it greatly increased their delight, and filled their hearts with thanksgiving to God, when they found men joyfully practising the works of self-denied love. In both these respects, then, the gospel daily receives fresh confirmation in the eyes of all who see it believed and obeyed. Thus the word of life is held forth in the world, for the mutual confirmation and encouragement of them that believe, and for awakening the attention of unbelievers; serving as a mean of divine appointment to lead some to the faith, and to render others inexcusable.

THE change made upon a man by the belief of the gospel, may be thus illustrated. When LAZARUS was revived to the enjoyment of this mortal life, neither his will nor his power were concerned in the obtaining of life. Yet his life could no otherwise be continued and enjoyed, but in his voluntary exercise of it. As soon as he revived, the principle of self-preservation, with  
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all its hopes and fears, began immediately to be set in motion. No sooner was he possessed of life, than the active love of it began to take place. Accordingly, no sooner does any man know the grace of God in truth, than love to it takes place in his heart. Love is the activity of that life which a man obtains by faith ; for faith worketh by love. No man then, however sound his profession of the faith may be, can enjoy that life which lies in God's favour, further than he loves God and keeps his commandments. Let a man talk like an angel about the things of God, if he wants this love he is nothing.

The change made upon a man by the gospel, is called *repentance unto life*. The gospel is always held forth as the great persuasive argument to lead men to repentance. So the evangelist MATTHEW informs us, that JOHN the Baptist, and Jesus Christ, began to preach, saying, *Repent : For the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. MARK declares the same thing thus: *The kingdom of God is at hand : Repent ye, and believe the gospel*. PETER, preaching the gospel to the Jews, says, *Repent ye therefore*. And PAUL declares, that *God now commandeth all men every where to repent*, by the same argument. And he tells us, that the scope of all his preaching was, *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*. Repentance, then, is the change of a man's mind to love the truth, which always carries in it a sense of shame and regret at his former opposition to it. And he who knows the truth,



so as to love it, will daily find occasion for repentance, and so of having his attachment to the truth increased, as finding his daily comfort depending upon it.

Thus he will be more and more set free from the service of sin, and engaged in that of righteousness. And it may be added here, that no man can be assured that his sins are forgiven him, but in as far as he is freed from the service of sin, and led to work righteousness. For we must still maintain, that the favour of God can only be enjoyed, in studying to do those things which are well pleasing in his sight. I cannot pretend to give a similitude that will answer this case in all respects : Yet we may say, if a man of low condition is by a royal patent ennobled, and entitled to a place in the politest assemblies; he cannot enjoy the pleasure of the promotion, but in as far as he loves and studies to learn the manners suitable to his rank and new company. If he delights in the honour conferred upon him, he will naturally be anxious to improve his manners; he will regret his former low breeding, he will readily be touched with shame at finding it so naturally recur upon him, and be sorry at the difficulty he feels in throwing it off; nor will his satisfaction be complete, till his manners are formed.

MOREOVER, this change gets likewise the name of *self-denial*, which is commonly joined with other expressions, importing the prospect and pursuit of supernatural happiness; as when  
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Jesus calls men to deny themselves, and follow him ; or when he says, *He that findeth his life, shall lose it : And he that loseth his life for my sake, shall find it ; or, He that loveth his life, shall lose it : And he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal.* In the common course of the world, we often see men change the objects of their fond pursuit, and their conduct in life in many respects greatly influenced, in consequence of some fresh intelligence or new sentiment they have occasionally received. But the change we speak of will be best viewed, as contrasted with its opposite, the fall of man.

For if human nature was at first depraved by impious falsehood, what can be more proper for restoring it than divine truth? Man had originally a natural sense of dignity, as being made to enjoy dominion, in subjection to and friendship with his Creator. He forfeited his dignity, when his sense of it was corrupted, or when he entertained such a notion of it as emboldened him to throw off his allegiance. That sense of dignity, then, which still remains with men, and encourages them in disobeying the divine law, as well as despising the gospel, is deceitful, being founded on a lie, even the lie originally instilled, and constantly cherished in human nature by the father of falsehood. This lie is the root of all ungodliness and inhumanity, the root of all disobedience to God, and of all the mutual hatred and variance among men. Every man imagines, there is at bottom some excellency about his own self,



on account of which he thinks it would be a reflection against the goodness of the Deity, to conclude, that misery should be the certain consequence of his following the bent of his own inclinations.

This lie works by pride, even as faith works by love. Pride, with all its subservient passions, is the exercise of that life which men live in opposition to God. Every man cherishes his favourite lie, as the dearer half of himself, and hates every ray of light that tends to undeceive him about it : Yea, the very principle of self-preservation leads him to do so ; for this lie being the hinge of his pride, so the very center of his life, he cannot part with it, but at the rate of falling headlong into despair and death.

The gospel alone can comfortably undeceive men, and effectually cut the sinews of their pride, by bringing them a report concerning foreign worth, sufficient to entitle them to a much more glorious life than that which was forfeited by transgression. He, then, who knows the gospel, so as to love it, may well be said to deny himself, and to lose or hate his former life, and to receive the beginning of a better from an unexpected quarter.

But as our constitution was framed for the enjoyment of no other than the forfeited life, and as the life which comes by faith is supernatural ; so the Spirit of grace, which bestows it by the words of the gospel, must continue to support it against the natural bias. Hence arises the opposition



position betwixt nature depraved and grace, betwixt the earthly and the heavenly life, or betwixt the flesh and the spirit, which PAUL describes from his own experience, *Romans vii.* Here he makes a distinction in some sort as betwixt two persons. Yet he plainly places his proper self, on the side of the supernatural life, which he preferred, inclining to speak of it in the first person, and of the other in the third; which last he, in the strongest manner, denies to be life, and accordingly he groans to be delivered from it, as opposing his true happiness.

The life-giving truth lays the only proper foundation among men for that love which is the fulfilling of the law, enjoined in these words, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* For it teaches every one to renounce his favourite distinction, by which he secretly claims the superiority over his neighbour. It furnishes all who believe, with one common sense of foreign worth, one common source of life and joy, so leads them to boast and glory only in that which abolishes all differences among them. Thus it teaches them to delight in one another, on account of that which is common to them all, by which the pride of none of them can be flattered, and which gives the precedence to none of them above another. Thus each is taught to love another as himself. Herein lies the exercise of self-denied love.

The Lord's supper shews the unity of Christ's people, and serves as a notable occasion for their enjoying the comfort of love. A company of



Christ's disciples must come together to this ordinance, finding nothing, any of them, to recommend him to God, but the sacrifice of Christ. If any of them come to it, not to say hating his brother, but secretly imagining he has any thing to give him the preference in God's favour, beyond any of his fellows; or, on the other hand, envying any of them as better qualified than himself, so repining at his own deficiency; he cannot enjoy the comfort of love. He labours under a mistake about the foundation of unity, and the common source of joy.

Self-denied love is best to be seen in Jesus Christ, the spring and pattern of it to all his people. He, having a full and just sense of his natural dignity as God over all, condescended to forego the consideration of his dignity, so as to suffer the extremity of infamy and pain, in the character of the most worthless and most obnoxious, yea, from the hands of such; and what crowns all, that he might raise such to the highest dignity and blessedness for ever! Here is self-denial unparalleled. Here all the glory of the blessed God is manifested. When sinful men come to the knowledge of the truth, so to enter upon the world of realities, they are indeed taught to deny themselves. But what mighty self-denial is this? Why, they are taught to see things as they really are, to deny an untruth, to part with a favourite lie, to renounce a pernicious falshood. They are called to fellowship with the Son of the Highest, by his voice addressing them thus, *Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.*

Yet



Yet the Son of God is pleased to call it self-denial in us thus to learn of him. He is pleased to call it conformity to and imitation of himself, and to connect with it a great reward in heaven. What a great value does he put on our condescension, if it deserve to be called so? how little we on his!

THE change made on men by the gospel is likewise called *conversion, regeneration, new creation, or the new creature; putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man; walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit, &c.* But whatever name be given in scripture to this change, no man can warrantably say, he has undergone it, on account of any impressions or motions whatsoever he has found in his heart: For great illuminations may take place, and yet not accompany salvation. Yea, even as to all the genuine effects and proofs of faith, we must still say with PETER, *If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall, &c.* Jesus, who had connected blessedness with the good profession his disciples had made of the faith, afterward, on the appearance of their pride, addresses them in this manner; *Verily I say unto you, Except ye*



*be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* Therefore they who have made the best profession of the faith, are still to be called to repentance, still to be put in mind of the necessity of conversion. The apostles themselves could have no further evidence that they belonged to Christ, than as they were daily influenced by the same temper of mind that appeared in him.

When once the saving truth is admitted in the conscience of any man, it becomes, as it were, a new *instinct* in him, encouraging him to draw near to God, providing him with an answer to the condemning voice of the law, which haunted his conscience before, and opposing the natural pride of his heart, in the exercise of which he formerly lived. By this instinct, he is led to desire “the sincere milk of the word, that he may grow thereby.” And he arrives at the proper consciousness and enjoyment of life, when he comes to full age, and *by reason of use, has his senses exercised to discern both good and evil.* All the exhortations, commands, and institutions of the gospel, are directed to consciences endued with this instinct, and are, in a peculiar manner, adapted for the service thereof. So the apostle JOHN, recommending the new commandment of mutual love among Christians, says, *I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.* The whole Christian church-order was framed for cherishing this instinct. By this Christians know and love one another. And it  
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is their business, in all their assemblies, to fortify one another in the knowledge and love of the truth, in opposition to every lie, or lest any of them be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

The truth of the gospel is always the great argument on which every call to working and doing proceeds. Here, then, let all the passages of scripture which call for any activity on our part, have their force. And let us no more be blindfolded with the notion of some ambiguous endeavouring and working, or labouring to exert acts, which are denied to be proper works required by the divine law. Here, I say, let all these commands have their full and proper force: *Strive to enter in at the strait gate, &c. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, &c. Work out your own salvation, &c.* The apostles deduce every motive to obedience from the truth. If they call men to liberality in almsgiving, they remind them of the grace of “the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor, that we through his poverty might be enriched.” If they exhort them to mutual forgiveness, they remind them of the divine forgiveness for Christ’s sake. In short, they enforce their exhortations to every deed of self-denied love, by some consideration drawn from the divine love, as manifested in Christ Jesus.

If there were no counterfeits of the truth, so neither of faith; and if every man spoke as he thought, then so soon as any man made the Christian profession, he might be assured of his  
eternal



eternal salvation ; seeing it must still stand true, that *he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.* But the case is far otherwise : Therefore every man must examine himself, and prove his own work, that he may have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in the friendly esteem which his brother is bound to have for him.

Men may be employed in the same actions, professing the same principles, and yet be influenced by very different motives. PAUL says, *What man knoweth the things of a man, save the Spirit of a man which is in him?* That is, However narrowly I may observe the conduct of another man, I may be mistaken about his secret intention and leading design.

Every man's own conscience is the best judge of the secret spring of his actions. Now, the apostle JOHN, speaking of obedience to the new commandment of love, says, *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God;* that is, if, notwithstanding our natural bias against the gospel, with its remaining effects giving us daily disquiet, our heart condemn us not as destitute of love to that truth which the world hates, then have we confidence toward God ; even as much confidence as the testimony of our own conscience can give us. For we are here supposed to judge of ourselves, not by the good opinion others have of us, but by the sober verdict of our own conscience in the sight of God. Such a testimony of one's own conscience must give no small confidence. Yet this is but  
one



one witness, and needs to be supported. For in this case one may be liable to doubts, lest even his own conscience should be partial in his favour.

Here then the Spirit of the truth, who never fails to bear witness to the genuine effects thereof, gives his testimony as a second witness supporting the former. Thus PAUL, after he had said, *As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God*; adds, *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God*. And this he does, by shedding abroad in the heart such an abundant sense of the divine love, as leaves no room for, so casts out the anxious fear of coming short of life everlasting. Thus that love to the truth, which formerly wrought in the way of painful desire, attended with many fears, is perfected, by being crowned with the highest enjoyment it is capable of in this mortal state. So this *perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; whereas he that feareth is not made perfect in love*.

Jesus Christ, who loved his Father with a perfect heart, even while sorrowful unto death, received the highest proof of his being the beloved Son of God, when being exalted at the Father's right hand, and being made most blessed with the sense of his love, he experienced fulness of joy in his presence. The report of this draws them who believe it to love him, and suffer for his sake. To such Jesus Christ promised fellowship with him in his fulness of joy: John xv. 10, 11. *If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my*



*my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.* Now, they who partake of this joy, receive the highest evidence that Jesus is the Christ, the beloved Son of God. They know, that he is the Christ, or anointed with the oil of joy and gladness, by partaking with him in the same anointing. Thus their faith is greatly confirmed, or rather perfected, by a kind of presence of its object; thus their love is joyfully inflamed; and thus they obtain the assurance of hope, by having in themselves an experimental foretaste of what will be their eternal enjoyment. — The assurance of faith, then, arises from the evidence carried in the divine testimony to the consciences of the ungodly; the assurance of hope arises from experience in the hearts of them that love God, and keep his commandments.

THE difference betwixt faith and experience is often pointed out in the New Testament: John viii. 31, 32. *Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* They already believed, so had that assured knowledge of the truth which arises from the evidence of report or testimony. But Jesus gives them to understand, that, in their *continuing* in his word, it would be manifest they were his disciples indeed; and they should receive an experimental know-



knowledge of the truth, by enjoying the freedom of children in the family of God.—Jesus Christ calls all who believe on him to follow him in patient suffering for his sake, and he promises to comfort them in so doing. Speaking of the comforts he will bestow, he says, *These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*

It is evident, then, that they who, depending on the promise of Christ, run all hazards for his sake, and accordingly enjoy the promised comfort, must, by means of this experience, have their joy and confidence in the truth greatly enlarged. They now find by experience the truth of what they formerly believed on testimony. They know their connection with Christ, and so have the assured hope of reigning together with him.

PAUL declaring how Christians rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and even glory in tribulations, describes the matter thus: *Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the holy Ghost which is given unto us.*—When ABRAHAM believed God, and that which he believed was imputed to him for righteousness, he had the assurance of faith, before it was put to the great trial of offering up his son. But in this trial he obtained a kind of sight of what he believed and hoped for. He saw the day of Christ,



Christ, and was glad. He saw in a figure the death and resurrection of Christ. So the apostle JAMES says, *Seest thou how faith wrought his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness: And he was called the friend of God.—*

The same apostle likewise says, *The trying of your faith worketh patience; but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.*

The assurance of hope, then, is founded on experience of the love of God, and always holds pace with it; even as that experience is founded on the self-denied labour of charity, and always holds pace with it; and I may add, even as the self-denied labour of charity is founded on the simple belief of the truth, and always holds pace with it. So that, if either more or less than the simple truth of the gospel be admitted in the heart of any man as the ground of acceptance with God, if either more or less than the bare persuasion of the truth be admitted as requisite to justification, the whole superstructure of the Christian practice and consolation is effectually undermined and overthrown. Neither more nor less than the bare persuasion of the truth can give birth to the genuine works of love; and to these alone the holy Ghost bears witness as the Comforter.

The scripture always maintains the connection of these things. So PAUL, *Now the end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and*  
*of*



*of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.* The simple truth alone can quiet the sense of guilt, and furnish a man with the answer of a good conscience toward God ; or give that perfection of the conscience which the same apostle says could not be obtained by the legal sacrifices. And thus alone the heart is purified from evil affections, and fitted for abounding in the work of charity. They alone, who being led by the evidence of the truth to submit to it, so had their hearts purified, not only by a taste of forgiveness for past offences, but also by the prospect of greater objects for interesting their affections than those which influence worldly lusts ; they alone, I say, were fit to perceive the force of the apostolic exhortations to abound in charity. So PETER says, *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently.*

The greatest saints on earth, when disquieted with the sense of guilt, or fear of condemnation, can no otherwise find relief, but by the same truth that relieved them at first when sitting in darkness, and under the shadow of death ; even the same truth that relieved the thief on the cross. When PAUL was in distress of mind, he heard nothing from Jesus Christ to relieve him, but these words, *My grace is sufficient for thee ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* And by these words he was relieved effectually. When JOHN in the isle Patmos was ready to die for fear, on having a vision of the divine glory,

Jesus



Jesus Christ did not comfort him by reminding him of his apostolic labours, of his being the beloved disciple, nor of his present suffering of banishment for his sake ; but he said unto him, *Fear not : I am the first and the last ; I am he that liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, &c.* He encouraged him, by reminding him of the same truth which encourages the worst of mankind when they first understand it.

The greatest faint cannot be relieved from the pain occasioned by the conviction of sin, by imagining there is any thing about him on account of which it becomes God more readily to forgive him than the most profane of mankind. Yea nothing can be more opposite to every degree of religious pride, than the assurance of hope itself : For it proceeds on the consciousness of loving from the heart that very truth which asserts the divine sovereignty in the strongest manner, and sets at nought every distinction on account of which any one of mankind can glory over another.

No man, then, by enjoying the holy Spirit as the Comforter, can find any ground for being less afraid of sinning, or of its consequences, than he was before : For he no sooner indulges any evil affection, or any thought opposite to charity, than he loses that enjoyment. PAUL supposes, that men who have tasted of this enjoyment, may, by indulging the passions opposite to charity, grieve the holy Spirit, and so lose that enjoyment. So he says, *Eph. iv. 30. Grieve not the holy Spirit of God,*



God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. They who thus grieve the holy Spirit, must find mercy and forgiveness in the same way as at the first. And their love must be left to work in the way of painful desire and fear, till it be again crowned with enjoyment, and so perfected.

No confessor of the Christian faith can find any ground in the scripture to think, with the popular doctrine, that his sins are less displeasing to God than those of other men; that they expose him less to the divine wrath, or make him less obnoxious to the curse of that law, which saith, *Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* If any man imagines, on account of some acts of faith he has exerted, that his sins expose him only to some fatherly chastisements in this life, and not to the curse of the divine law, and the wrath to come, he is ignorant both of the gospel and of the true God. A believer can find ease to his guilty conscience only by that truth which relieves the most openly profane. If he seek it any other way, he ceases to be a believer; or rather it appears he never was one, however just a title he had to the name from others.—The language of Christians runs thus: *Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us hold the grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.* Not, according to the jargon of the popular doctrine, “*A God out of Christ is a*” *consuming fire to all the workers of iniquity,*” or



those deemed the unconverted. For Christians are at full liberty to deny that there is any such God, as also the *absolute God* much talked of in Sermons.

The assurance of hope is obtained by means very opposite to those prescribed by the popular doctrine for the improvement of its votaries. When the saving truth first shines into the hearts of men, the effect is suitable to the divine promise, Jer. xxxii. 40. *I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* This fear dwelling in their hearts, checks and recalls them when ready to be utterly led away by their former evil inclinations. They are preserved from falling away, by the fear of falling away. PAUL says to the Hebrews, *Let us fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.* Yea, he says of himself, *I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached the gospel to others, I myself should be a cast-away.* Thus they that believe come to be settled in the assurance of hope. Accordingly PETER prays for the Christians he writes to: *But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

From the passages of scripture we have been considering, it is evident, that to have the holy Spirit, as the Comforter, and earnest of the heavenly inheritance, is an attainment far beyond any influences of the Spirit that are common to  
those



those who believe for a time, and those who believe to the saving of the soul; yea, beyond the regenerating work of the Spirit by which men are at first brought to the knowledge of the truth, and taught to love it. So it must be distinguished from any joy or spiritual delight which necessarily attends the obtaining of faith, or its beginning to work by love; because it presupposes the work and labour of love, and the testimony of our conscience, that love is the spring of our work and labour.—Hence also we see, that it is vain and absurd to call men to be assured of their being the children of God, when they are not enjoying his Spirit as the Comforter, and much more so when their faith is not working by love.—It is likewise evident, that it cannot further appear that any man has known the grace of God in truth, than he is led by that knowledge to give all diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.—It is also plain, that the promise of the Spirit, as the Comforter, is common to all those who follow the faith and practice of the apostles, even as it was uniformly enjoyed by all who walked in their footsteps at the beginning.

Before we go further, the substance of what has been said may be thus shortly summed up. The gospel presents a faithful testimony to be believed, exhibiting an amiable object to be loved, and good things to come to be hoped for. Faith, then, respects the truth of the testimony, Love what is amiable in it, and Hope the good things



things in prospect. — Faith comes by the evidence of testimony, and the assurance of hope through faith working by love, to which the holy Spirit never fails to bear witness as the Comforter.

WE may now proceed to observe, that every claim to peculiar relation to God, that rests not on the Spirit bearing witness as the Comforter to the work and labour of love, serves not only to slacken our diligence in that work and labour, but also to feed our natural pride, which may be more exquisitely gratified in the religious way than in any other ; and so to strengthen our inclinations to all the lusts of the world. Men may make as many bold assertions, and urge as many confident questions as they please, in favour of any such claim ; but it is very easy to find an answer to them. In *Dialogue XIV. vol. ii. p. 270.* ASPASIO, speaking of his appropriating faith, says, — “ Then let me ask, Will this *alienate* your “ affections from your almighty BENEFACTOR ? “ Will this *irritate* evil concupiscence, or send “ you to carnal gratifications in quest of happiness ? “ Quite the reverse. When this faith is wrought “ in your heart, nothing will be so powerful to “ produce holy love, and willing obedience ; to “ exalt your desires, and enable you to overcome “ the world.”

Here I will take the liberty to say in my turn, **QUITE THE REVERSE.** And accordingly the case will appear, if we attend to matter of fact. The



experiment has already been tried in the most advantageous manner ; and the effects are recorded “ for our admonition, upon whom the “ ends of the world are come.” Were not the Jews very confident of their peculiar relation to God as his children, and full of the fondest expectations from their Messiah ? But what was the result ? Jesus tells us, *Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.* The appropriating claim was in some degree common to the whole nation, but it was much improved and carried to a great height by the leaders in devotion, who looked on the more ignorant and profane part of the people as accursed. The more refined appropriation served indeed to form many such eminent characters as the world admire : Yea, generally speaking, its votaries were justly respected for having greater regularity of life than their fashionable opponents the philosophical reasoners, and accordingly had the designation of the *strictest sect*. Yet so the fact turned out ; the more men excelled in this way, they proved the more hardened enemies to the true God, and the eternal happiness of mankind.

We may easily see their appropriation imitated in its several degrees in our own age. Is there any sentiment more commonly indulged among us, than, when we think on the wide extent of Pagan darkness, Jewish obstinacy, the delusions of Mahomet, and superstitions of Popery, to reflect with no small self-applause that we



are Christians \* and Protestants ; so at least in some better terms with the Deity than multitudes of our deluded fellow-creatures, whom we look down upon with a sort of contemptuous pity? Moreover, what an important sound do we hear, when one acquaints us, that he has the honour to be a member or minister of the church of *England* by law established, or of some other church reformed after the best pattern ?

But, more particularly, it is common with popular preachers to encourage their hearers to make the more refined appropriation, by reminding them, that they have already some peculiar relation to God, as having been devoted to him in baptism. They likewise declare, that God hath

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\* In the zealous opposition shewn to the Jew-bill, it evidently appeared how much we are influenced by the national pride of our Christian character, and that we have thoroughly imbibed the same temper of mind for which the Jews were remarkable in the days of the apostles. But why should this good Christian nation be so much disgusted at Jews, seeing we differ from them only in a few circumstances about time and place? Our leading sentiments and theirs at this day are much the same, as the great majority of pulpits throughout the island can weekly bear witness: Let the doctrine delivered from them be only compared with the printed Sermon given us last year by ISAAC NETTO the Jewish Doctor. Yea, the Jews to this day, notwithstanding the many rubs and disappointments they have met with, still persist in exerting as vigorously as the most forward among us their appropriating acts. I shall only quote a few words from the prayer at the close of the Sermon now mentioned. “ Take away fear from our hearts, and, “ instead thereof, inspire us with confidence; for thou art our “ God, our Saviour, and our strength; from thee alone we expect “ our salvation: That we may offer thee, as a sacrifice, tears of “ devotion, tears of gratitude, tears of joy and pleasure, drawn “ from the fountain of salvation.”



hath made a grant of Christ and his benefits more especially to the members of what they call the *visible church*. The people, especially in Scotland, are likewise called to believe, that their land is married to God, and that they are related to God by means of some covenant, which their fathers dictated, and swore to, and to which it is confidently supposed the Deity agreed. However, they who can by any means get their hearts wrought up to exert the appropriating act of faith, have by far the ascendant above all others. And the next considerable distinction is betwixt serious souls who are aiming at it, and those who are careless or profane. To the former many comfortable things are said, and the latter are abandoned to mere mercy, as worthless wretches.

Many preachers recommend it as an improvement of their appropriating acts, to put them into form by personal covenanting; and as a further improvement, not a few exhort the people to join in some shadow of national covenanting, in imitation of the persecuting engagements entered into in the last century. And indeed, what else were those engagements or covenants, but public appropriating acts of faith? Thus we see how naturally the appropriating acts issue in Spanish or Portuguese acts of faith: Yea, they seldom fail to do so, when they meet with the much wished-for concurrence of men of power and influence. Thus we see that men may, in the height of what they reckon pious devotion, devote themselves to work wickedness in the



name of the Lord. And men called CHRISTIAN have shewn themselves abundantly forward to imitate the Jews in this kind of zeal.

But perhaps some will contend, that the Jewish appropriation was not so well founded as our modern imitations of it; and that there is a great difference betwixt reformed orthodox Christians, and presumptuous stiff-necked Jews. Yet, if we will attend to the scriptures, particularly PAUL'S Epistles, we shall find, that the Jewish plea had the advantage much every way. And we shall likewise find, that the sad effect it had upon them, is often set before professors of Christianity for their admonition. Their appropriation was the great spring of all their pride, of all their disaffection to the true gospel, and all their ruin. In like manner, the great corruption of Christianity took place, by its professors zealously imitating the Jews.

But let us see how the plea of the Jews was founded. PAUL acquaints us with the grounds of it, while he bewails the effect it had upon them: *I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, — for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh; who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.* And he dwells much on the Jewish plea, especially in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, in order to repress the religious pride of professors



feffors of Christianity, which he confiders as having far lefs ground to proceed upon than that of the Jews.

The fame apoftle likewise reads an awful leffon to the Corinthians from the more ancient history of his nation. *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink: For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these were our examples, &c.* Then, after narrating several of their provocations and punishments, he adds, *Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.* WHEREFORE LET HIM THAT THINKETH HE STANDETH, TAKE HEED LEST HE FALL. If any, fond of nice distinctions, shall still insist, that this way of reasoning, from the case of ancient Jews to that of zealous Christians, is not conclusive, and that the cases are not parallel; I shall only say, that the reasoning is PAUL'S, that the parallel is of his drawing, and that it is solemnly urged home on the consciences of those who had at least as good a title to the Christian name as any now can pretend to.

I SHALL



I SHALL now take notice of a most extraordinary answer given by ASPASIO, in *Dialogue XVI. vol. iii. p. 311.* to those “ who advise us to prove  
 “ our title to comfort by genuine marks of con-  
 “ version, and teach us on this column to fix the  
 “ capital of assurance.” He says, “ I would rather  
 “ propose a question, than advance objections.—  
 “ Is not this somewhat like placing the dome of  
 “ a cathedral upon the stalk of a tulip ?” A daring  
 question indeed ! Here I make free to propose  
 another in my turn. Is not this somewhat very  
 like talking profanely ? And dares the devout  
 ASPASIO thus approach so near to ridiculing the  
 work of the holy Ghost, as the Comforter, which  
 God hath promised to them that obey him ?  
 Who taught him, with such levity and gaiety of  
 expression, to disjoin those things which are so  
 solemnly and inseparably connected throughout  
 the whole New Testament ? One would have  
 thought, that his vivacity might have been  
 checked by his friend’s reply, reminding him of  
 the apostolic language and practice, which, he  
 well says, is “ left upon record as a pattern for  
 “ all posterity to copy :” *We know that we are  
 passed from death unto life, because we love the  
 brethren.* But, instead of giving a serious hearing  
 to this weighty argument, he turns it aside, by  
 telling us, that the apostle’s reasoning here is  
 like the form of an inverted cone. “ Observe,  
 “ THERON, the process of the apostle’s reasoning.  
 “ It is like the form of an inverted cone ; where  
 “ you have first the point, and from thence pro-  
 “ ceed



“ceed to the base. So the sacred writer begins  
 “with the less, and ascends to the greater proof.  
 “He says in one of the following verses, *Hereby*  
 “*perceive we the love of God, because he laid down*  
 “*his life, not merely for sinners, but for us in*  
 “particular. — Here, you see, is assurance by the  
 “direct act of faith.”

Before we consider the last-cited text, it will be proper to observe, how well the former one cited by THERON tallies with the words of Jesus, recorded by the same apostle in his gospel. John v. 24. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that beareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.* Here we see how men pass from death unto life. JOHN declares how they come to know this; while, plainly pointing at the words of Jesus, he says, *We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* By this proof, men come to know, that the joy they had upon their first believing, was not the joy of the hypocrite, or of those who believe only for a while, but was indeed the beginning of eternal life; and so their joy is made full. By this they come to know that it was the genuine truth of God, and not any human counterfeit or corruption of it, which they at first believed. They know that they have not mistaken the truth, nor believed in vain, as many do, who, on their first profession, make full as promising an appearance, as those who believe to the saving of the soul. Thus they receive an additional knowledge and certainty  
 about



about the truth, in the way of experience, by perceiving that it works effectually in them, producing its genuine effects.

Let us now consider the passage which ASPASIO compares to an inverted cone, only premising this much, that as there is more in Christianity than can be seen by the eyes of men inspecting each other, the apostles sustain themselves not only as the standard of the true profession of Christianity, as far as men can observe it in one another's words and actions, but also as witnesses, from their own certain experience, that the comforts promised in the gospel to believers, invariably attend the genuine practice of it. Accordingly, as often as the apostles speak of their interest in Christ and life eternal, or use any language to that effect, we shall find that they either speak of themselves separately, or in conjunction with those only who are possessed of the same unfeigned faith and love with them.

The passage runs thus : 1 John iii. 13. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren : He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer : And ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 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.* Which, agreeably to the scope of the whole Epistle, may be thus paraphrased at large. “ Be not surprised, my brethren, at  
“ the



“ the contemptible figure you make in the eyes  
 “ of the wise and devout world. As your brother-  
 “ hood is not framed to promote any of those  
 “ ends which they admire, but, on the contrary,  
 “ serves to gall them in the tenderest part, by  
 “ undermining all the grounds of boasting which  
 “ they hold most sacred, it must always appear  
 “ as despicable to them as did the character of  
 “ Jesus Christ, the foundation and bond of your  
 “ union. Your mutual affection for his name’s  
 “ sake, must always provoke the world, in like  
 “ manner as his name did from the beginning.  
 “ Marvel not then at their hatred, nor be dis-  
 “ concerted at any insults, or other sufferings,  
 “ you meet with from thence, so as to be thereby  
 “ shaken or cooled in your love to, or esteem  
 “ for one another ; but rather consider what we,  
 “ the apostles, by whose ministry ye received  
 “ the gospel, can assure you of for your en-  
 “ couragement. We ourselves have trod the  
 “ path we recommend to you, and have found  
 “ it successful. In obeying Christ’s new com-  
 “ mandment, we have experienced the promised  
 “ consolation. And thus *we know that we have*  
 “ *passed from death unto life, because we love the*  
 “ *brethren.* And this enjoyment is no way pe-  
 “ culiar to us, but is common to all who are in-  
 “ fluenced by the same love. We then, as the  
 “ chosen patterns to all Christians of the genuine  
 “ influence and effects of the gospel, as well as  
 “ the authorized speakers of it, assure you from  
 “ our own experience, that in obeying the truth  
 “ we know that we have eternal life. And thus  
 “ we



“ we do to encourage you to follow us, and pre-  
 “ vent your being imposed upon by any deceivers  
 “ making high pretensions to friendship with  
 “ God. For though all Christians walking in our  
 “ footsteps enjoy the same consolation with us,  
 “ yet ye cannot with equal certainty believe any  
 “ man giving an account of his experiences as ye  
 “ can believe us, for ye know that our testimony  
 “ is true. And the pretensions of all Christians  
 “ must still be tried and examined by our stan-  
 “ dard: And after all by this standard must every  
 “ Christian examine himself. For we are of God:  
 “ He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is  
 “ not of God, heareth not us. Hereby we know  
 “ the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.  
 “ Now, if any man among you, however emi-  
 “ nent in his profession otherwise, *loveth not his*  
 “ *brother, he abideth in death.* If he love not  
 “ the brotherhood, or any one of them, for the  
 “ truth’s sake dwelling in them, so be influenced  
 “ by the aversion which the world bears to them  
 “ on that account, he is yet a stranger to life  
 “ eternal: For *whosoever hateth his brother, is a*  
 “ *murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath*  
 “ *eternal life abiding in him.* But hereby we,  
 “ who love the brethren, *perceive the love of God,*  
 “ *because he laid down his life for us.* We, who  
 “ are conscious of the effects and enjoy the fruits  
 “ of the atonement, know that God first loved  
 “ us, and had a peculiar regard to us in providing  
 “ the atonement; so first and last, from that  
 “ atonement, arises all our knowledge and expe-  
 “ rience of the love of God. And while we thus  
 “ per-



“ perceive God’s love to us in providing the atone-  
 “ ment for us, we find our encouragement, as  
 “ well as obligation, to proceed as we have begun  
 “ to imitate his love, greatly enforced. We have  
 “ the most endearing and cogent reason to judge,  
 “ that *we ought to lay down our lives for the*  
 “ *brethren.*”

The simple belief of the truth, is the only spring of all true holiness, of all love and obedience to God. He who, perceiving the divine love to sinners of all sorts, without distinction, manifested in the atonement, is thereby led to love the atonement, and the divine character appearing there, and so to enjoy the promised comfort resulting thence to the obedient, comes at the same time to know his particular interest in the atonement. And thus, by happily experiencing the truth of the gospel, he is greatly encouraged to go forward in that course into which he was at first introduced by the evidence of truth appearing to him in the report of the gospel. So he labours neither first nor last to acquire any requisite to justification ; but all his labour proceeds on the persuasion, that the atonement itself is the sole and all-sufficient requisite to justification. He is likewise sensible, that the atonement is the sole spring of all his self-denied love, and of all the present comfort, as well as future reward connected with it : So he knows, that all his holiness, as well as all his happiness, comes entirely of that grace which provided the atonement. And thus he understands how grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.

The



The merchant who, being encouraged by some credible intelligence Providence has favoured him with from an unexpected quarter, sets out at all hazards on some new branch of traffic, will be greatly animated to proceed, when he finds his labours crowned with success: And he will always reflect with satisfaction on the happy occasion that first gave him the advantageous hint. But as to all earthly things, it must be owned, that the best founded hopes are often frustrated by accidents, which no human foresight can prevent. And here the excellency of the gospel stands distinguished: For he who so knows the bare report thereof, as to love it, and run all risks upon it, shall in no wise lose his reward. "Heaven and earth shall pass away," but he shall not be disappointed.

BEFORE we go further, I would take this occasion to say, that the passages in the *Dialogues* which appear to me to deserve the greatest censure, are those two, which, in a very confident manner, deny, the one, the comfort attending the simple belief of the gospel, and the other, the additional comfort attending self-denied obedience to it. Both these passages are within a few pages of each other, in *Dialogue XVI. vol. iii.* The former, in *p. 301.* puts the strong negative, *No, surely,* against any manner of advantage arising to us from the bare persuasion of the truth of the gospel. The latter, in *p. 311.* compares that assurance of our interest in Christ, which the scripture every where rests on obedience to his laws,



laws, to placing the dome of a cathedral upon the stalk of a tulip. And all this is done, in order to rest, I cannot say our comfort, but a good opinion of our state, on what is neither faith nor obedience. For, according to the popular doctrine, men living for a course of years together in unbelief, consequently neither loving the gospel nor enjoying the comfort of it, are allowed to consider themselves all the while as regenerate, provided they have once in their lifetime exerted a certain act.

I SHALL now take some notice of a treatise highly esteemed by the votaries of the popular doctrine, I mean *The gospel-mystery of Sanctification*, wrote by Mr MARSHALL. I have seen lately, in a Third Edition of the *Dialogues*, a very ample commendation of this book, which I cannot quote here at present, not having that edition of the *Dialogues* beside me. But, if I rightly remember, it is commended as inferior to no book but the Bible. It is divided into Fourteen Directions. And one may have a pretty good view of the whole, by looking over *the contents* at the front of the book. This author supposes his unconverted reader, when beginning to be concerned about religion, to propose for his end such an obedience to the divine law, as may be acceptable to God: And in order to conduct him in a right manner to this end, he directs him to make use of Christ as the means by which he may be qualified for performing acceptable obedience, and so obtain the desired end. According



to this author, then, Christ is *not* “ the end of  
 “ the law for righteousness,” but the best means  
 one can make use of for enabling him to per-  
 form that righteousness which is the end of the  
 law.

In *Direction I. p. 2. Third Edition, Edinburgh, 1733*, he says, “ Take notice further, that the  
 “ *law*, which is your *mark*, is *exceeding broad*;  
 “ Psalm cxix. 96.” And, after speaking of the  
 extent of the law, he says, “ This spiritual  
 “ universal obedience is the great end, to the  
 “ attainment whereof I am directing you. And  
 “ that you may not reject mine enterprize as im-  
 “ possible, observe, that the most I promise, is no  
 “ more than an acceptable performance of these  
 “ duties of the law, such as our gracious merciful  
 “ God will certainly delight in, and be pleased  
 “ with, during our state of imperfection in this  
 “ world, and such as will end in perfection of  
 “ holiness, and all happiness in the world to  
 “ come.” Would not one imagine he were  
 hearing Mr LOCKE just now? But to go on  
 with our author, *p. 6.* “ The *second* thing con-  
 “ tained in this introductory Direction, is the  
 “ necessity of learning the powerful and effectual  
 “ means, whereby this great and excellent end  
 “ may be accomplished, and of making this  
 “ the *first* work to be done, *before* we can ex-  
 “ pect success in any attempt for the attainment  
 “ of it.

“ This is an advertisement very needful, be-  
 “ cause many are apt to skip over the lesson con-  
 “ cerning the means, (that will fill up this whole  
 “ treatise)



“ treatise) as superfluous and useless. When once  
 “ they know the nature and excellency of the  
 “ duties of the law, they account nothing wanting  
 “ but diligent performances; and they rush  
 “ blindly upon immediate practice, making more  
 “ haste than good speed.” — *p.* 7. “ That you  
 “ may not stumble at the threshold of a religious  
 “ life, by this common oversight, I shall endea-  
 “ vour to make you sensible, that it is *not* enough  
 “ for you to know the *matter* and *reason* of your  
 “ duty: But that you are also to learn the *powerful*  
 “ and *effectual means* of performance, before you  
 “ can successfully apply yourselves to immediate  
 “ practice.”

Accordingly, the well-disposed reader is led forward to his desired end, in consequence of the same good dispositions that lead him to use the means. But why all this round-about course? Why should we seek to repress any man's impetuosity to fulfil the law, who already knows the matter and reason of his duty, and is already acquainted with the nature and excellency of the duties of the law? Why should we retard his course, by intangling him in a labyrinth about the use of means, seeing he may die before he has learned to use them aright, and so never reach his desired end? Methinks it would be much better to direct him to study EZEKIEL, chapter xxxiii. where he will find, that all well-disposed persons have as much security for their happiness, as the divine oath can give. As for the gospel, it was only intended to relieve those ill-disposed people who despair of ever doing any thing to



render them acceptable to God, by any assistance whatsoever. It was never intended to be an auxiliary to those good people who are desirous to give acceptable obedience to the divine law. All such, wherever they are, shall undoubtedly be happy, without having any occasion to trouble their heads about the gospel. The gospel was never intended to make void the law in any respect; yea, it establishes the law on all sides, in the strongest manner.

Let us now observe the use of means to which our author directs. *Direct. XI. p. 208.* “ En-  
 “ deavour *diligently* to perform the great work  
 “ of *believing* on Christ, in a *right manner*, with-  
 “ out *any delay.*” *Pag. 209.* “ The first thing  
 “ in the present *Direction*, is to *put you upon the*  
 “ *performance* of this great work of believing on  
 “ Christ, and to *guide you* therein. For you are  
 “ to consider distinctly four things contained in  
 “ it.

“ 1. The first is, you are to *make it your dili-*  
 “ *gent endeavour* to perform the great work of  
 “ *believing* on Christ. — Even those who are  
 “ convinced, that believing on Christ is a duty  
 “ necessary to salvation, do neglect all diligent  
 “ endeavours to perform it: Either because they  
 “ account, that it is a motion of the heart which  
 “ may be easily performed at any time, without  
 “ any labour or diligent endeavour; or, on the  
 “ contrary, because they account it as difficult as  
 “ all the works of the law, and utterly impossible  
 “ for them to perform, by their most diligent  
 “ endeavours, except the Spirit of God work it  
 “ in



“ in them by his mighty power.” *Pag.* 212.  
 “ 2. Believing on Christ is a work that will re-  
 “ quire diligent endeavour and labour, for the  
 “ performance of it. We must labour to enter  
 “ into that rest.” *Pag.* 215. “ 3. Though we  
 “ cannot possibly perform this great work in a  
 “ right manner, until the Spirit of God work faith  
 “ in our hearts by his mighty power ; yet it is  
 “ necessary that we should endeavour it ; and that  
 “ before we can find the Spirit of God working  
 “ faith effectually in us, or giving strength to be-  
 “ lieve.”

Let us next observe our author's account of  
 faith, *p.* 180. “ Let it be well observed, that  
 “ the reason why we are to assure ourselves in  
 “ our faith, that God freely giveth Christ and his  
 “ salvation to us particularly, is not, because it is  
 “ a truth before we believe it ; but because it  
 “ becometh a certain truth when we believe it,  
 “ and because it will never be true, except we do,  
 “ in some measure, persuade and assure ourselves  
 “ that it is so. We have no absolute promise or  
 “ declaration in scripture, that God certainly will,  
 “ or doth give Christ and his salvation to any one  
 “ of us in particular ; neither do we know it to  
 “ be true already, by scripture, or sense, or reason,  
 “ before we assure ourselves absolutely of it ;  
 “ yea, we are without Christ's salvation at pre-  
 “ sent, in a state of sin and misery, under the  
 “ curse and wrath of God. Only I shall prove,  
 “ that we are bound, by the command of God,  
 “ thus to assure ourselves ; and the scripture doth  
 “ sufficiently warrant us, that we shall not de-



“ ceive ourselves in believing a lie, but *according*  
 “ *to our faith, so shall it be to us, Matt. ix. 29.*  
 “ This is a strange kind of assurance, far different  
 “ from other ordinary kinds ; and therefore no  
 “ wonder, if it be found weak and imperfect,  
 “ and difficult to be obtained, and it be assaulted  
 “ with many doubtings. We are constrained to  
 “ believe other things, on the clear evidence we  
 “ have that they are true, and would remain  
 “ true, whether we believe them or no ; so that  
 “ we cannot deny our assent, without rebelling  
 “ against the light of our senses, and reason, or  
 “ conscience. But here our assurance is not im-  
 “ pressed on our thoughts by any evidence of the  
 “ thing, but we must work it out in ourselves  
 “ by the assistance of the Spirit of God, and  
 “ thereby we bring our own thoughts into cap-  
 “ tivity to the obedience of Christ.” Here is the  
 great whirlpool of the popular doctrine ! Here is  
 the grand secret of manufacturing truth without  
 evidence ! But this quotation is of so extraor-  
 dinary a nature, that, in comparison with it,  
 all remarks upon it must appear extremely in-  
 sipid.

When we have thus, according to our author,  
 wrought ourselves into a new state, or, as is  
 supposed, out of a state of *nature* into a state of  
*grace*, by the curious labour here described, we  
 are then, and not till then, qualified for the  
 practice of holiness. For, according to him,  
 there is no practice of holiness, but what pro-  
 ceeds from the persuasion of our state being  
 changed. This persuasion is his faith. And by  
 this



this we receive qualifications necessary for obedience, according to *Direction II. p. 15.* “Several  
 “endowments and qualifications are necessary to  
 “enable us for the immediate practice of the  
 “law; particularly, we must have an inclination  
 “and propensity of our hearts thereunto; and  
 “therefore we must be well persuaded of our re-  
 “conciliation with God, and of our future en-  
 “joyment of everlasting heavenly happiness, and  
 “of sufficient strength, both to will and perform  
 “all duties acceptably, until we come to the  
 “enjoyment of that happiness.” We must not  
 imagine, for any thing here said, that the serious  
 reader, before he attains to that happy change  
 of state, which is the truth affirmed in their  
 faith, is quite destitute of love to God in every  
 sense: For, as the popular doctrine is every where  
 double, provided an unconverted person has a  
 good inclination and propensity to get the better  
 of his bad inclination and propensity, and to use  
 all proper means for that end, he is in a very  
 promising way. And when once he is supposed  
 to be, in some measure, successful, then the  
 happy change is made. He may then believe  
 with all freedom. He is then qualified to do  
 works properly good in all senses, without any  
 ambiguity.

But let us further hear our author himself  
 making this faith, or persuasion of our state being  
 changed, the principle of all holiness. *Direction*  
*XII. p. 274, 275.* “Christ himself walked in  
 “a constant persuasion of his excellent state; he  
 “set the Lord always before him, and was per-  
 “suaded,



“suaded, that because God was at *his right hand*,  
 “he should not be moved, *Psalms xvi. 8*. How  
 “should it be rationally expected, that a man  
 “should act according to this new state, without  
 “assurance that he is in it?” &c.

How foreign to the scripture is this kind of reasoning! The first Christians were indeed taught to serve God, by having the same Spirit of faith that was in Christ, that is, believing the same truth which he believed. They were persuaded of the dignity and excellent state of Christ, not their own. The worthiness of the Lamb that was slain, was the sole ground of all their confidence toward God, the sole spring of all their obedience, and all their consolation. But if we hearken to this author, we must set out in the service of God, from the confidence of our being in a better state than other men. We must set out from the persuasion, that God hath assisted us in producing certain good motions in our hearts, by which we have acquired an excellency above others. Thus our obedience is not influenced by what God hath testified concerning his Son, but by a persuasion that we are better than other people. Accordingly our author censures the ignorance of those who would make a holy life to spring only from what is believed on testimony. *Pag. 251*. “Some, *says he*, make no  
 “more of *living and walking by faith*, than  
 “merely a stirring up, and encouraging ourselves  
 “to our duty by such principles as we believe.”  
 Whereas he would have us animated thus, *p. 273*.  
 “Stir up and strengthen yourself to perform the  
 “duties



“ duties of holiness, by a firm persuasion of your  
 “ enjoyment of Jesus Christ, and all spiritual and  
 “ everlasting benefits through him.” And to  
 doubt about this, is with him the great sin of  
 unbelief\*. He makes no account of the grand  
 things testified of Christ, as any way sufficient to  
 lead us to holiness, without a good opinion of  
 our own state. In using this latter principle  
 dexterously, consists, according to him, the great  
 mystery of a holy life. For whenever such  
 gentlemen have any deep plot to manage against  
 the gospel, they are sure to din our ears with the  
 deepness of the mystery they are going to declare.  
*Pag. 248, & seqq.* “ This is the rare and ex-  
 “ cellent art of godliness, in which every Chris-  
 “ tian should strive to be skilful and expert.  
 “ The reason why many come off with shame  
 “ and confusion, after they have a long time  
 “ laboured with zeal and industry for the attain-  
 “ ment of true godliness, is, because they were  
 “ never

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\* This is a very notable device, and of great and extensive influence in the popular doctrine. By this the conscience itself is drawn in to be the friendly supporter of self-conceit. Thus men are taught to think it a heaven-daring crime to suspect themselves of hypocrisy, even when a full conviction of it would be the happiest thing that could befall them, and though such a conviction can do no real harm to any man, at any time. All the most awful rebukes and declarations of the divine displeasure, are artfully pointed against this imaginary crime. And thus the consciences of men are seared as with a hot iron, so as to become utterly impenetrable to the conviction of sin. They are taught to think, that if they should admit what their conscience, or what the divine law hints to them, they should be guilty of the hainous damning sin of unbelief. Thus the popular preachers spend much of their time, and abuse many passages of scripture, to the sending of multitudes down to the grave with a lie in their right hand.



“ never acquainted with this holy art, and never  
 “ endeavoured to practise in a right gospel-way.  
 “ Some worldly arts are called *mysteries* ; but,  
 “ above all, this spiritual art of godliness is *with-*  
 “ *out controversy a great mystery*, 1 Tim. iii. 16.  
 “ because the means that are to be made use of  
 “ in it are deeply mysterious, as hath been  
 “ shewed ; and you are not a skilful artist till  
 “ you know them, and can reduce them to  
 “ practice.” Whereas, if once the import of  
 Christ’s resurrection be understood, all the parts  
 of the Christian religion appear to have as re-  
 gular a connection with it, as is to be found be-  
 twixt any one part of the course of nature and  
 another.

This author, with many others of his stamp,  
 labours much to persuade his reader, that, with-  
 out a good opinion of his state, the bare gospel  
 can give no comfort, so can furnish no motives  
 to love God, and keep his commandments. Thus  
 the ancient gospel, which from the beginning  
 turned many from idols to serve the living God,  
 is now set aside, to give place to human artifice,  
 dressed out with many swelling words of vanity.  
 Thus all the grand things testified concerning  
 Jesus Christ the Son of God, are made to serve  
 only as a footstool for human pride. Yet,  
 however many be blinded, the election shall ob-  
 tain.

Now, seeing it is the fashion to recommend  
 religious books, I am willing to comply with it  
 for once. If any one chooses to go to hell by a  
 devout path, rather than by any other, let him  
 study



study to form his heart on any one of these four famous treatises, Mr GUTHRIE'S *Trial of a saving interest in Christ*, Mr MARSHALL'S *gospel mystery of Sanctification*, Mr BOSTON'S *human nature in its fourfold State*, and Dr DODDRIDGE'S *rise and progress of Religion in the Soul*. If any profane person, who desires to be converted, shall take pains to enter into the spirit of these books, it will be easy to shew, from the New Testament, that he thereby becomes "twofold more the child of hell than he was before\*." If none of these four are at hand, he may, without travelling far, easily read or hear plenty of sermons and books to the same purpose.

On the other hand, if any one has got an ear for the truth of God, and desires to have his mind established therein, let him read the History of JESUS CHRIST, and the Acts of the apostles, recorded by the four evangelists. Would he be skilful in distinguishing the ancient gospel from all counterfeits, and so expert in fighting the good fight of faith? let him read PAUL'S Epistles. Would he know what is "pure and undefiled religion before God," in distinction from idle talking about it? let him read JAMES. Would he

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\* What sort of conversions are produced and encouraged by the popular doctrine, may be seen in the second volume of a book, called, *Historical Collections, relating to remarkable periods of the success of the gospel, and eminent instruments employed in promoting it*. The second volume is titled along the top of the pages, *The success of the gospel in the XVIIIth century*. It is at present a point of zeal among devout people, to enter into concerts for prayer, for the promoting of such conversions as are there narrated.



he learn sobriety of mind, and patience in suffering for the truth, and have his veneration for the greatest names in the Antichristian world abated? let him read PETER and JUDE. Would he be satisfied, that his spiritual joys are not the joys of the hypocrite, but that they arise from fellowship with the true God, so are the sure pledges and real beginnings of life eternal? let him read the Epistles of JOHN. Would he know the true state and appearance of the kingdom of God in this world, and the world to come, and so have his mind fortified against all modern dreams, visions, and prophecies? let him read the *Revelations* of the last-mentioned apostle. Would he have a safe and authentic commentary on the Old Testament, to prevent his being imposed upon by the deceitful glosses of ancient or modern Jews? let him consult all these apostolic writings together.

WE may now proceed to take notice of the origin and spring of all practical errors as to the Christian religion. If any consideration, beside or along with the sacrifice of Christ, be admitted into one's faith, or held requisite for his justification before God, that consideration, whatever it be, is his righteousness, that is the center and spring of his charity and hope, so the leading principle of his life. As the most holy faith, or one thing needful, refuses all mixture, or to be joined with any thing else; so he who goes about to add any thing to it, must be influenced to do so by disaffection to the one thing needful,

and



and by love to that which he adds. His favourite addition, then, is the great spring of his life, and the hinge of his passions. And what he knows of the gospel, is wholly subservient to this.

Moreover, if one maintains that Christ died for any other end than he and his apostles have declared; that other end, whatever it be, must serve, more or less, to darken his understanding about, and cool his affection to the great end for which Christ died; and accordingly give a false direction to his zeal in the profession of Christianity. The like effect flows from mistaking what was the justifying righteousness which Jesus Christ finished in his death. Perhaps there is nothing in Christianity less attended to by its professors, than the real character of Jesus Christ. He who is persuaded, that that character, which was set at nought by all ranks of men, was the only character on earth acceptable to God, and of such high value in his sight, as to procure his favour for the guilty, must, in consequence of this persuasion, entertain very uncommon notions of virtue and piety. And he who declares this character to be the sole requisite for his justification, and does not make conscience of imitating it, evidently tells a lie, as the scripture every where affirms.

Every practical error, then, in the profession of Christianity, proceeds from some mistake about the one thing needful. It would be endless to take notice of every particular mistake, and the  
**practical**



practical error that follows upon it. Yet some are very glaring.

Many, trusting in themselves that they are more eminently godly than others, look down with a solemn pride on the rest of mankind, and are greatly encouraged in this pride by their teachers. Whereas the members of one Christian church ought to have the same love one towards another ; yet many are encouraged to look down on their fellows, in the same communion, as ungodly and profane. Many have their pride not a little gratified, by complaining of the defections of the church whereof they are members. They feed upon these defections, in the midst of all the mournful airs they assume, with a delicious sort of self-applause ; because they are thus reminded of their own excellency. Take away this fund of religious discourse and meditation from many devout people, and you leave them little religion behind.

The dress, equipage, public entertainments and amusements of people of wealth and rank, serve as a notable fund of declamation for the popular preacher. In handling this topic well, he awakens the devotion of the lower sort of people, while he stimulates their envy ; and he extracts from their poverty, the richest food for their pride. At the same time, such of the hearers as are seriously intent on the pursuit of wealth, are led to consider that avarice, which restrains them equally from liberality in the works of mercy, as from expensive pleasures, as a Christian virtue.

The



The various methods by which popular preachers form the distinction betwixt the devout and the profane world, serve to possess the minds of the former with a self-sufficient censorious disposition toward the latter. Whereas the gospel teaches its disciples a very opposite temper of mind : Titus iii. 1. *Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man ; to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men ; for we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.*

The devout people are likewise taught, by the help of an ingenious distinction, with great confidence to resume the ancient prayer of the Pharisee. Mr R. ERSKINE, in a Sermon on Psalm ci. 1. called, *The militant's Song*, p. 33. encourages his hearers to rejoice, " when, says he, ye are helped to say thankfully, what the Pharisee said boasting, *The Lord be thanked that I am not as other men.*" But how comes the preacher thus to reproach the Pharisee, as praying with a worse disposition than his own hearers? The Pharisee spoke not a word of boasting more than they. He said, *God, I thank thee, &c.* No reason then can be given, to shew, that he was not as thankful as they.

As to the end of Christ's death, many think he died to purchase grace and spirit, to help men to establish their own righteousness, or acquire  
some



some requisite to justification ; and accordingly their zeal is directed. It is common with people of this class, to shew their zeal, in longing and praying for the down-pouring on all ranks, of some other spirit than that which speaks in the scripture, that serious religion may be brought into repute. And thus many satisfy themselves in their present neglect of the written mind of the holy Ghost, regarding the scriptures no farther than they find them impressed on their hearts in a certain way, and without such impressions, professing they want light about the clearest passages of scripture.

Many think that Christ died to redeem the forfeiture of earthly happiness, so as to reinstate men in the possession of what the first man lost by transgression. And accordingly, their attention must be drawn aside from the sole end of his death, which was to give his people eternal life, by a resurrection from the dead. Many think he died to make way for the establishment of national churches ; or, in other words, to procure a worldly kingdom for his followers and representatives, seeing he could not obtain it for himself while on the earth. And accordingly their zeal runs in that channel. If they are Dissenters, they murmur at the badness of the times, and the irreligion of those in power, because their mode of religion is not more countenanced. And they take delight to vent their envy, in the midst of their religious warmth, by declaiming vehemently against the established Clergy, as hirelings, intruders, wolves, &c.

It



It is common with those who are possessed of the forementioned zeal, whether Churchmen or Dissenters, to lament the decay of religion, the contempt of the gospel and gospel-ministers, the open profanation of the Lord's day, the little frequenting of ordinances, the increase of infidelity, and, in a word, every thing that spoils the public decorum as to religion, or that serves to lessen that weight and influence which they apprehend their religious character or office intitles them to in the nation. Yet one might as well quote the *Alcoran* to these same people, as talk to them of *continuing stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.* The commands of Christ have no manner of weight with them against tradition and reputable custom. Christ's new commandment of *love* is odious to them. Should they be put in mind of the express and particular law of Christ, *If thy brother trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone, &c.*; they will answer, It is impracticable, as matters now stand.

Though the apostolic decree, which declares the peculiar precepts of the Mosaic law, that served to distinguish the Jews from other nations, to be no way binding on believing Gentiles, with equal force and clearness of expression enjoins such Gentiles abstinence from blood, as a *thing necessary* for them to observe; yet our devoutest preachers, when lecturing on that decree, with solemnity equal to their impudence, take upon them to pronounce the enjoined abstinence to be a *thing*



*indifferent.* The reason is, they regard the bare authority of scripture no more than an old ballad. Yet the same men can shew the warmest zeal against the stage. The reason is, the frequenting of the stage interferes with the respect and attendance due to the pulpit, and the venerable personage who fills it.

Let mention be made of the particular expressions of love which the apostles enjoined the first Christians, and the devout people, with their teachers, will scoff at them. Put them in mind of that law wherein Christ calls his disciples to *lay up their treasure, not on earth, but in heaven,* by giving to the poor, adding this reason, *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also;* they will readily answer, that Christ, far from forbidding to lay up treasures on earth, only forbids us to set our hearts on them. Thus they burlesque the reason given by Christ, and make him to say, "For where your heart is, there will your heart be also; or where you put your treasure, there your treasure will be." And herein they imitate their predecessors the Pharisees, who though they gave much alms, yet derided Christ's doctrine against covetousness.

And thus might I speak of every precept of Jesus Christ that has nothing but the weight of his authority to enforce it; yet if any one presumes to trespass so far on the public decorum, as frankly to profess himself an unbeliever, the devout people will be apt to stare at him as a kind of monster. But whatever dislike they have to  
what



what they call *infidelity*, they hate the ancient gospel much more.

Not a few possessed of the last-mentioned zeal are keen for persecution, so soon as it shall be in their power, and complain greatly of the toleration granted by the present government. These act a consistent part in declaiming bitterly against every thing that opposes their wished-for uniformity. But why should the lovers of our present happy government, the friends of toleration and public liberty, murmur at the natural consequences of that liberty? But more especially, why should Christians complain whatever shape the world puts on, while they have liberty to follow their own religion? Is it not their business to live quietly; to pray for, and do good to all men as they have opportunity; to upbraid none, to glory over none, and to hate even the thought of pluming themselves over any of mankind on account of their religious devotion? Thus they will best recommend their religion to the attention of others. Thus they will imitate Him, of whom it was said, *He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man bear his voice in the streets: A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, &c.* Two very fit emblems for the appearance of his kingdom in the world\*. I may add here, that it is a common

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thing

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\* A *light* or *lamp*, and a *rod* or *sceptre*, are frequently used in scripture as signs of royal power and dominion. And no signs could be more fitly chosen for the outward weakly appearance of such power, than a *bruised reed* for a sceptre, and a *smoking wick* or  
lamp



thing with religious people to make a great noise about divine judgments impending over the nation for the sins of others, not considering that the wrath to come is chiefly pointed against contempt of the ancient gospel, which takes place no less among the stricter than among the looser sort.

Many are the little singularities of parties, by which the attention of men is drawn away from the common faith. And indeed they cannot be too lightly esteemed in comparison of the great end for which Christ died.—Some, who do not profess Popery, maintain, that Christ died to consecrate an order of priests to offer certain unbloody eucharistical sacrifices to propitiate for daily sins, and must be influenced accordingly in their religious practice.—Many devout persons in Scotland are taught to think, that Christ died to purchase for the people inhabiting a certain district called a parish, a right to claim from the British government, fifty, sixty, or a hundred pounds Sterling yearly, to the man they choose for their minister. And though it is well known, that the British government hinders no people to choose their own minister, nor to feed and clothe him in the  
best

lamp apparently ready to die away, and be extinguished. Agreeably to this, we find, that the enemies of Jesus, decking him with the mock ensigns of royalty, in order to insult his pretensions, gave him a reed for a sceptre, and carrying their insult to the greatest extremity, took the reed out of his hand, and smote him on the head. But the day approaches, when the bruised reed shall become a *rod of iron*, and the smoking flax a *flaming fire*, and all other kingdoms and establishments be quenched as tow.



best manner they can; yet many are taught to consider it as a heavy grievance to be deprived of the forementioned right: Yea, this is the chief thing understood in the noted phrase, *The rights of the Lord's people*. Thus they are taught to think and speak disrespectfully of those in power, contrary to all the rules of the gospel. And thus they are taught to think impiously of Jesus Christ, as if it were in the power of any potentate on earth to deprive Christ's people of any right he died to purchase for them.—Many think Christ died to authorise persecuting oaths or covenants, among whom even the friends of ASPASIO make a distinguished figure. In a word, whatever side religious people take in politics, or whatever party-designs they are engaged in, they are apt to suppose, that they are promoting some end for which Christ died.

Mistakes about the character of Jesus Christ are attended with the like practical errors. Various parties, of the same temper with those who opposed him at the first, have found it convenient to patronize their favourite designs with his sacred name; by perverting, some one, some another part of his history. Yea, not to stay upon lesser instances, bloody and deceitful men have bound themselves by solemn covenant to the most impious inhumanity; and pretended they were herein following Jesus Christ, who drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple. And though Jesus Christ made PILATE well understand, that his kingdom no way interfered with that of CÆSAR; yet many preachers, with great vehemence,



mence, oppose the headship and sovereignty of Christ to the supremacy of the King of Britain. Thus, if times and circumstances allowed, they would patronize rebellion with the sacred name of Jesus.

Here I must declare myself at a loss to understand how a friend of public liberty, and of our happy constitution, should, in a book intended to recommend the imputed righteousness, or the character of Jesus Christ, direct us to learn holiness from men who declare their aversion to toleration, and so to humanity, and at the same time a sacred regard for persecuting oaths ; from men, who would make Jesus to be what the Jews accused him for, and at the same time lead us to follow a Messiah altogether such as they desired. Mr BOSTON, I own, seems to have been so much taken up in teaching his people to establish their own righteousness by acts of faith, that he insisted less on the covenanted uniformity, with the several political uses for the Messiah, than some others of his class : But Mr E. ERSKINE in his Sermons shews his zeal abundantly for a Jewish secular Messiah in all respects: Yea, he carries the matter so high, that in his Sermon, intitled, *The kingdom of God within the soul of man*, he warmly commends as *worthies* those who, in the last century, chose rather to die, than say, *God save the King*.

The popular preachers of Scotland are presently doing the best they can to infuse their spirit into England. Witness a late performance published by one of them, intitled, *England's alarm,*  
&c.



&c. And they take care to propagate their appropriating faith in the closest connection with their impious principles of inhumanity. And indeed they so far judge right; for nothing is more cruel and inhuman than spiritual pride. — One would think, that these gentlemen of Scotland might easily enter upon a treaty of alliance with the followers of Mr HUTCHINSON in England, could they only come to some mutual agreement or forbearance about a few trifling questions relating to Presbytery and Prelacy. But it is happily so ordered by Providence, for the benefit of mankind, that their common enemies are often easily divided by very trifling circumstances: And however much they howl, pray, and groan forth their sorrow at the public divisions in religious matters; yet they are so infatuated, that all their machinations serve often rather to widen than to heal these divisions.

I SHALL here take some further view of the progress of the popular doctrine in England, as also of the counterfeit *grace*, which may justly be considered as the capital characteristic of that doctrine; even as the true grace of God is the grand characteristic of the apostolic gospel. The counterfeit grace corresponds with the preliminary faith formerly noted. And the purpose it serves for is, to prepare and qualify men for, or to make them deserving objects of saving grace; that is, it serves to qualify some men beyond others for being benefited by the great work of mercy and grace finished by Christ on the cross, where a one



the saving grace of God is manifested. This preliminary *grace*, however much it has been christianized, is at bottom the same thing with that divine *afflatus*, influence, or energy, by which it was supposed philosophers and heroes of old became good and great men \*. When the writings of any eminent preacher of this grace are published after his death, the editor commonly takes care to usher them into the view of the public with high encomiums on the piety of the author, as being desirous to make us understand, that he led a life of very intimate communion with the Deity, so could not fail to have been admitted far into his secret counsels. Thus their writings come abroad to us with a sanction or authority not unlike what attended ancient Legislators, when they emerged to the view of the public from some cave or grotto, where it was supposed they had been for a long time intimately conversing with some male or female divinity.

But we are not to imagine, that the preachers of this grace are content with the prospect of being worshipped after death. They generally incline

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\* Dr HEYLYN, a man of no small repute for piety, in one of his *Select discourses*, called *The connection of Religion with Morality*, says, “SOCRATES not only teaches the *duty of prayer*, but shews the necessity of *divine assistance* for the right performance of it, the same which in Christian stile we call *the Spirit’s helping our infirmities*, because we know not what to pray for as we ought; and he shews convincingly, that God only can prepare our hearts to pray worthily, by dispelling the darkness of the soul, and purifying it, so that it may distinguish rightly between good and evil.”



cline to leave their editors or gentlemen-ushers as little to do as possible. They take care to make it a principal part of their doctrine, to preach up their own excellency, and make the people understand, that they have an uncommon intimacy with the Deity, and are the canals of his favours to men.

But this is not all : They are also careful to magnify the testimony of some spirit, which they call the divine Spirit, above the written testimony of God in the scripture. I do not say they magnify it expressly in opposition to the written word. This would never do ; for the credit of the scripture must still be maintained, so as it may remain as a proper foundation and ground-work for all their artifices. They generally agree with the more cautious of the people called *Quakers*, in maintaining, that this inward witnessing spirit must never flatly contradict the outward testimony of the written word, while yet it may give evidence beyond and above that word.

To sum up what has been said : A popular preacher may pretty easily be distinguished by these three marks, namely, by his preaching the counterfeit grace above described, by his aggrandizing his own person in lofty strains, and by his magnifying the testimony of some spirit above the scripture. Yet any one of these is sufficient to darken one's mind, and to disaffect him to the doctrine of the true grace of God preached by the apostles.



“ Beware” (says Dr CRISP in one of his Sermons \* on Isaiah liii. 6.) “ that you make not  
 “ the credit of the voice of the Spirit to depend  
 “ upon the word.” His notion of grace may be  
 seen by the following passages. “ Now hath the  
 “ Lord given thee a heart to come, that thou  
 “ wouldst fain have Christ if thou durst, fain  
 “ thou wouldst that all thy iniquities should be  
 “ taken from thee to be laid upon him. Beloved,  
 “ the Lord saith expressly unto you, *Every one*  
 “ *that will, let him come.* Have you but a mind  
 “ to come, and take him, your coming and  
 “ taking is your security †.” In another Sermon,  
 on John vi. 37. *And him that cometh to me, I*  
*will in no wise cast out* ; he proceeds thus : “ I say,  
 “ suppose a person to be in the worst condition  
 “ you can imagine, single out the vilest man in  
 “ the world, &c. ; — such a person as this, and  
 “ continuing to this very instant, now before the  
 “ Lord as he was before, without any change  
 “ or alteration in the world until this time ;  
 “ suppose such a person ; by this text it appears  
 “ so manifest, that if the Lord do but grant, and  
 “ hath but put a willingness and readiness of  
 “ spirit into this man ‡, that Christ he *would*  
 “ have,

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\* See the Two Volumes of his Sermons published two years ago by Dr GILL, vol. ii. p. 133.

† Vol ii. p. 95.

‡ At this place Dr GILL has the following note. “ Here you see clearly the Doctor supposes willingness and readiness of spirit to come to Christ put into such a sinner ; which is owing to power and grace thus making willing ; and such a soul will never be rejected, let him be ever so vile.”



“ have, if it might appear he *might* have him ;  
 “ if his heart do but say, I would have him, all  
 “ that sinfulness, though to this instant continued  
 “ in, is no bar in the world, but this man may  
 “ claim his portion in Christ, and have as certain  
 “ security that his portion is there, as any other  
 “ man may have \*.”

His lofty self-conceit may be seen by the following passage : “ Let me tell you, the Lord hath  
 “ sent *me* at this time to *proclaim liberty to such*  
 “ *captives* that are in this sad, bitter, and (to  
 “ their thinking) desperate condition : Liberty  
 “ God hath given thee, if thou wilt come  
 “ freely ; nothing in the world shall hinder  
 “ thee †.”

I am not surpris'd to find Dr GILL espousing the grace maintained by this writer, as his avowed principles lead him to conclude, that adult persons are intitled to baptism, so to the kingdom of heaven, on account of that which distinguishes them from infants : Whereas if the doctrine of the apostles be true, that the former can contribute no more than the latter for obtaining a part in the kingdom of God, their reasoning must also be just, that where God makes no difference as to the communication of his favour, we can make none in the expression of our regard, or in administering the outward signs or privileges, without being guilty of *withstanding God*. When PETER beheld God setting aside the difference which he formerly made great account of, yea  
 much

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\* Vol. i. p. 341, 342.

† Ibid. p. 343.



much more than of that betwixt infants and adult persons, he reasoned like a sober-minded man, *What was I, that I could withstand God?* But the Doctor is a man of great consequence, no less than one of the Deity's Ambassadors, if we will take his word for it.

I am rather surpris'd to find, that a class of people, whom I am just going to mention, have so thoroughly imbibed the very rankest poison of the popular doctrine. I have seen "A collection of Hymns for the use of the church of Christ meeting in *Margaret-street*, near Oxford market, and other churches in fellowship with them." By way of introduction to the Hymns, we have a summary of principles, subscribed by WILLIAM CUDWORTH, and titled thus: "The united principles of the church of Christ for whom these Hymns are collected; being the substance of those maintained by the late Mess. ERSKINES, and the seceding ministers in Scotland, agreeable to the scripture, and all old Protestant divines." Here we see what names people now choose for patronising their creed, instead of those of the apostles.

I shall here quote a few sentences from this summary. "And as to *power* to come to or believe in Jesus Christ, a worthy minister well observes as follows: If thou hast a will to embrace him, the great difficulty is over; for there lies the principal stop, *Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.* Where God gives the will, *he gives also to do of his own good pleasure.*" Erskine's *Sermons*, vol. i. p. 188.

And



And again, “ Strength to believe is one thing,  
 “ and to believe in Christ for strength is another.  
 “ Strength to believe, is God’s enabling one to  
 “ the act of faith ; but to believe for strength, is  
 “ faith acting upon Christ, the object held up in  
 “ the word of promise.” Here we see plainly,  
 that the use these people have for Christ is, to  
 give them strength to do something toward their  
 justification. Here we see their notion of faith  
 and of grace.

I shall copy a few more of the words which  
 the author of the summary proceeds to quote :  
 “ Let us sow the seeds ; I mean, let us store our  
 “ minds with the pure and precious truths of  
 “ God, and acquaint ourselves with those things  
 “ which are to be believed, as they are laid before  
 “ us in the oracles of the scriptures of truth.  
 “ Think upon Christ’s suretyship, and substitu-  
 “ tion in our room, &c.—These are some of the  
 “ materials of faith ; faith comes by hearing of  
 “ these things, and by thinking and meditating  
 “ upon them. You have as good ground to ex-  
 “ pect the power of the Spirit of faith in this  
 “ way and method, as ever they of old had to  
 “ look for the celestial fire to come down and  
 “ consume their sacrifices, as a testimony of the  
 “ divine acceptance, when they had, according  
 “ to the command of God, done what was in-  
 “ cumbent on them in preparing their materials\*.

“ And

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\* I shall here copy a few words more from the same passage  
 from whence Mr CUDWORTH brings the above quotation “ Al-  
 “ though the act of saving faith be the effect of the divine power  
 “ and



“ And when you have done the will of God in  
 “ this matter as you can, you must hold on,  
 “ even though you find no sensible influence  
 “ concurring: For it is the command of God in  
 “ his word, and not the influence of the Spirit,  
 “ that is the rule and measure of your duty. And  
 “ if you continue doing the will of God in this  
 “ matter, with an eye to Him who is *the author*  
 “ *and finisher of faith*, you may assure yourselves,  
 “ that

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“ and grace, yet it is in the power of nature, by a common con-  
 “ course, to stock and store the mind with those things which are  
 “ the seed of faith. The husbandman, though he cannot make  
 “ one grain of corn to grow, yet he can plough and sow his  
 “ ground; and when he has done his part, he leaves the seed  
 “ under the clod, and looks up to heaven for the waterings of the  
 “ former and latter rains: And accordingly God, for ordinary,  
 “ crowns his endeavours with success, making the heavens to hear  
 “ the earth, and the earth to hear the corn, whereby it brings  
 “ forth ten, twenty, or an hundred fold. So here, let us do what  
 “ is incumbent on us, and what we have power in an ordinary  
 “ way to do: Let us sow the seeds; I mean, let us store our minds  
 “ with the pure and precious truths of God, and acquaint our-  
 “ selves with those things which are to be believed, as they are laid  
 “ before us in the holy oracles of the scriptures of truth; and  
 “ having thus laid in the seed into the ground or soil of our  
 “ hearts, let us look heavenward and wait for a shower of the  
 “ Spirit's influences, according to that word of grace or promise,  
 “ *Isaiah xliv. 3. I will pour water on the thirsty, and floods upon*  
 “ *the dry ground.* You know, they that offered sacrifices of old,  
 “ though they could not make fire come down from heaven to  
 “ consume their sacrifices; yet they could fetch the bullock out of  
 “ the stall, or the lamb out of the fold; they could bring it to the  
 “ altar, and bind it with cords to the horns of the altar; they  
 “ could gather their sticks, and lay in proper fuel; and having  
 “ done their part, they looked up to heaven for the celestial  
 “ fire to set all on a flame together. In like manner, I say, do  
 “ what is incumbent on you; gather your sticks, lay in the  
 “ proper fuel of faith, store your minds with the materials of  
 “ believing, which you are daily reading or hearing in the word,”  
 &c.



“ that *he that shall come, will come, and put his*  
 “ *hand to his own work.*” *Sermon on assurance*  
*of Faith.*

Is it possible, after what we have seen, for any one to imagine, that these people look for acceptance with God only through the sacrifice of Christ once offered for the sins of many? after they have so plainly declared the contrary? after we have heard them with open mouth setting up in its stead another sacrifice of their own preparing and offering? It is indeed surprising, that Mr CUDWORTH, and his friends in communion, should have chosen, for the public profession of their faith, the very passage in Mr ERSKINE'S Sermons, wherein he betrays, more evidently perhaps than in any other, his disaffection to the true atonement, and the true grace of God appearing there.

To these now mentioned, I shall only add one other notable promoter of the popular doctrine, Mr ROMAINE, whose picture may clearly be seen in his *Practical Comment on the 107th Psalm, Third Edition.* Let us first observe with what dignity this gentleman struts in his pulpit : *p.* 109.  
 “ And can none of my exhortations, none of my  
 “ friendly intreaties, prevail with you to rouse  
 “ up, and to look into your own hearts, and to  
 “ examine your state and condition? cannot I  
 “ prevail? If you still turn a deaf ear to me, O  
 “ blessed Jesus, I will then turn to thee. Thou  
 “ God of love, send thy good Spirit upon every  
 “ person here present, on whom my arguments  
 “ have made no impression, and shew them the  
 “ dan-



“ dangerous malady of sin, that, feeling the  
 “ pain and misery of it, there may be raised in  
 “ their hearts a strong cry for thy salvation. And  
 “ may our most adorable God now work in you  
 “ this happy change, that you may be disposed to  
 “ apply for your cure to the great Physician of  
 “ souls.”—*Pag. 131, 132.* “ When the blessed  
 “ Jesus invites, when he presses you to accept  
 “ health and salvation at his hands, what can  
 “ tempt you to reject his gracious offer \*? I now  
 “ stand up in his name, and by his authority  
 “ now proclaim these tidings of great joy ;—  
 “ *I will heal their backslidings ; I will love them*  
 “ *freely.*”

Let us now hear him further on his notion of  
 grace. *Pag. 66.* “ And if you find any prayer,  
 “ if it be but a desire, rising in your minds to  
 “ accept of full and free redemption through  
 “ Jesus Christ, hear how comfortably the holy  
 “ Spirit exhorts you to apply to him in your  
 “ distress, as it follows in the 6th verse : *Then*  
 “ *they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and*  
 “ *he delivered them out of their distresses.*” *Pag. 84.*  
 —“ So

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\* Thus it would seem our devotion must be animated by the  
 consideration of the great goodness and condescension of the Deity  
 manifested in sending us the precious person of a Clergyman, as  
 his representative, to waste his lungs for an hour or two upon us.  
 Thus the florist has his devotion chiefly animated by what he sees  
 of the Deity in a *tulip*, the astronomer by the *stars*, the virtuoso by  
*shells* and *pebbles*, the man of pleasure by beholding every divine  
 charm in the fair face of his mistress.

If once that point of view wherein the apostles beheld the  
 Deity be set aside, it is indeed a matter of great indifference  
 which of these be made use of as the great incentives to our devo-  
 tion.



— “ So soon as the sinner was disposed to accept,  
 “ the Saviour was willing to bestow free and  
 “ full redemption.” *Pag.* 118. “ And the first  
 “ sigh that comes from an awakened heart pierces  
 “ the ears of our gracious God.” *Pag.* 180.  
 “ The psalmist says, He sent waters into the  
 “ wilderness to change its nature; that is, he sent  
 “ his grace into our hearts to change their nature,  
 “ to shew them their dead and barren state, to  
 “ make them sensible of it, distressed under it,  
 “ and then cry to him for deliverance. And  
 “ when grace has thus far disposed the heart a-  
 “ right, and it can pray for more grace; then will  
 “ our Lord enrich it with abundant streams: For  
 “ he is always disposed to give in the measure we  
 “ are disposed to receive; and if we hunger and  
 “ thirst for much, he has promised that we shall  
 “ be filled.

“ There is no doctrine of Christianity more  
 “ opposed than this, nor any at present more  
 “ ridiculed. And until men desire to have their  
 “ barren hearts changed, it must sound strange to  
 “ them to talk of the necessity of doing what  
 “ they have no desire to do\*.”

However

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\* The same preacher, in a Sermon called the *Parable of the dry bones*, plainly enough shews us what source of hope he proposes for his hearers, and on what ground he would have them conclude that their state is happy. “ Only one question now remains, and  
 “ that is, Has this parable been fulfilled in us? Can every one of  
 “ us lay his hand upon his heart, and declare in the presence of  
 “ God, I know this scripture to be true by my own experience.  
 “ The Spirit of God shewed me my guilt and danger; at the sight  
 “ of which I shook and trembled for fear; but he gave me grace  
 “ to resolve, that if I did perish, I would perish at the feet of Jesus.



However much this doctrine may be ridiculed by those who, led more by sound than by sense, mistake it for that preached by the apostles; yet we have good reason to say, that the grace here maintained deserves from the friends of the ancient gospel a graver censure than ridicule. It deserves to be treated with their most serious indignation; not the malicious indignation of extirpating heresy-hunters, but that honest indignation which always becomes the humane declaration of saving truth when opposed to pernicious falsehood. But who can help them? Who can pretend to undeceive them? They have already all advantages. They lack no means of instruction. They have MOSES and the prophets, with the additional evidence of the apostles: If they will not hear them, what remains? but—If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Let the blind lead the blind, and every man stand to his own hazard.

By comparing the doctrine of the gentlemen now quoted, with that of the apostles, one may have a very good notion of the difference betwixt ancient Christianity, and that which is considered by many devout people as the best form of the modern.

BEFORE I conclude this Letter, I would take  
some

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“ On him I waited with prayers and tears, rejecting all hopes in  
 “ my own power or works, until he put his Spirit within me, and  
 “ I lived. Can every one of you say, that God hath dealt thus  
 “ with your souls? If he hath, happy are ye. In you this scripture  
 “ is fulfilled.”



some notice of the apostolic account of charity, which I have hitherto rather referred to in general, than considered particularly. Charity is a sound acceptable to all ; and all contending parties are ready to reproach each other with the want of it. But perhaps no expression is more constantly used in opposition to the apostolic sense of it than this.

PAUL gives us the most particular description of it in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter xiii. After having shewn, that all gifts and virtues wherein a man may excel without it, are of no real benefit to him, he proceeds to set before us the general tendency of it in these words: *Charity suffereth long, and is kind*: So imitates the divine long-suffering and kindness toward men. Then he declares what it is opposed to: *Charity envieth not, charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, [or is not provoked to revenge], thinketh [or deviseth] no evil.*

Thus far we see charity opposed to pride, and the various ways wherein men are influenced and conducted thereby. Then he comes to shew positively, wherein the peculiar nature of charity consists, what is the hinge on which it turns, or what is the center of its delight. He says, *It rejoiceth not in iniquity, (συγχαίρει δε τη αληθεια), but rejoiceth with the truth.* The great truth, that God is well pleased in his beloved Son, proved by his resurrection from the dead, is the center of the joy of charity. The apostle amplifies this description, by giving us to understand, that



charity *beareth all things* reported in the truth, or all the inspired descriptions of it, however opposite to the corruption of human nature, so counts none of them hard sayings, or unfit to be borne; that it *believeth all things* imported in the great truth, or all the inferences which the apostles have deduced from it, as being well affected to the amiable source from whence they flow; that it *hopeth for all things* promised in it, and *endureth all things*, or patiently suffers all the afflictions that can attend a steady attachment to it: And he crowns the description, by declaring, that *charity never faileth*, so is greater than its temporary companions, *faith and hope*.

The blessedness of God consists in the consciousness of his own boundless perfections. These are fully displayed only in the atonement. The fulness of the divine good-pleasure and delight, then, can only be manifested there. If we speak then of God as made manifest to his creatures, we must say that the atonement is the center of his delight. This is also the centre of the joy of charity. Charity then is fellowship with the true God in his blessedness.

Yea, if we take in the notion of Deity which the scripture is writ to exhibit, we must say, that the love manifested in the atonement, is the only true God; and that there is no God besides that love. Thus only can we perceive the propriety of the apostle JOHN's words, *He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. — He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* And he sums up all that he hath to say of  
of



of love and happiness, in one idea, in the close of his Epistle, *This is the true God and eternal life.*

The sufferings of Christ, with the glory by which they were crowned, are known to us only by report. Charity then, on this side the grave, is the love of that report. So PETER, speaking of Christ, says, *Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

Charity delights in the character of the true God drawn in the truth, and has no regard for any other, though drawn by the wisest men, and applauded by multitudes. — Charity does not respect men for any of those things, on account of which one man glories over another ; but it delights in all who are of the truth, for the truth's sake dwelling in them. — Charity has a sacred regard for all the institutions of worship delivered in the New Testament, as baptism, the Lord's day, and the several ordinances wherein the first Christians continued steadfastly on that day ; as all these have the truth evidently stamped upon them, and serve to bring it to remembrance, and so to promote the happiness resulting from it. But it has no regard to any institutions of worship founded on the traditions or commandments of men, though authorized by the grandest assemblies on earth. — Charity is well affected to the great commandment of Jesus Christ, *Love one another, as I have loved you ;* and to all the services and expressions of that love appointed in the



New Testament, however ridiculous in the eyes of the world. But it has no reverence for the rules of holiness devised and held in high repute by this or the other religious party.—In a word, charity despises all the little singularities of parties, but it has a high veneration for the public statutes of the kingdom of heaven, which all serve to promote “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Charity bears good-will to all men, and is ready to do them good as opportunity presents; but its joy is confined to those in whom the truth dwells. We may see in PAUL, who was an eminent pattern of charity, how it rejoices with the truth. Speaking of his self-denial and condescension toward all sorts of men, to recommend the gospel to their attention, as well as for the benefit of them who believed, he says, *And this I do for the gospel's sake, (ὅτι συγκαινωνός αὐτῆς γενώμεαι), that I may be its partner.* He chose to join in partnership with the gospel, and to run all risks with it for the salvation of mankind, in hopes of partaking of the glory promised in it. So he says in another place, *I endure all things for the elects sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.* Charity, then, is benevolent toward all men for the elects sakes, as knowing none but whom God may save by bringing them to the knowledge of the truth. So its benevolence toward all men, proceeds from the joy it has in the truth. But the complacence of charity can be mutually exercised only among them who love the truth. Charity, then, is the imitation of the  

divine



divine goodness. God shews kindness to all, making his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sending rain on the just and on the unjust:” But he taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Charity contains the sum of all holiness \* of heart and life. No action, however commendable, no character, however highly esteemed, that is not formed upon the love of the truth, can be well-pleasing to God. All love to the truth is influenced by the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the truth, who is therefore likewise called the Spirit of love. And thus we see the true difference betwixt the Spirit of God, and the spirit of the world, or the spirit of pride, by which men fortify themselves in their disobedience to God, and flatter one another down to eternal perdition.

In PAUL’S description of charity, iniquity stands opposed to the truth; as all iniquity proceeds upon falshood, or the truth of God changed into a lie, according to which men are embolden-

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\* All sanctification solely springs from the bare truth, so much set at nought by our preachers. Jesus Christ said in his prayer, *John xvii. Sanctify them through thy truth: Thy word is truth.— And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.* Only by this truth are the consciences of the unclean sanctified, and encouraged to draw nigh to God. Only by this truth is the heart purified from evil affections, for obeying the new commandment of love. Only by this truth do men overcome the world: *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*—If we attend to these passages of scripture, we will readily be disentangled from many volumes of nonsense that have been writ by many famous preachers on sanctification.



ed to sin with hopes of impunity. In the profession of Christianity, all iniquity is promoted by some perversion of the gospel. Thus Jesus Christ foretold, *Many false prophets shall arise, and shall deceive many; and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.* And PAUL speaking of the great apostasy, as prefigured by ancient idolatry, calls it *the mystery of iniquity*, and says it comes “with all deceivableness of un-  
“righteousness.” And he declares, that it comes as a judgment on them who *received not the love of the truth;—but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* Thus we have an extensive view of his account of charity, as it “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but  
“rejoiceth with the truth.”

As charity then always holds pace with the truth, and keeps company with it wherever it goes; so it is very jealous in its behalf, as finding all its joy in it. No injury can be done to the truth, but charity feels the wound. Christian zeal is nothing else but the fervency of charity; and as there are many counterfeits of the truth, so are there likewise of charity. We may easily know then what sort of charity any man has, by inquiring what does he hold for truth, or what is his justifying faith. The faith of some is nothing else but a good opinion of themselves, as helped to excel others by something that they call *grace*; and they maintain, that this faith is the only true principle of holiness. Whatever charity then such people pretend to be influenced by, we have good ground to say, that they are influenced by the spirit of pride, and that all their works of  
holi-



holiness are indeed the works of pride. — The spirit of love rejoices only in the works of Christ, and delights to imitate them; and has no pleasure either in the direct or reflex acts of self-conceit, wherein the spirit of pride delights to exercise itself.

The spirit of pride, which is the spirit of the world, under the borrowed name of *charity*, always opposes the truth. Yea, it can take pleasure in any thing but the truth. Among some devout people, it takes the name of *catholic charity*; among the more fashionable, that of *universal benevolence*. But whatever name it assumes, it always looks with an evil eye on the truth, as a narrow way of thinking, exceedingly odious to it: And whenever it smells the breath of ancient charity, it is ready to oppose it with the same temper as it did of old, *Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?* It always charges ancient charity with some malignant disposition.

The profession of charity must proceed on some profession of the faith. Anciently men were acknowledged as Christians, or objects of charity, on what they had to say of Christ, or on their calling Jesus, LORD. The Ethiopian eunuch was acknowledged for a Christian, when he said, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*. Among many devout people now, the expression of mutual charity proceeds on some such profession as this: “ Thus and thus I endeavoured, and  
 “ was accordingly assisted; I understand the case  
 “ is the same with you: — I sincerely consider  
 “ you



“ you as a gracious person, and a good Christian ;  
 “ and I presume you can think no less of me.”  
 Having thus founded their charity toward each other, they comfort one another with the popular doctrine concerning the perseverance of the saints. And though one who has thus become an object of what is called charity, should not appear to be much influenced by the precepts of the gospel, nor to enjoy the comfort of it ; yet it is still presumed that the root of the matter is in him.—Thus the spirit of the world, which always fortifies men in a sense of their own importance, worth, and excellency, speaks comfort to thousands walking in the broad way to destruction.

The spirit of love, as it works in them that believe, leads them to a careful jealousy over each other, as well as every one to be, in the first place, jealous over himself. Charity delights in the *just living by faith* ; yet it is ready to join with God, in saying, *If he draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* The language of charity to its favourites may be thus summed up. “ If ye  
 “ know Christ, as I am bound by your profession  
 “ to judge ye do, happy are ye if ye obey him.”  
 Charity regards its favourites only for the truth’s sake dwelling in them, and is grieved at every thing about them unbecoming the truth. Hence it is led to rebuke them ; and when they repent, so return to the truth, to forgive them ; and if they repent not, to reject them as hypocrites and unbelievers.—Here I am reminded of some lines  
 in



in a song, which, after addressing charity as the offspring of God, proceeds thus.

True as the object to the glass,  
 With him you wake your ire,  
 Frown when he frowns, hate what he hates,  
 And what he loves, desire.

Charity is indeed of supernatural birth. It learns its notions of what is good and profitable to mankind, not from the maxims of worldly society, the duration of which is but short, and fast draws nigh to its final period; consequently all its maxims are no longer of any significance: But it learns them from Him who only knows the true interest of mankind; from Him who “made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth;” from Him who gave his Son to take part in flesh and blood with men of all nations, without distinction. Thus charity alone knows how to *honour all men*, and to disregard all the little distinctions, on account of which they either envy or undervalue each other. All the works of charity serve to promote the interests of one grand society, arising out of all nations, and whose union will not appear till the final dissolution of worldly society. That charity which *seeketh not her own*, can give no just cause of umbrage or jealousy to any party contending for influence and power in the world. As charity has no worldly project in view, so neither has it any baits to allure the passions of men, or spirit up any worldly faction. Yet charity promotes such a scheme of universal be-



benevolence, as always did, and ever will, while this world lasts, provoke the hatred and contempt of all ranks of men in every nation, as was both exemplified and foretold by Jesus Christ, in whom alone divine charity shone forth in perfection. When he came into the world, he alone truly understood, and faithfully pursued what was most beneficial to mankind. But what was the issue? All ranks thought him unworthy to live. And before he died, he warned his disciples never to expect to find the world in a better temper towards them, while they kept his word.

No works but those of charity will be rewarded in the new Jerufalem. Worldly society can never want baits sufficient to prompt men to run all risks in its service. And if it has not sufficient rewards to bestow on all occasions, it will never want leaders in religion, zealous enough to assign happy abodes in some Elyfian field or other for those whom it cannot otherwise reward. And such leaders will always be fondly listened to, while worldly society lasts. Though charity does not fire a man's breast with ambition; yet it can never make him a bad subject, neighbour, or member of worldly society, while it binds him to venture his life at the command of those in authority, and while it will not suffer any Christian society to retain a member who is disaffected to the sovereign. And as no cause can be sufficient to make a Christian rebel against the worst government, he must have a grateful



grateful affection toward one which is good and gentle.

All the relations formed by charity are eternal. All relations, natural or civil, shall be dissolved, when “the fashion of this world passeth away.” Marriage, the origin of all natural relations amongst mankind, shall have no place in the world to come. But no tie made by mutual charity, can ever be loosed. The meanest services of charity will turn to account in the world to come; for “God is not unrighteous to forget “them.” Whereas the works which make the most shining figure in history, as of greatest account to worldly societies, though praised by contemporaries, and admired by posterity, shall be buried in oblivion with those societies, whose praise was their proper reward.

Charity, while absent from the grand things hoped for, has the truth for its companion and comforter, while it labours in self-denial for the salvation of mankind, holding forth the word of life to them, at the risk of their greatest displeasure. Charity utters with delight the encouraging sound, *He that believeth, shall be saved*; and it adds, with benevolent concern, *He that believeth not, shall be damned*; that men may be warned in time of their real danger. Charity respects the meanest peasant, who loves the truth, as a prince in the kingdom of heaven; while it scruples not to call the most eminently devout perverters of the truth, *dogs, evil and deceitful workers, ministers of Satan transformed as ministers of righteousness, &c.* It were easy to shew at large, and illustrate  
by



by facts, how a perverted gospel serves to promote in its votaries a temper of mind the reverse of charity, or such as charity is all along opposed to, in PAUL's description of it; as that it leads them to grudge others the benefit of the divine long-suffering and kindness, and cherishes the roots of envy, vaunting, and all the other fruits of pride. But

I proceed to observe the hinge of that charity which may properly be called *modern*.

Formerly the spirit of the Christian world shewed itself, in zealously promoting and maintaining uniformity in religious opinions and practices. To be convicted of what was called *heresy*, was worse than being convicted of felony. Public uniformity was the hinge of charity; and nothing was more odious or heretical in the eyes of this charity, than the ancient gospel.

The spirit of the Christian world has now, for some time, been working upon a new plan, by promoting, among people of very different religious persuasions, a friendly intercommunity of charity at least, if not of worship also. As this friendly intercommunity is but forming as yet, different parties are not fully agreed on what common foundation it ought to rest; though good advances are already made toward this agreement. Hence it is that we have as yet no fixed name or title for this common foundation. It is called by many, *soundness in the fundamentals of religion*. In Scotland it is commonly called, *the being right in the main*. It is true,  
the



the more nice sort of people are apt to start questions about what are the fundamentals, or wherein does the main of religion consist. But those who would gain the greatest reputation for charity, choose to hold by the general expressions, and to avoid particular explications as much as possible. Hence the pleasure some fawning teachers take, in speaking of *our common Christianity*.

If we would give a name to this common foundation, suitable to what is aimed at by different parties, we must call it PIETY TOWARD THE GODS. This piety we shall find is the hinge of modern charity. For modern charity is not so much concerned about what character is drawn for the Deity, or what God one worships, as that every one worship his own God decently, seriously, or with piety, without speaking disrespectfully of that of his neighbour. This charity, as far as it has hitherto taken place, is as much disaffected to the ancient gospel, as the old uniformity was. And should the friendly intercommunity of this charity prevail so far as to carry the sword on its side, or, according to scripture-stile, to *gather together the kings of the earth and their armies*, as they were formerly gathered together in behalf of uniformity; then the lovers of the truth may expect to feel the weight of its vengeance, unless Heaven seasonably interpose for their relief: For as the love of the truth will always provoke against itself the charge of that inhuman and unfociable temper, that inflexible obstinacy, that hatred and aversion to mankind,

with



with which it was reproached from the beginning; it must remain excluded from this friendly intercommunity, and become the principal butt of its resentment.

The learned author of *The divine Legation of Moses*, who has described the friendly intercommunity of worship amongst the ancient Pagans, likewise shews, how that friendly intercommunity stood affected to the peculiar pretensions of the Jewish and Christian religions. I shall here quote part of the passage, in *vol. II. book ii. § 6. p. 49, & seqq.*

“ The Pagan world having early imbibed this  
 “ inveterate prejudice concerning intercommunity  
 “ of worship, men were but too much ac-  
 “ customed to new revelations, when the Jewish  
 “ appeared, not to acknowledge its superior pre-  
 “ tences. Accordingly we find, by the history  
 “ of this people, that it was esteemed a *true one*  
 “ by its neighbours. And therefore they pro-  
 “ ceeded, in their usual way, to join it, on oc-  
 “ casion, with their own : As those did whom  
 “ the king of Assyria sent into the cities of Israel  
 “ in the place of the ten tribes. Whereby it  
 “ happened, (so great was the influence of this  
 “ principle) that, in the same time and country,  
 “ the Jews of Jerusalem added the Pagan ido-  
 “ latries to their religion, while the Pagans of  
 “ Samaria added the Jewish religion to their ido-  
 “ latries.

“ But when these people of God, in conse-  
 “ quence of having their dogmatic theology more  
 “ carefully inculcated to them, after their return  
 “ from



“ from the captivity, became rigid, in pretending  
 “ not only that their religion was true, but the  
 “ ONLY TRUE ONE; then it was, that they began  
 “ to be treated by their neighbours, and after-  
 “ wards by the Greeks and Romans, with the  
 “ utmost hatred and contempt, for this *their in-*  
 “ *humanity and unsociable temper.* To this cause  
 “ alone we are to ascribe all that spleen and ran-  
 “ cour which appears in the histories of these  
 “ latter nations concerning them. CELSUS fairly  
 “ reveals what lay at bottom, and speaks out for  
 “ them all. If the Jews, on these accounts, —  
 “ adhere to their own law, it is not for *that* they  
 “ are to blame: I rather blame those who forsake  
 “ their own country-religion, to embrace the  
 “ Jewish. But if these people give themselves  
 “ airs of sublimer wisdom than the rest of the  
 “ world, and on that score refuse all COMMU-  
 “ NION with it, as not equally pure; — I must  
 “ tell them, that it is not to be believed, that  
 “ they are more dear or agreeable to God than  
 “ other nations.” Hence, amongst the Pagans, the  
 “ Jews came to be distinguished from all other  
 “ people, by the name of GENUS HOMINUM IN-  
 “ VISUM DEIS, and with good reason.

“ This was the reception the Jews met with in  
 “ the world, &c.

“ When Christianity arose, though on the  
 “ foundation of Judaism, it was at first received  
 “ with great complacency by the Pagan world.  
 “ — The gospel was favourably heard, and the  
 “ superior evidence with which it was enforced,  
 “ inclined men long habituated to pretended



“ revelations, to receive it into the number of the  
 “ established. Accordingly we find one Roman  
 “ emperor introducing it among his closet-reli-  
 “ gions, and another proposing to the senate to  
 “ give it a more public entertainment. But when  
 “ it was found to carry its pretensions higher,  
 “ and to claim, like the Jewish, the title of the  
 “ ONLY TRUE ONE, then it was that it began to  
 “ incur the same hatred and contempt with the  
 “ Jewish. But when it went still further, and  
 “ urged a necessity for all men to forsake their  
 “ own national religions, and embrace the gos-  
 “ pel ; this so shocked the Pagans, that it soon  
 “ brought upon itself the bloody storms which  
 “ followed. Thus you have the true origin of  
 “ persecution for religion : — A persecution not  
 “ committed, but undergone by the Christian  
 “ church.

“ Hence we see how it happened, that such  
 “ good emperors, as TRAJAN and M. ANTONINE,  
 “ came to be found in the first rank of persecu-  
 “ tors : A difficulty that hath very much imbar-  
 “ rassed the inquirers into ecclesiastical antiquity ;  
 “ and given a handle to the Deists, who impositon  
 “ every thing, of pretending to suspect, that there  
 “ must be something very much amiss in primi-  
 “ tive Christianity, while such wise magistrates  
 “ could become its persecutors. But now the  
 “ reason is manifest. The Christian pretences  
 “ overthrew a fundamental principle of Paganism,  
 “ which they thought founded in nature, namely,  
 “ *the friendly intercommunity of worship.* And  
 “ thus the famous passage of PLINY the younger  
 “ be-



“ becomes intelligible. “ For I did not in the least  
 “ hesitate, but that whatever should appear on  
 “ confession to be their faith ; yet that their fro-  
 “ wardness, and *inflexible obstinacy*, would cer-  
 “ tainly deserve punishment.” What was the  
 “ *inflexible obstinacy*? It could not be in professing  
 “ a *new religion* : That was a thing common  
 “ enough. It was the refusing all communion  
 “ with Paganism, refusing to throw a grain of  
 “ incense on their altars. For we must not think,  
 “ as is commonly imagined, that this was at first  
 “ enforced by the magistrate, to make them re-  
 “ nounce their religion ; but only to give a *test*  
 “ of its *hospitality*, and *sociableness* of temper.  
 “ It was indeed, and rightly, understood by the  
 “ Christians to be a renouncing of their religion,  
 “ and so accordingly abstained from. The mis-  
 “ fortune was, that the Pagans did not consider  
 “ the inflexibility as a mere *error*, but as an  
 “ *immorality* likewise. The *unsociable, uncommu-*  
 “ *nicable* temper, in matters of religious worship,  
 “ was esteemed by the best of them, as a *hatred*  
 “ *and aversion to mankind*. TACITUS, speaking  
 “ of the burning of Rome, *Haud perinde in*  
 “ *crimine incendi i quam ODIO HUMANI GENERIS*  
 “ *convicti sunt [Christiani]*. *Convicted*, he says,  
 “ *of hate to all mankind*. But how? The con-  
 “ fession of the Pagans themselves, concerning  
 “ the purity of the Christian morals, shews this  
 “ could be no other than a *conviction* of their  
 “ rejecting all *intercommunity of worship*; which,  
 “ so great was their prejudice, they thought could  
 “ proceed from nothing but *hate to mankind*.



“ The like character the same historian gives of  
 “ the Jews : *Apud ipsos FIDES OBSTINATA, sed*  
 “ *adversus omnes alios HOSTILE ODIUM.* Now,  
 “ the Jews and Christians had nothing in com-  
 “ mon, but this *unsociable, uncommunicable temper*  
 “ in religious matters, this *obstinata fides*, which  
 “ gave so much offence to Paganism. We are  
 “ not to imagine these excellent Pagan moralists  
 “ so blind, as not to see all the merit of a *firm*  
 “ *and fixed resolution of keeping a good conscience.*  
 “ They did see and own it, as appears by the  
 “ famous *justum et tenacem propositi virum, &c.*  
 “ of one of their moral poets. But, unluckily  
 “ for truth, they did not see the *pervicacia et*  
 “ *inflexibilis obstinatio* of the Christians in that  
 “ light ; though it was nothing more than such  
 “ a *fixed resolution*, as one, who most severely  
 “ censured them for it, the good Emperor MAR-  
 “ CUS ANTONINUS, fairly confesses. In his book  
 “ of *Meditations*, speaking of a wise man’s readi-  
 “ ness to die, he says, “ He should be so pre-  
 “ pared, that his readiness may be seen to be the  
 “ effect of a well-weighed judgment, not of *mere*  
 “ *obstinacy*, like that of the Christians.” This  
 “ is a heavy charge on the primitive martyrs.  
 “ But he himself removes it, in his Constitution  
 “ to the *Community of Asia*, given us by EUSE-  
 “ BIUS. “ I know,” says he, “ the gods are  
 “ watchful to discover such sort of men : For it  
 “ is much more fit, that they themselves should  
 “ punish those who *refuse to worship them*, than  
 “ that we should interfere in it.” Why then was  
 “ it called *mere obstinacy*? The reason is seen  
 “ above.



“ above. Universal prejudice had made men re-  
 “ gard a refusal of this *intercommunity*, as the most  
 “ brutal of all dissociability. And the Emperor  
 “ JULIAN, who understood this matter the best of  
 “ any, fairly owns, that the Jews and Christians  
 “ brought the execration of the world upon  
 “ them, by their aversion to the gods of Paga-  
 “ nism, and their refusal of all communication  
 “ with them.”

Thus far the learned author. Now that much the like case to what is here represented, may take place amongst men wearing the common name of Christians, will appear no way improbable to one who will only take time to reflect, what an obnoxious figure any small number of ministers, in either of our national churches, would make, who should agree, with proper spirit and zeal, to maintain, not to say the ancient gospel, but the plain obvious first intended sense of their own public standards of doctrine, and insist upon a credible profession of hearty adherence to that sense, as the terms on which they admitted any to hold communion with them in the sacred institutions. It will be allowed, I dare say, that their situation in the national church would be very uncomfortable, as well as extremely ridiculous: For modern charity would soon awaken many enemies against them, to distress and misrepresent them in various respects.

Here I must acknowledge it to be a thing somewhat new, to see the cause of modern charity supported in volumes, professedly written



to recommend the imputed righteousness, or the character of Jesus Christ, and wherein the much insulted doctrine of the sovereignty of divine grace is oftener than once strongly asserted. On this last article, which has the closest connection with the former, I shall here quote a very bold passage from *vol. I. p. 284, & seqq.* “ Believe  
 “ me, my dear friend, salvation, both in the root  
 “ and all its branches, is *entirely* of grace; or else  
 “ believe me, for the many cogent testimonies of  
 “ scripture, which most circumstantially ascertain  
 “ this great truth.—*Election* is of grace: *Having*  
 “ *predestinated us unto the adoption of children,*  
 “ not on account of human worthiness, but *ac-*  
 “ *ording to the good pleasure of his will.*—Equally  
 “ gratuitous is our effectual *vocation*: *God hath*  
 “ *called us with an holy calling, not according to*  
 “ *our works, but according to his purpose and*  
 “ *grace.*—Faith is owing to the same cause: *By*  
 “ *grace ye are saved, through faith.*—From hence  
 “ springs *justification*: *Being justified freely by his*  
 “ *grace.*—This is the origin of *regeneration*:  
 “ *Of his own will beget he us by the word of truth.*  
 “ —The *consummation* of bliss flows from the  
 “ same all-supplying source: *The gift of God is*  
 “ *eternal life.* It is in every respect a gift; not  
 “ only without, but contrary to all desert of ours.  
 “ —So that the foundation is laid in the riches of  
 “ grace; the superstructure is reared by the hand  
 “ of grace; and when the top-stone is brought  
 “ forth, when our felicity is completed in the  
 “ kingdom of heaven, the everlasting acclamation  
 “ will be, *Grace, grace unto it!*

“ This



“ This is that glorious gospel, which human  
 “ learning could never have discovered ; which  
 “ carnal reason cannot understand ; which the  
 “ wisdom of this world accounteth foolishness ;  
 “ which the envy of the devil, and the pride of  
 “ man, will always oppose.”

WHAT pity is it that these sentiments did not bear sway throughout the *Dialogues*. and to find that THERON'S conversion is carried forward in such a manner, as if the reverse were true ! But this is not my present purpose. — What I at present think strange is, that one who avows the sentiments now quoted, should join in the friendly and affectionate alliance of charity, with such as he himself perceives opposing the imputed righteousness, and with the most open and determined enemies of the divine sovereignty. After this, I own, I need not be greatly surpris'd at finding him likewise discovering a lothness to exclude from the friendly alliance, even the philosophers described by PAUL in the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans. — But may I not here be allowed to put the question, *What communion hath light with darkness ? and what concord hath Christ with Belial ?* Or what delight can charity take in “ the envy of the devil, and the pride of man ? ”

It was probably by observing this *sociable* temper in the author of the *Dialogues*, that a friend of his was induced to vindicate him from the odious aspersion, of being a lover of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, asserted in the



above-quoted passage, by alledging in his behalf, that though he does indeed adopt these doctrines, yet it is evident he does not lay much stress upon them : Or, to give the words of that friend, “ Of whatever consequence he may think them “ to the true comfort of Christians, it is evident, “ he does not hold them to be of the same im- “ portance with these here mentioned, which are “ necessary to the very being of true Christianity ;” namely, the doctrines approved by this friend in the former part of his paper \*. — It might well have been expected, that love to the truth would have resentted, in a proper manner, the offices of such a friend, however kind they might seem. But I have not as yet heard, whether any such resentment has been shewn.

I shall now give some instances of the charitable esteem expressed for particular writers in the *Dialogues*, and in the *Meditations*. For as I find nothing said in the latter revoked in the former, I may be well allowed to consider them together.

I shall first observe the respect paid to the author of *Night-thoughts*, and his writings. For I suppose we understand each other all along, to judge of particular writers, only as they appear in their writings. The two following lines, which breathe the very sentiments and stile of the spirit of self-dependence, may well be considered as the motto of this author.

*O be*

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\* See *London Magazine* for September 1755, p. 425.



*O be a man ! And thou shalt be a God !  
And half self-made !——Ambition how divine !*

It would be tedious to note all the commendations of the *Night-thoughts*, both in the *Dialogues* and in the *Meditations*. I shall only quote what is said in the first volume of the latter, at the close of a note at the foot of p. 87. “ These *Thoughts* “ give the highest entertainment to the fancy, “ and impart the noblest improvement to the “ mind. They not only refine our taste, but “ prepare us for death, and ripen us for glory. “ I never take up this admirable piece, but I am “ ready to cry out, *Tecum vivere amem, tecum* “ *opteam libens; i. e.* Inspire me with such a spirit, “ and life shall be delightful, nor death itself un- “ welcome.”

The author of these *Thoughts* does indeed speak many grand things concerning the atonement : But as he evidently makes them all subservient to human pride, his leading scope can deserve no more regard from a Christian, than the testimony of him who said, *I know thee who thou art, the holy One of God.*

I shall next glance at Dr LUCAS's *Inquiry after Happiness*. In p. 126. of part I. *Edinburgh*, 1754, he says, “ That God so governs the “ world, that the issues of things are not fatal “ and unavoidable, but dependent upon our- “ selves.”

In p. 137. after some previous reasoning, he says, “ These, with many others, are the absurd “ consequences which attend the denial of the “ uni-



“ universality, or sufficiency of grace ; but if, on  
 “ the other hand, we do grant, that God almighty  
 “ is ready to assist every man who calls on him in  
 “ his endeavours after virtue and happiness, and  
 “ that his assistance is sufficient to the end for  
 “ which it is designed ; then we must needs ac-  
 “ knowledge, that it is in every man’s power to  
 “ be good and happy ; for it is no more than to  
 “ acknowledge that man can do what he can do ;  
 “ or, which is all one, what God has put in his  
 “ power to do.”

In p. 166. while he is labouring to shew the  
 possibility of attaining happiness in this life, he  
 supposes an objection will arise from these words  
 of the gospel, *If any man will come after me, let  
 him take up his cross, and follow me, Matt. xvi,  
 24.* He acknowledges, that obedience to this  
 precept was “ indispensably necessary to the pro-  
 “ pagation of the gospel ;” immediately adding,  
 “ But, blessed be God, the obligation of that  
 “ duty has long ago ceased\*.” This specimen  
 sufficiently shews the spirit of this author.

US

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\* According to this author, and many others, we are much in-  
 debted to the first Christians for suffering, that we might reign, or  
 enjoy a religion suited to all our worldly interests.—I have heard of  
 an eminent prelate of the Roman church, who said to his fellow,  
*O quantum profuit nobis hæc fabula de Jesu Christo !* “ What a  
 “ fund of gain to us has this fable about Jesus Christ been !”—  
 Here I am reminded of a remark writ me by a reader of the *Me-  
 ditations and Dialogues*, on the author’s scheme, in these words :  
 “ His scheme speaks little of bearing the hatred of the world  
 “ after Christ, and as little of the Christian hope, seeming to be  
 “ adapted to men enjoying worldly ease and wealth.”—I could  
 wish that all occasion for any such remarks had been effectually  
 cut off.



us now hear the encomium given both to the author and his performance, in a note at the foot of *p. 52. Meditations, vol. i.* “An author, in whom the gentleman, the scholar, and the Christian, are most happily united. — A performance, which, in point of solid argument, unaffected piety, and a vein of thought amazingly fertile, has, perhaps, no superior.—Nor can I wish my reader a more refined pleasure, or a more substantial happiness, than that of having the sentiments of this entertaining and pathetic writer, wove into the very texture of his heart.”

What shall we say of the charity breathing here? Does it proceed from the same mouth which praises the divine grace? *Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?* Must not the reader be tempted to think, indeed, that he who maintains the ancient doctrine of grace in this connection, does not lay very great stress upon it? Yea, what would Messieurs BOSTON and ERSKINES have said to the proposal of uniting together in the same heart, their avowed sentiments of grace, with those of the two gentlemen we have been now considering? Would not the former have charged the latter with gross heresy, and judged them worthy of extirpation? — Surely we must allow, that no two Pagan gods differed more than the different characters drawn for the Deity by these Christian teachers. Is the popular doctrine, then, which has so long claimed the title of orthodoxy, now disposed to hold forth the right hand of fellowship to her  
eminent



eminent adversary, with whom she has so long waged war ?

I shall now take notice of the respect paid to the author of the *Family-Expositor. Meditations*, vol. i. p. 148. in a note at the foot of the page, he is called “ a *masterly* Expositor, who has “ illustrated the Life of our blessed L O R D, in “ the most elegant taste of criticism; with the “ most amiable spirit of devotion, and without “ any mixture of the malignant leaven, or low “ singularities of a party.”

In the second volume of the *Dialogues*, at the foot of p. 378 & 379. we have two notes on these words of PAUL; *The Gentiles which followed not after righteousness; have attained to righteousness\**, even the righteousness which is of *faith* †.

\* “ Surely this must signify more, than attaining to the *profession* of a religion whereby they may be justified and saved.” To this multitudes ‘ attain, who continue, as the prophet speaks, *stout-hearted and far from righteousness*; who derive no real benefit from their profession, but are rendered utterly inexcusable, and liable to more aggravated condemnation.’

† ‘ Surely, *the righteousness which is by faith*, cannot consist “ in humbly committing the soul to CHRIST, in the way that he hath appointed.” According to this notion, the justifying righteousness would spring from ourselves, would be constituted by an act of our  
‘ own



‘ own, and not by the perfect obedience of our  
‘ Lord.

‘ I am sorry to see this, and the preceding in-  
‘ terpretation, in the works of an *Expositor*, whose  
‘ learning I admire, whose piety I reverence, and  
‘ whose memory I honour. Yet I must say on  
‘ this occasion, with one of the ancient philoso-  
‘ phers, *Amicus Plato, amicus Socrates, sed magis*  
‘ *amica veritas.*’

It gives me some satisfaction to see the *faith*  
and *righteousness* of this author justly discarded  
and set at nought. But this would only serve  
to puzzle me the more, to find the reason why  
charitable esteem is expressed for him, were I  
not informed by these words, “ whose piety I  
“ reverence.” But what piety? Surely not  
Christian piety: For even the popular doctrine  
will assert, that unfeigned faith is the only prin-  
ciple of all true holiness or piety. It must then  
be modern piety, or the modern imitation of  
ancient Pagan piety. For it may well be allowed,  
that this author worshipped *his own* God decently,  
without shewing any unfociable or malignant  
temper toward *that* of his neighbours. But it  
can never be allowed, while we pay any regard  
to the New Testament, that he worshipped  
the same God with PAUL. — This piety is the  
broad foundation of modern charity: But I am  
apprehensive, that the ancient charity, with its  
peculiar practices, would appear, in the eyes of  
the modern, liable to be charged with “ ma-  
“ lignant leaven, or the low singularities of a  
“ party.”

Piety,



Piety, in the large sense, is now the reputable word in every one's mouth, except those who are at the very top of the fashion, who profess Atheism, or to worship no other God but their own honour or favourite pleasure. Accordingly our guardians of devotion, while they set themselves in opposition to the irreligion or Atheism of the age, endeavour to awaken our attention to, and raise our esteem of the piety of the ancient philosophers, whom, by the by, Dr WARBURTON has shewn to have been no better than Atheists. And while they set before us the pious sayings of these wise men, in order to heighten our devotion, they produce so many passages from the Psalms of DAVID, or other parts of scripture, as more sublime sayings of the same kind with the former. And withal they condescend to add the name of Jesus Christ in such a manner, as plainly shews, that they have no other use for it, but to throw a dash of popularity into their devotion, or to pay some decent respect to the religion of their country; yea, in such a manner, as plainly shews, that if they lived in Asia, or the east of Europe, they would make the same use of the name of MAHOMET. We shall even find Christian teachers admiring the piety of the Emperor MARCUS ANTONINUS, who persecuted Christians unto death for their piety: And as if this had been too small an expression of his resentment, his philosophic piety led him to insult that joyful constancy appearing in their sufferings, which he himself was greatly straitened how to account for.

But



But whatever these men do, one would have expected, that in volumes, wherein the grand article of the imputed righteousness was to make the principal figure, the author would have made no hesitation, whether he should heartily agree with PAUL's account of the ancient philosophers, or be either intimidated or caressed by their modern successors and admirers, to strike into some doubtful middle path.

In *Dialogues*, vol. ii. the note at the foot of p. 97. begins thus: "Though I love and admire the character of SOCRATES, yet I cannot approve the whole of his conduct. One thing which gives me particular offence, is, the *habitual* practice of *swearing*, which occurs in all his conferences with his pupils."

*Ibid.* p. 201. ASPASIO had said, "Even their philosophers, the most improved and penetrating geniuses, were unacquainted with the very *first* principle of true religion. Even they could not pronounce, with an unfaltering tongue, That GOD is ONE." The note below has these words: A learned and ingenious friend would fain have SOCRATES exempted from this charge. I wish I could gratify his benevolent temper, and spare that amiable philosopher. But, however justly he may express himself on some occasions, at other times he wavers: He evidently revolts, and is most pitiably inconsistent with himself.—Even in his excellent conference with ARISTODEMUS, where he argues admirably well for the *existence*, he cannot steadily adhere to the *unity* of the GODHEAD. —  
"Nay,



“ Nay, in his last solemn Apology before his  
 “ judges, he publicly *renounces* the truth ; declares,  
 “ that he worshipped those gods which were ac-  
 “ knowledged by his countrymen ; worshipped  
 “ them, and no other, on the same festivals, at  
 “ the same altars, and in the same [*idolatrous*]  
 “ manner.

“ Let none conclude from this, or any other  
 “ passage, that we would consign over all the  
 “ Heathens to damnation. This is as far from  
 “ our intention, as it is foreign to the argument.  
 “ We are only like witnesses, summoned to give  
 “ in our evidence. From which it appears, that  
 “ the very best among the Gentiles were ignorant  
 “ of the true GOD ; or, if *they knew him* in any  
 “ degree, *they glorified him not as God ; but be-*  
 “ *came vain in their imagination,* and vile in  
 “ their worship. — *Whether* they shall obtain  
 “ mercy, or *which* of them shall be objects of  
 “ divine clemency, is left *solely* to the determi-  
 “ nation of their supreme, unerring, righteous  
 “ JUDGE :

— “ *Non nostrum est tantas componere lites.*”

Though nothing is more common, yet nothing is more foreign to the gospel, than for men to expect, from each other's complaisance or benevolence, the mutual returns of charity, or to be acknowledged as objects of the divine favour. A cheerful good-natured man will be liberal of his pleasantries and good-humour to all around him ; but if he love the gospel, he will not dare to  
 pronounce



pronounce his most acceptable comrade more agreeable to God, than he sees his heart and life agreeable to the gospel. The gospel will lead a man to be kind and obliging to his neighbour, as to all things within his power; but for one to pretend to dispose of either the smiles or frowns of the Almighty, is impious: And to do the former, is of more pernicious consequence to men than the latter; for men are often hurt, yea and utterly ruined, by flattery, or false charity. But, on the other hand, he who enjoys the favour of the true God, has that joy which no man can take from him by any anathema whatsoever. When one expostulates with me thus, “ I have charity for you, and hope you have the same for me ;” I can understand him to mean nothing else at bottom but this, “ The favour of my God is at your service, and I expect you will be no less obliging in return :” or, “ I am disposed to frame and accommodate my God to your pleasure and comfort, and would think it very unkind in you not to do the like for me.” Thus men often gain reputation for charity by the most Atheistical trifling in sacred things: And thus he who has the loosest notions concerning the Deity, comes to be reckoned the man of the most extensive charity; though he should be no way remarkable for self-denied beneficence in his actions.

But let us consider the above-cited note, where it is said, “ Let none conclude from this or any other passage, that we would consign over all the Heathens to damnation.” But why this



caution? Surely no Christian will ever dream of consigning over all the Heathens to damnation. The scriptures abound every where with promises of salvation to the Heathens, and with testimonies that they obtained it. But how? I hope no Christian will say they obtained it any other way than by *faith*, or the knowledge of the Messiah. Before the Messiah came, we read of Heathens, who believing the promise, came to take refuge under the wings of the God of Israel; and after he came, we find that the salvation of God was sent unto the Heathens, and that they heard it, and were thereby “turned from idols to serve the “living God.” But perhaps I am here multiplying proofs aside from the purpose. If so, the question still recurs, For what serves the caution? Do we think it wrong to affirm, that there is no salvation but by the knowledge of Christ; and that there is no name but his given under heaven for salvation to men? Then we think it right to affirm, that there is at least a possibility of salvation otherwise; and that the divine mercy *may* be conveyed to men by some other channel, though we cannot certainly say it *shall* be so, or who shall be objects of it. If this be our opinion, then it is plain, that however much we may talk about the gospel, we are far from laying much stress upon it. Then it is plain, that we consider all the grand things revealed in the scriptures to be “Much ado about “nothing.”

But what intimidates us? what shakes our confidence about many the clearest passages of the gospel on this head? Are we afraid of being deficient



ficient in our due respects to the philosophers, ancient or modern? Do we consider this sort of men as “the very best among the Gentiles?” Do we “love and admire the character of SOCRATES,” or any of his followers, down to his eminent modern disciple in our own country; who, by the use he made of his test of truth, if I may not say taught the nation, has at least made it very fashionable for people to laugh at the religion of their country, and withal to observe what is reckoned outward decorum, by a decent compliance with the public forms and rites of that religion? Can we ever expect to learn what is TRUE, what is COMELY, or what is HONEST, from the random unmeaning flourishes of those men who are, and ever have been, notable enemies to truth and sincerity, especially in the most sacred matters? and if we examine their sentiments as to humanity, we shall find that it is perfectly agreeable to their *good taste*, their *sense of order and decorum*, their *sound judgment*, their *enlarged sentiments*, and their notions of *public utility*, to persecute, under the name of *enthusiasts* or *fanatics*, the very same people, whom zealous churchmen would persecute, under the name of *heretics*; even all who fear God more than them *who kill the body*. We shall find them ready to agree with the most bloody-minded ecclesiastics, in considering reverence for the true God, as looking with an evil aspect both on the church and state. The truth is, nothing is more comely in the eyes of the former, than dissem-



bled Atheism, and in the eyes of the latter, than piety supporting pride.

But, of all men, I wonder how the followers of the fishers of Galilee should come to admire the philosophers, *the very best*; — rather the very worst among the Gentiles; so as to wish the earth might be removed for them; yea, what is infinitely more stable than the earth, that the divine character might be varied in their favour. We may easily think of other classes of men, to whom “it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment than for” them. — Nothing can serve more readily to beget mistakes in our minds about the gospel, than our being unhappily led in to admire, either the ingenious Atheism of the philosophers, or the ostentatious devotion of the popular preachers. For in what else do either of these stand distinguished above other men, so as to claim our particular attention or admiration?

I find, that the *gentle spirit* which breathes in the *Dialogues*, can be roused to a sufficient height of resentment, when it meets with suitable provocation. This is manifest from the angry note against *common beggars*, vol. iii. p. 346. Yet this is far from being the only class of men where gross imposition prevails; neither is their imposition of the most considerable or extensive hurt to mankind. After all that is said against them, and those who are prevailed on by their importunate clamours, I can find no reason to blame myself, or others, for parting with a trifle to a common beggar, even though the note endeavours



deavours to put us in fear of a rebuke at the day of judgment for so doing.

I leave the restraint of common begging to those in authority, who have power to provide for the needy otherwise, as well as to correct the unruly; and suppose that every man's first care of himself will keep him from being greatly hurt by common beggars. So I see no reason to grudge them what Providence, civil authority, and the indulgence of their fellow-creatures, allows them. The note which recommends the *real poor* to our compassion, in opposition to common beggars, whom it excludes, does not sufficiently shew, that many of the former class may not be found among the latter. I find, that in Judea, when Jesus Christ lived there, the streets, the lanes, and the highways, were frequented by supplicants, who were undoubtedly so *sturdy*, as to be "able to undergo the fatigue of travelling;" and were also "able to undergo the inclemencies of the weather:" yet I do not find that He, who on all occasions shewed his zeal against *sin* without reserve, ever pointed his displeasure against this class of men, or yet forbid any to relieve them: yea, some passages in the gospel look much the other way.

As people of this class seldom appear in print, and have no friends of condition who choose to own them, so can form no party, we may indeed with all freedom shew our indignation against them, without dreading any repulse from them or their friends; yet methinks, when we are writing of set purpose in defence of the gos-



pel, the strength of our zeal would be much more profitably employed in opposition to its most eminent and deceitful enemies, who daily impose upon thousands to their utter destruction.

For instance, Might not something like the spirit and stile of the note now referred to, be properly used to guard us against many such, who cry aloud for our reverent esteem, and make heavy complaints for the want of it? As, “Let us  
 “ be deaf to their most importunate clamours;  
 “ and assure ourselves, that, by this determined  
 “ inflexibility, we do God, we do our *communi-*  
 “ *ty*, we do *them*, the most substantial service. —  
 “ Should they implore by the *injured* name of  
 “ JESUS, for the honour of the *Lord Jesus*, let  
 “ us resolutely withhold our reverence.” Their meaning is, “I cannot go on in my present —  
 “ iniquitous course,” with sufficient credit and influence, “unless you will administer some kindly  
 “ pernicious assistance: for CHRIST’s sake, there-  
 “ fore, assist me,” by your hearty concurrence,  
 “ to persist in the way that leads to eternal de-  
 “ struction. — This is the *true import* of their pe-  
 “ titions. And whether the sanction of that most  
 “ venerable name, added to *such* a request,  
 “ should move our reverence, or excite our ab-  
 “ horrence, let every lover of the gospel and of  
 “ mankind judge.”

Here I cannot forbear remarking, that the zeal of ancient charity must be very rare, when he who, among writers, justly deserves to be accounted the chief, if not the only contender for  
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the doctrine of divine grace and imputed righteousness in the church of England, shews so much lothness to break friendship with, and expose himself to the hatred of its open and determined enemies : and when the like Chief in the church of Scotland, I mean the author of a late *Essay on Justification* \*, expressly declares himself,

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\* The second Edition, Edinburgh, 1756, is called, *Essay on the connection between the doctrine of Justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ, and holiness of Life.*

When I took notice of the author of this *Essay* as above, and in my fifth Letter, I had some reason to hope, from the uncommon regard he shewed to the scriptures, that he would proceed to bestow his attention on their great and leading scope ; and leave to others the discussion of such curious questions as these : Whether it be agreeable to *divine right*, or the maxims of the kingdom of heaven, that the patrons, or that the populace of a parish, should have most influence in presenting a candidate for the vacant benefice allotted by earthly kingdoms for the preacher of the national religion ? Whether the pulpit or the stage, in the present improved state of both, are fittest means for promoting sanctification in the hearts of men ? and, Which is the best method of consolidating iron and clay into one uniform substance ? Or of making a nation wealthy and powerful under the true profession of Christianity ?

For my part, if the Theatre, as it pretends, serves to refine the taste and manners of those who claim the rank of gentlemen ; if the national Religion, as in duty bound, retains the body of the people in due respect to the magistrate, and subjection to the laws. I know no higher benefit we can reasonably expect from either. I do not expect from any Theatre regulated according to the taste of those who rule the fashion : nor from any Religion established as most agreeable to the inclinations of the people, as it must be, if worthy of an establishment, and fit to render the expected service to the civil government ; from either of these, I say, I do not expect to find an effectual remedy against the corruption of human nature, nor do I think that either of these tend to fit men for the kingdom of heaven.

Dean SWIFT, in one of his serious moods, (in a Sermon called *Mutual subjection*) once discovered, that were we only all righteous, were it our only emulation who should serve each other to the best



self, agreeably to the modern trimming humour, disposed rather to “reconcile than widen” the  
several

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advantage, we should become a very happy nation. But he who could effectually teach the nation to become holy and righteous, would certainly make a much more important discovery. For, after all the fine things that have been said, the complaint of the corruption of human nature is still as strong as ever.

I have lately seen *A serious Inquiry into the nature and effects of the Stage*, writ by the author of the above-mentioned *Essay*. In this Inquiry, the author shews no small zeal against the stage, as the rival of the pulpit. And his reasoning would lead us to form our notion of the ancient distinction betwixt *Christ's people* and the *world*, in an especial manner, by opposing those who are fond of Sermons, to those who delight in the Stage; or the *devout*, to the *gay* and fashionable world: Whereas that distinction, when first made, was most clearly manifested and understood in the opposition betwixt Christ's disciples and the strictest leaders in devotion. It does not look well in our author, that he should be so amicably disposed to reconcile, or make little account of the differences wherein the honour of Christ is evidently at stake; and at the same time so resolute in employing all his abilities to widen to the utmost those differences wherein the honour of the Clergy is chiefly concerned. Yea, so zealous is he in this latter cause, that he seems to think he has gained a considerable point, if, by collecting a great variety of different considerations into one complex idea, he has been able to raise a doubt in the minds of men concerning the lawfulness of the Stage.

I could wish this author would think seriously on the state of the question he has given us with regard to the Stage. In his 10th and 11th pages, he first supposes the best-regulated Stage that can be expected, and then enumerates the things, either bad in themselves, or of bad tendency, which must necessarily be implied in supporting it in this its best supposable condition. After this, in p. 12. he states the question. Now, put the case, that I have, in like manner, supposed the best established church that can be expected, and described the various things necessarily implied in the erecting and supporting of it; then let us hear his state of the question, without any other variation of his words, than *the national Church* instead of *the stage*. “The fair and plain state of this  
“ question then is, Whether it is possible or practicable, in the  
“ present state of human nature, to have the above system of  
“ things under so good a regulation, as to make the erecting. and  
“ coun-



several differences about faith; and even as to what he himself judges worthy of being contended for, seems afraid of being “infnared, and “exposed to censure.” Of whom? Surely of none other but those whom he himself looks upon as the enemies of the gospel. — How often do we see the ancient proverb verified, especially in the  
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“countenancing *the national Church*, agreeable to the will of God, “and consistent with the purity of the Christian profession?” Could our author attend to this fair and plain state of the question, it might furnish him with a key to his knowledge of the scripture, and lead him to apply many passages of it more pertinently than he has done.

But by what follows it would appear, that his mind is very strongly tinged with the pride of his Order. Whereas the partisans of the pulpit, and those of the stage, with equal discretion on both sides, have lately exchanged many “little pieces of satire;” our author charges the latter with no less than the hainous crime of “blasphemously comparing the pulpit with the stage.” This is like the language of the tenth century. Can our author seriously think, that a frame of wood called a *Pulpit*, when filled with a living creature called *the Reverend*, acquires a dignity equal to the throne of the Highest; so as all freedom of speech used against the former, should, like that used against the latter, deserve the charge of *blasphemy*? It may justly be reckoned a very doubtful question, whether the pulpit or the stage, in the present improved state of both, conveys most spiritual benefit to the souls of men; but which of them does most hurt, may, I think, be very easily decided, if any regard be had to the authority of the New Testament.

The Apostles, mean spirited mortals, it would seem, never supposed, that their persons, their Sermons or Epistles, would be respected by the public on a footing with dramatic performances, or the writers of them; so they never ran the risk of being foiled in the competition.

It may give those who observe the fulfilment of the apostolic prophecies some satisfaction, to perceive the high-minded gentlemen of the Pulpit reduced so low, as to enter the lists with those of the Stage; and at the same time apparently sensible, that the competition is by no means contemptible.



the matters of religion, *The fear of man bringeth a snare?* The force of its counterpart is not so readily attended to,—*But whoſo putteſt his truſt in the Lord, ſhall be ſafe.*

I ſhall now cloſe what I have to ſay on charity, with obſerving, that as apoſtolic charity ſeeks the good of men without courting their favour by flattery; modern charity, however benevolent it may ſeem, bears the ſame aſpect toward the real intereſt of mankind, as the inſinuating address of that ſpirit, who firſt taught, and ſtill continues to teach mankind, to diſregard the words of their Creator with hopes of impunity; or to preſume, that every act of diſobedience, for which they have plauſible reaſons, is not neceſſarily connected with miſery. — On the whole, What avails it what ſet of principles we chooſe to ſtamp as properly our own, while we join in the friendly alliance of charity with determined promoters of impiety and inhumanity? Is it not evident from the ſcripture, that the judgment of God is pointed, not only againſt them who do theſe things, but alſo againſt thoſe who *take pleaſure* in ſuch as do them?

If the leading ſentiment in theſe ſheets ſhall prove acceptable to any party, having, or deſiring to have the public leading in religion, there will thence ariſe the ſtrongeſt ground to ſuſpect, that either I have greatly miſtaken the apoſtles, or that my readers have greatly miſtaken me.

I have in theſe Letters ſtudied to write agreeably to the cry of JOHN the Baptiſt, *Every valley ſhall*



*shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low*; — to shew, that philosophers, savages, revered doctors, knights of the post, &c. stand all an equal chance for the kingdom of heaven; — so to set at nought all the boasted distinctions among men, on account of which the great salvation is neglected. And I have the satisfaction to find, that when ASPASIO has the divine grace full in his eye, without being diverted by any other object, he is ready to second and support me in all the greatest freedoms of speech I have used: while he ascribes all opposition to that grace, to “the envy of the devil, and the pride of man.” And I have no other intention in these Letters, but to support and enforce the many excellent things he has said in commendation of that grace, and to separate the chaff from the wheat.

I have used some freedom with the names of several eminent preachers. But I have no occasion to apologise for this to the friends of PAUL’S gospel; for such will readily perceive, that there was no attacking the popular doctrine \* to any purpose,

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\* Perhaps it will be thought needful, that I should define with greater precision than I have hitherto done, what I mean by the *popular doctrine*; especially as I have considered many as preachers thereof who differ remarkably from each other; and particularly as I have ranked amongst them Mr WESLEY, who may justly be reckoned one of the most virulent reproachers of that God whose character is drawn by the apostles, that this island has produced. To remove all doubt concerning my meaning, I shall thus explain myself.

Throughout these Letters, I consider all those as teachers of the popular



purpose, without making an honest essay towards profaning the divinity of those demi-gods, whose authority supports it, and whose credit must stand or fall together with it. Mean while, the votaries of that doctrine may, if they please, rest quietly assured, that the voice of truth will be heard only by a very few in the midst of the more alluring cries of worldly factions, and that PAUL's gospel will never pretend to set up for a rival to theirs in this world.

I have, as I found occasion, freely adopted the observations, and even the words of the friends of the doctrine contained in these sheets, without  
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popular doctrine, who seek to have credit and influence among the people, by resting our acceptance with God, not simply on *what Christ hath done*, but more or less on *the use we make of him*. the advance we make toward him, or some secret desire, wish, or sigh to do so; or on something we feel or do concerning him, by the assistance of some kind of grace or spirit; or, lastly, on something we employ him to do, and suppose he is yet to do for us. In sum, all who would have us to be conscious of something else than the bare truth of the gospel; all who would have us to be conscious of some beginning of a change to the better, or some desire, however faint, toward such change, in order to our acceptance with God; these I call the popular preachers, however much they may differ from each other about *faith* and *grace*, *special* or *common*, or about any thing else. For I am disposed rather to reconcile than widen the various differences among them.

But my resentment is all along chiefly pointed against the capital branch of the popular doctrine, which, while it asserts almost all the articles belonging to the sacred truth, at the same time deceitfully clogs them with the opposite falsehoods. This I would compare to a chain, having one link of gold, and another of brass, alternately; or, I would call it a twofold cord, wherein one thread of truth, and another of falsehood, are all along entwisted together. — If we think of its practical address to, and influence on the minds of the people, as contrasted with its formally avowed tenets, it resembles a *whited sepulchre*, inwardly full of rottenness.



seeing any necessity for quoting them, or mentioning their names ; for I frankly acknowledge, that I have no friends whose names are of sufficient weight to enforce any thing I have said, or to screen me from censure, if I have departed from the mind of the Apostles, who alone are the proper judges in every question about the Christian faith. If I have not been faithful to the *one thing needful*, I can complain of no censure as too severe ; if I have, I see no reason to be greatly alarmed on any other account.

As I am sensible my own name can add no weight to these Letters, so I judge it ought not to diminish any weight they borrow from the scriptures. And as I espouse that *faith*, which ASPASIO pronounces to be “ certainly of the *enfeebled* and *infantile* kind,” when he condescends to “ suppose” it “ to be sound and genuine,” *vol. III. p. 290* ; I shall at present, knowing no reason for being either anxious to conceal, or yet forward to publish my own, content myself with assuming the name, under which that faith is introduced, as not knowing any particular person intended by it. And as I have not the pleasure of being personally acquainted with you, nor had any opportunity of seeing or knowing you, but by your writings ; I have chosen the same public channel of the press, by which you have communicated your sentiments to me, among the rest of your readers, for returning mine to you and them.

On the whole, the result of all that has been said amounts to this, That every man’s great concern



cern turns upon what issue his mind comes to about the question, which PILATE once moved, without waiting for an answer, *What is truth?* He who knows what is the truth, has no occasion to give himself any disturbance with any of the controversies that have been moved about, *What is faith?* Yea, he may, with the greatest confidence and safety, dismiss all the modern descriptions of it, whether fashionable or popular, and send them back to the regions of darkness from whence they came.

To conclude, were it needful, I would willingly produce here many passages from the *Dialogues*, containing sentiments, which never owed their birth to the popular doctrine, and as to which, it is enough to awaken the highest regret and resentment, to think that they should ever be confounded with it \*. But I shall content myself with transcribing, out of many, one  
passage

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\* That the saving truth is effectually undermined by this confusion, may readily be seen in the following easy view. He who maintains that we are justified only by faith, and at the same time affirms, with ASPASIO, "that faith is a work exerted by the human mind," undoubtedly maintains, if he has any meaning to his words, that we are justified by a work exerted by the human mind.

I have all along studied to make use of every form of expression I could think of, for evincing, in the most clear, palpable, and striking manner, a difference of the last importance, which thousands of preachers have laboured to cover with mist. If I have made that difference manifest to those who have any attention for the subject, my great end in writing is gained, on whatever side of it men shall choose to rank themselves. It has frequently appeared to me a thing no less amazing than provoking, when the great  
difference



passage on the Article of Justification, from *vol.*  
i. p. 276.

“ Both grace and faith stand in direct oppositi-  
“ on to works ; *all* works whatever. Whether  
“ they be works of the law, or works of the  
“ gospel ; exercises of the heart, or actions of  
“ the life ; done while we remain unregenerate,  
“ or when we become regenerate ; they are all,  
“ and every of them, *equally* set aside in this  
“ great affair.

“ That the bill of exclusion is thus *extensive*,  
“ or rather quite *unlimited*, appears from the rea-  
“ son assigned ; *lest any man should boast*. That  
“ all pretence of glorying may be cut off from  
“ fallen creatures. That the whole honour of  
“ obtaining

difference betwixt the ancient gospel here contended for, and the popular doctrine, has been pointed out, as clear as words could make it, to find many, after all, so obstinately stupid, as to declare they saw no real difference. This I cannot account for, by assigning any other cause than the special agency of the prince of darkness. All such will be ready to complain that I have treated the popular preachers with too great severity. And to such I can only say, that I cannot pretend to explain myself more clearly than I have already done : only they will be pleased to remember, that where there is a real difference from the apostles on the point of acceptance with God, however small and insignificant it may seem, when obscured with a multitude of words, either without meaning, or fitted only to deceive, it will be found, in its effects and consequences, wide as the difference betwixt *Christ* and *Belial*, light and darkness, heaven and hell.

To lead Christians to distinguish, with the utmost jealousy and care, upon this point, is the great scope and constant aim of the apostles in all their writings ; yea, this is the principal branch of instruction inculcated throughout all the scriptures. And in nothing more evidently does it appear, how cheap the gospel is held by many of its professed friends, than in their want of this jealousy, and their readiness to count differences about faith of small importance.



“obtaining salvation, may be appropriated to  
 “Him, who *bid not his face from shame and*  
 “*spitting.*—And is He not worthy, unspeakably  
 “worthy, to receive this *unrivalled* honour, as  
 “a recompense for his *unparalleled* humilia-  
 “tion?”

May the truth set forth here be the strength of your heart in the hour of death. And, meantime, may fellowship with this truth, in all the afflictions and joys which attend it, be your hearty choice. Many indeed will be your enemies, and few your friends on earth: but all in heaven will be on your side. After what is now said, it would be a very small thing to add, that to hear of this being your determined choice, will greatly heighten the affectionate esteem of,

DEAR SIR,

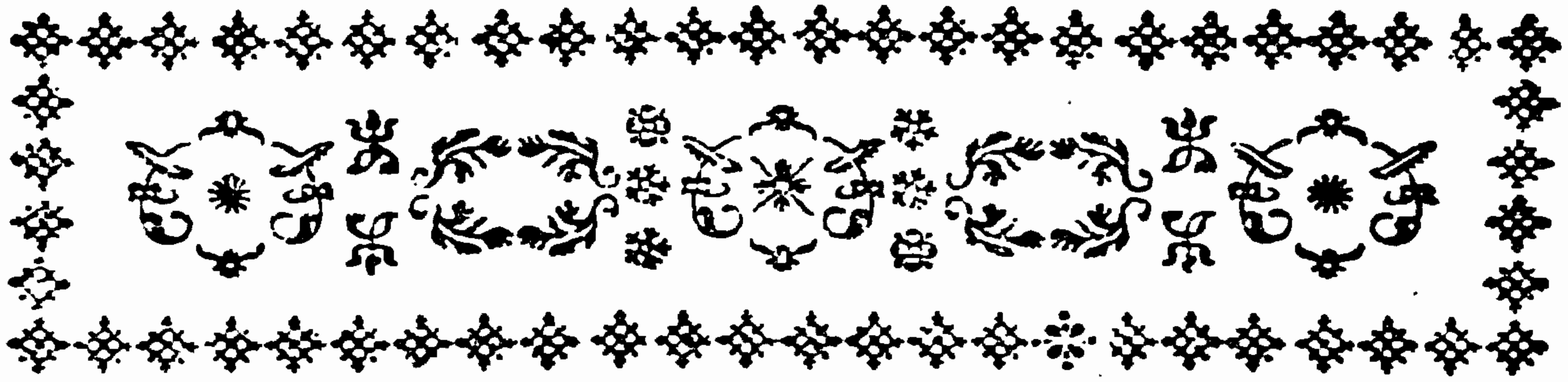
*Your friend and servant,*

*May, 1757.*

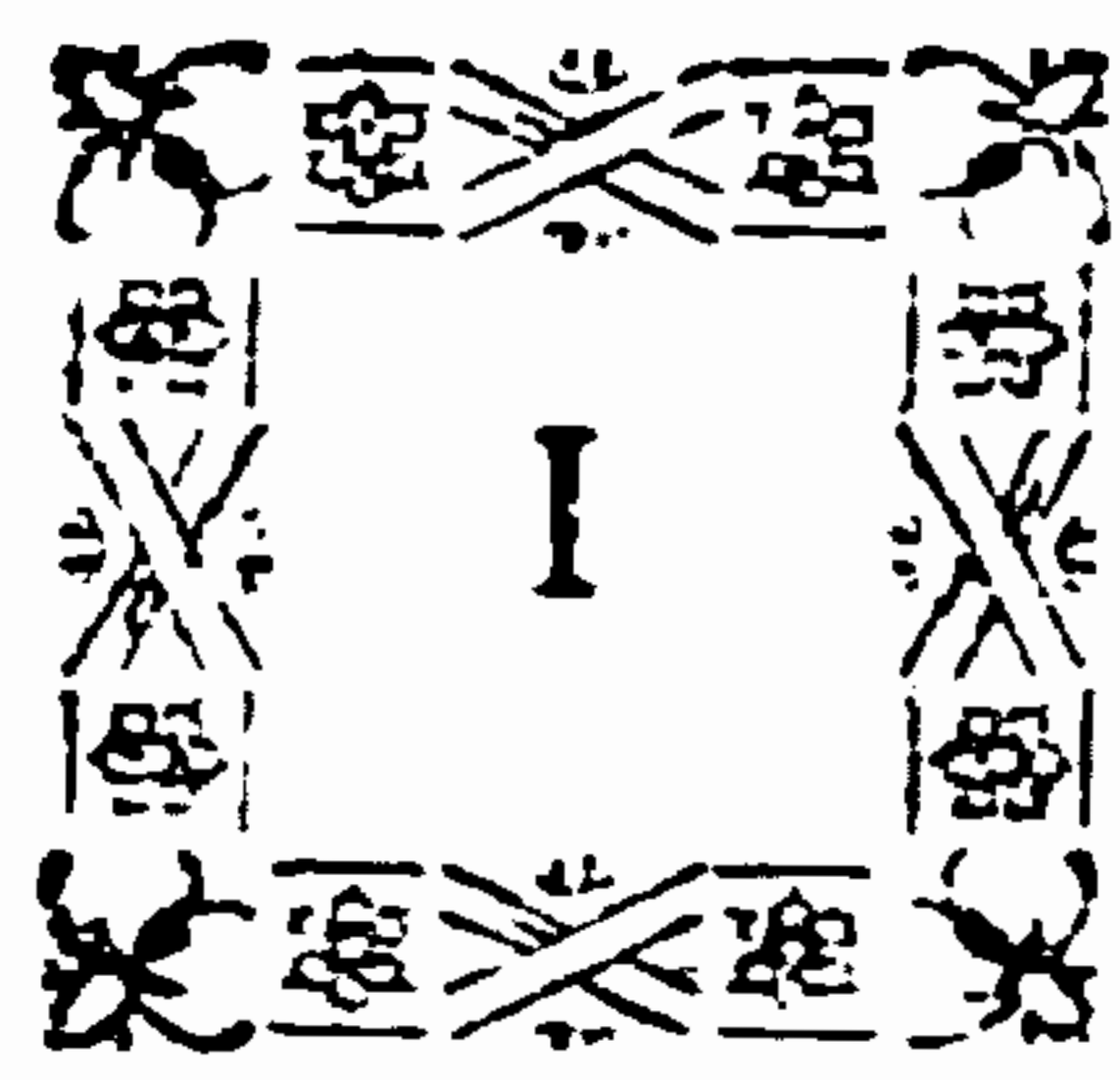
PALÆMON.

A P P E N D I X





## A P P E N D I X.



It is agreed, by the great majority in all Christian countries, that there is no salvation but by Jesus Christ. Thus far general consent agrees with the apostolic doctrine. But then a capital difference between these two arises in the following manner.

The apostles maintained, that Christ did enough to save sinners in his own person, without their concurrence, and that all who were so persuaded accordingly found salvation in him. As the natural counterpart of this, they at the same time maintained, that if any man went about to deny or undermine the all-sufficiency of Christ's work to save, by insisting on the necessity of any other concurring requisite whatever, Christ should profit him nothing.

On the other hand, since Christianity began to flourish and prevail in the world, the majority of those wearing the Christian name, have been agreed in maintaining the necessity of something beside Christ's work to save them, or procure them acceptance with God. Yea, long before that time, even in the apostolic age, the Judaiz-



ing Christians, who were far from being few in number, proceeded upon the same plan. This we are taught by the apostles to call a corrupted, or *perverted* gospel. And here chiefly we may perceive the consent of the Christian world all along opposed to the apostolic doctrine.

But while we behold the Christian world consenting, against the apostles, about the necessity of some addition, we see them at the same time very far from being agreed among themselves about what ought to be added, and how much, the nature of the assistance needful to promote the addition, and the properest means of soliciting the concurring assistance, with various other considerations depending on these. So, when Israel once departed from the worship of the one God who led them out of Egypt, they could never settle upon the worship of any other, but lay open to all the innovations of the neighbouring nations. Thus, when a wife once departs from her husband to admit another, she may easily be prevailed upon to admit a second, third, and fourth, till at last she becomes a downright prostitute.

In the apostolic age, the favourite addition was, to become a Jewish proselyte by circumcision. And it is evident, that much more could be said in favour of that, than could be urged in behalf of any other that has been adopted since. In the Roman church, the additional grounds of acceptance with God have been multiplied in a very extravagant manner. Protestants have in many respects discarded the extravagance of that church,



church, yet they still generally agree in establishing their own righteousness as the ground of their acceptance with God, according to various schemes of their own, some in a more open, others in a more secret and ambiguous manner, frustrating the all-sufficiency of the righteousness finished by Jesus Christ. Now it is evident, that the scheme of doctrine which most resembles the apostolic in honouring Christ's work, yet finds means of rendering it of no effect, must in a more special manner awaken the jealousy, and move the resentment of such as maintain the all sufficiency of that work, exclusive of every reserve. And such is the scheme contained in the *Dialogues* between THERON and ASPASIO.

The reader will perceive by my First Letter, with what reluctance and respect I commenced an opponent to the author of these *Dialogues*; and that I was willing to consider him rather as imposed upon, than sufficiently aware what he was doing. But not many months after the publication of these Letters, I found by Three Sermons \* he published in August, 1757, that I had presumed too much in favour of my author, and that accordingly the affectionate esteem I had expressed for him, had proceeded upon a fond mistake. In short, I found I had no reason to distinguish him from other preachers of the same doctrine. Those who know the difference between the strain of doctrine in his Three Sermons,

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\* Called, The Time of Danger, The Means of Safety, and The Way of Holiness.



mons, and that in my Letters, will easily understand me here: and to others, I apprehend, it would be but so much lost labour to attempt a large explanation.

Though I found reason to change my thoughts of Mr HERVEY, yet, in forwarding this Second Edition, (which was mostly printed before his death) I thought it best to retain the same form of address all along as in the First, that the reader might still have in his eye a full view of the genuine progress of the controversy. The slowest of my readers will probably perceive, that it is now too late to say any thing to move the attention of Mr HERVEY; and I presume they will likewise readily agree with me, when I say, it is highly probable that he will continue to live as an author, when both I and my book are forgot.— If, amidst the throng of daily publications, my book serve as a little transitory fuel to the *fire* of that contention which the Saviour came to revive upon the earth, and which will continue burning till he come again, my purpose in writing is sufficiently honoured; yea, though it should be forgot before the current year end, I have it to say that my purpose has already been honoured far beyond expectation.

Not a few, I understand, (such is the curiosity of people about the sentiments of famous men) would be fond to know what I have learned of Mr HERVEY's *Reflections* on reading these Letters. But as they have been so much of a piece with the reflections made by many others, I think it equally needless as unseasonable to produce



duce them here. Besides, his correspondents have already made them circulate, in a private way, pretty widely.

Yet, I apprehend, it is not yet unseasonable to take some notice of a foolish complaint against me, that has been handed about with no small keenness among the larger circle of his friends; as if I had wronged him much by choosing to animadvert on the First Edition of his *Dialogues*, and not on the Third; since it appears from my book (p. 430.) that I had seen his Third Edition before my Letters were finished. This Complaint, I call, at first instance, foolish; because those who make it, do not so much as pretend to say, that in his Third Edition he has retracted any one sentiment that I have censured in his First.

However, to give such as may be imposed upon by such a complaint all reasonable satisfaction, I am willing to inform them, that soon after I read his First Edition, in April, 1755, I set about the writing of these Letters. I had not opportunity of seeing any of his subsequent Editions till more than a year after, when my Letters were well advanced. Some time about Midsummer, 1756, my attention was drawn by a News-paper advertising a new Edition of *Marshall on Sanctification*, and producing a recommendation of that book from Mr HERVEY's *Dialogues*, Edition Third. This led me to look for that Third Edition, that I might see the recommendation there with my own eyes. On this occasion, in a bookseller's shop, I glanced over several pages of



that Edition, especially in *Dialogue XVI.* to see if there were any alterations or additions. Some of both these indeed I found, but no change in point of sentiment. Instead of that, I saw fresh care taken to support, with a variety of human suffrages, his main point, which appeared to me unsupported by the scripture, to wit, the appropriation supposed necessary to saving faith. Therefore I thought it needless to tire myself and the reader, by noting the variations between two Editions of the same book, when the strain of doctrine was the same in both.

Not long after the publication of my Letters, I considered his Third Edition with more leisure, and found that a particular notice of it would have served rather to enlarge than diminish my censure. Besides, the sensible reader will readily reflect, that as the writings of such an author have a good chance of soon running out into many Editions, whatever Edition I had chosen to remark upon might, before I had finished my remarks, have been followed by another, and accordingly the pretended cause of complaint still have remained. If then a reason were to be assigned for the complaint suitable to the temper with which it has been urged, I apprehend it must turn upon this, that I should have been so presumptuous as to point my severest censure against the doctrine most acceptable to the strictest sect of the national Religion, whatever book, or whatever edition of any book I had chosen to attack it in. In confirmation of this, it may be observed, that the three forementioned Sermons,  
which



which were published some months after my Letters, have proved no less acceptable to the complainers, than all the Editions of the *Dialogues*. Yet no where more palpably, than in those Sermons, has the author laboured to change the gospel of the divine grace, and the kingdom of heaven, into a *Self-righteous* and *political* scheme.—Self-righteous, while he leads men to make use of Christ as their assistant in fulfilling the law, that thereby they may save their souls alive, and while he comments in such a manner on *Ezek. xviii. 27.* as serves to deface, or rather abolish the difference between living by the works of the law, and living by faith; even that grand difference, which I may say the New Testament was writ to elucidate.—Political, while he leads Britons to consider the true atonement as a like defence to them from the sword of the French, as the blood of the paschal lamb was to Israel from the punishment inflicted on Egypt.

Though Mr HERVEY is now removed from the field of controversy, and how soon his opponent may follow him is uncertain, yet all on whose minds the scripture has more weight than the empty noise of giddy multitudes, will readily perceive, of how small consideration the life or death of any sinful mortal ought to be, in the controversy about *the faith once delivered to the saints*; a controversy that has already outlived many generations, and will continue to be upheld, in what shape Providence pleases, till the time of the final determination of all disputes; and I may add, a controversy wherein every man's



highest interest is at stake, and eventually turns upon what conclusion his mind comes to about it.

Before I proceed to another branch of my subject, I would here make a few general reflections on the conduct of those who any way interest themselves in the controversy about the faith. None appear to me to be more obnoxious to censure from the scripture, than those who go about to diminish, obscure, or dissipate the capital difference between the apostolic faith and all counterfeits of it, even the grand difference between the one thing needful, and every addition, however artfully and ambiguously introduced. As the scripture is clear and positive on the point, that there is but *one faith* that saves men, it always appears so far respectable in any man, as betokening something like the action of conscience, when we see him steady and zealous for his own notion of faith in opposition to every other, so as to admit no other to stand either in competition or alliance with it. All neutrals, trimmers, and reconcilers in this case, stand more especially obnoxious to the censure of all such as find as much in the gospel as determines them in good earnest to take a side. The former, like the pretended mother before SOLOMON'S judgment-seat, not having their hearts and bowels interested, are willing to accommodate matters, by halving, dividing, or destroying the capital difference. Whereas those who find all their salvation in the one thing needful, and see its proper value in that very point of view wherein it excels or differs



fers from every thing that affects either competition or alliance with it, find themselves interested at all hazards to preserve the difference clear, full, and entire.

Yet the corruption of Christianity has, from the beginning, been chiefly introduced by the more prudent and respectable sort of men, who desired to accommodate matters betwixt the obnoxious gospel, and the people of best repute for piety and good sense; by men who *desired to make a fair shew in the flesh*, and to do their utmost that *the offence of the cross* might cease; in a word, by men who had the interest of religion at heart, and who desired nothing more than to see Christianity flourish and prevail. Such were the men who, from the beginning, gave the greatest disquiet to the apostles, and awakened their keenest resentment. They had the address to introduce their deviations from, or additions to the truth, so privily and artfully, as to persuade many, that they taught the *same* gospel with the apostles only in a manner more advantageous, and less offensive to the *better sort* of people. On such occasions we see how much the anxiety and jealousy of PAUL was moved, and how he laboured to convince those who had been deceived with a gospel thus smoothed to the taste of the world, that they had been *bewitched* with what was in reality, and in effect, *another* gospel; however much art was used to make it appear to be, at bottom, the same with what he preached. Even as, in his reasoning against the Jews, we find him nice to the last degree, in his distinctions  
about



about grace, while he maintains, that grace bestowed on those who appear in any respect more deserving than others, is in reality no more grace.

The attempts made to deface the excellency of the sole requisite to justification, bear no small resemblance to the methods that have been employed to eclipse the dignity of the Messiah's person. We have been desired to conceive a vast extensive scale of created beings, arising from the lowest and most imperfect condition, even from the meanest reptile or shell-fish, up to man, and thence, through a very long series of angelic natures, gradually ascending in perfection, till it approach very near to the summit of all perfection, or to the Deity. Thus men have endeavoured to enlarge our ideas of creating power, and extend our views of the dominion of the Deity. At the head of this vast scale of created beings, they place the Mediator, next step, as it were, to the Deity: and thus, it is presumed, they have consulted his honour in a most advantageous manner, and set his eminence in a very high point of view. But after we have stretched our thoughts to the utmost, and exalted our ideas of created excellency as high as imagination, aided by invention, can soar; what a vast, what an infinite gap do we find remaining, unfilled up betwixt the highest creature and the Deity! and how vast the disproportion between the remaining gap and the whole scale of created beings beside! Yea, the disproportion here is infinitely greater, than that between the circumference of the earth, and the circumference of a reed shaken with



with the wind. So we must conclude, when we think of HIM *before whom all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; who doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto Him, What dost thou?* All creatures then, from the highest to the lowest, in point of dependence, stand at an equal distance from the Deity; and all, conscious of their dependence, are equally bound to obedience, and unreserved submission to his will.

Now, if it was necessary, that a substitute should work a righteousness for guilty men, the question arises, Who was equal to the great undertaking? Was the highest angel, or the highest creature imaginable? Far be it! It is impious at first view to suppose it possible for any creature to supererogate, or do more in the way of obedience to the Deity, than he is strictly bound to for himself, by virtue of his natural dependence: therefore none was fit for the task, but a person who naturally had, so could, without robbery, or without any degree of disloyalty, claim independence. Nor could such a person be found without the revealed distinction in the Deity. According to that distinction, we find the majesty, authority, sovereignty, or independence of the Deity, preserved in the person of the Father; while we behold it honoured and illustrated in the most striking view, by the unparalleled condescension and submission of the Son; even of him, who, in his lowest condition, could say, *I and the Father are one*; and as  
to



to all works peculiar to the Deity, from the creation downward, could say, *my Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*

Again, if the law to be honoured by the substitute was a law given to men, or a law respecting the nature and situation of men, then it was necessary that the substitute should be truly and properly a man: for the majesty and wisdom of God, in giving a law to men, could never be evinced to their satisfaction, if that law was never honoured with perfect obedience in any one instance; or, in other words, if it was not perfectly and evidently obeyed by a man. If obedience then was performed by one man, under an appeal to the most explicit declaration of the divine law, in its utmost extent, in the midst of every disadvantageous, discouraging, and intimidating circumstance, and opposed by all other men, yet honoured as faultless with the highest testimonies of approbation on the part of heaven; then the perfection and incomparable excellency of such obedience, must shine forth with the clearest and most unexceptionable splendor. And such, according to the scripture, was the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who often took pleasure to design himself the *Son of Man*, thereby denoting his proper manhood, while shewing himself to be the *Son of God*, by doing the works, and speaking the words proper only to the Most High.

Now, that such a divine righteousness is necessary for the relief of guilty men, may appear from all the trials that have been made by those  
who



who have laboured most seriously and diligently in following after righteousness, or in the business of establishing their own righteousness. — The chief hope of success in those trials has arisen from the observable series of the many degrees of difference or excellency between the most despicable and the most respectable character among men. This series is variously traced by men of different complexions; as, from the basest degree of barbarity to the highest of politeness, from the lowest knavery to the highest honesty, from the most illiterate to the most learned, the savage to the philosopher, &c. But the chief and most extensive series is from the most profane person to the most respectable devotee. The person who, being eminent in every other respect, shines also in devotion, is considered as not very much inferior to the Most High, and is even talked of as a kind of deity upon earth. Such persons, it is acknowledged, rarely appear: but then, where living example fails us, romance, legend, and fine imaginations borrowed from expected revivals of religion, come in to our aid, and help to elevate our ideas of human virtue and piety, a hundred degrees beyond what we ever see in real life. And the reader who can, while he is reading, admire such elevated virtue, fondly supposes himself on the road to the distant point, and ready to make more speedy progress, if he could only find suitable encouragement and concurrence. — Yet if it be seriously inquired, what it is at bottom that on such occasions most captivates the hearts of men with admiration and  
fond



fond hope, it will be found to be something very different from the character of Jesus Christ, which was *disallowed of men*, even when shining with the most heavenly lustre before their eyes.

The forementioned hope of success likewise arises from the many observable degrees of improvement in the character of the same individual. Well adapted to cherish that hope are our most approved accounts of the *rise* and *progress* of Religion in the soul, proceeding from the long chapter of convictions, through the following ones of good endeavours, desires, resolves, &c. And though this matter is sometimes greatly abridged, in order to retain some respect to the facts recorded in the New Testament; yet as the Teacher's skill chiefly appears in marking out a series of various stages between the profane person and the well-formed professor, so likewise the attention of the reader, or hearer, is chiefly captivated with such a series, so that he is apt to suspect matters will not be right with him, if he go not regularly through the several stages.

All excellency among creatures rises in proportion to the observable degrees of inferiority; but no sooner do we turn our eyes to the province of the Deity, than all such excellency vanishes, like that among the stars before the sun. — The case of a guilty person following after righteousness, may be illustrated by the similitude commonly applied to the insatiable thirst after gain. He is like one ascending a very high mountain, which beguiles the eye with the successive view of many intervening summits betwixt him



him and the highest. Every next summit promises him the satisfaction of his desired rest, till having attained it, he finds the prospect as distant as before. But no where does the similitude halt more than in the present case. Here the weary traveller having reached his utmost accessible point, on having his view extended, finds, after all, the distance betwixt him and a sure resting place to be immense, and that his remaining task is equal to that of scaling the heavens.

Though nothing short of effectual and sad disappointment on the trial will convince any man of the folly of his self-justifying labour; yet, on an appeal to the consciences of all those who have applied themselves most seriously to this labour, it will be found that such disappointment is its sure attendant. However hopefully, yea, and however much with apparent success, young beginners may proceed for a while, yet the longer and the more seriously men are employed in religion, the more importunate do they find the damping question, *What lack I yet?* But when the most respectable person for religion comes to be withdrawn from the consideration of what gave him importance before men, or from the self-satisfying contemplation of the many degrees, in point of character, below him, on which his excellency was elevated; and when his mind comes wholly to be occupied with the question, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?* then the scale by which his excellency was formerly measured, shrinking into nothing, the height of the  
divine



divine justice, and the extent of the divine law, open the prospect of an immense distance betwixt him and the perfection his conscience calls for.

He who came to obey for men, had a full view of this height, extent, and distance. The sentiment of his heart is thus described. *Thy righteousness, O God, is very high. — O God, who is like unto thee! — I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad!* Yet, with all this in his eye, he could hold up his face before the Father, and confidently say, *I have glorified thee on earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.* Putting his obedience in balance with the perfection of the divine law, he could say, *Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.* Laying open his inmost thoughts to the judgment of omniscience, he could say, *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* Resting the perfection of his obedience on the most awful appeal, he could say, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not bear me; but verily God hath heard me, he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.*

This perfect obedience is frequently called, both in the Old and New Testament, *the righteousness of God*; because the Father sent the Son to perform it, supported him by the aid of the eternal Spirit in the whole of his work, and at last crowned him with the highest testimonies of his approbation and delight, when he glorified him



him in that body wherein he was humbled, with that same glory wherein he was partner with the Father before any creature was. — Nothing short of the knowledge of this divine righteousness can reconcile men to that gospel which sets at nought all the boasted distinctions among men; and nothing less can shew men the force and propriety of PAUL's words, when he says, *The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

If the dignity of this righteousness had risen according to the scale by which human worth is rated, then he who wrought it would have allowed the characters most esteemed among men to rank next to his own; he would have given the men of such characters readiest access to his presence and favour; he would have consoled chiefly with them, as being the most eminent person among them, or their proper head and leader. But this righteousness being divine, like every thing else that is divine, stands at an equal distance from all that can be called high or low, great or little, among men\*. Therefore that

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\* When the scripture condescends, for our instruction, to use the language of comparison between human and divine excellency, it does it in such a manner, as to shew that the latter scorns all comparison with the former; for instance, *The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* Here is a strange peculiarity of stile, the force of which must be abated rather than heightened by any paraphrase. But one thing is evident at first view, that it is adapted in the most striking manner to put all human excellency to the blush, and cover it with confusion.



this equal distance might appear, it was proper and necessary that every character that made the most forward advance, and claimed the greatest preference among men, should meet with the strongest repulse from the righteous One, even as the gospel-history every where shews the fact really happened. The fact took place according to his repeated declaration, *Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first.* JOHN the Baptist, who came to intimate his approach, said, *Prepare ye the way of the Lord. — Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and bill shall be brought low.* ISAIAH foretold, that his appearance would be attended with the debasing of every thing that is high, and lifted up among men. And SIMON, beholding him when a babe, said, *This child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel.*

The great peculiarity of the gospel, is the high idea it gives men of divine perfection. Every other scheme teaches men, that, by the progress and improvement of nature properly assisted, they may approach *near* to what is divine. Thus men are at bottom led to think of the Deity no otherwise than of the grandest imaginable *creature*, the first in the scale of beings, or the first Being in nature. No sentiment is more fondly embraced among men, than that contained in the following lines:

Nature delights in progress ———

✻            ✻            ✻            ✻            ✻

O be a *man!* and thou shalt be a *God!*

And *half self-made!* Ambition how divine!

The



The scripture speaks in a very different strain to men, when it represents the Deity, saying, *Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, and far from righteousness; I bring near my righteousness,—my salvation shall not tarry.* The gospel, which declares the accomplishment of this prophecy, does not save men by instructing them what to do, and stimulating their emulation, but by declaring what God himself hath wrought; even as the prophet ISAIAH taught men to expect, when he said, *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us; for thou also hast wrought all our works for us.*

Christian teachers generally set the righteousness of the Messiah in the same position toward men, as the Jews did the righteousness of the Law: and the self-justifying labour marked out for the hearers, is made to consist in their serious endeavours to come within reach of that righteousness.—Let us hear the divine address by the prophet ISAIAH to Israel, who followed after righteousness: *Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you; for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.* The instruction here given may be paraphrased thus: “Consider the origin of  
“ your nation, and remember that ye sprung  
“ from ABRAHAM and SARAH, when, accord-  
“ ing to nature, they were equally incapable of  
“ having children as the dead to rise from their  
“ graves.



“ graves. Remember, that ye were produced  
 “ by power equally superior to the power of na-  
 “ ture, as if ye had been formed of stones from  
 “ the rock, or of clay from the pit.”

The faith of ABRAHAM, in the case now referred to, is set forth as the pattern of faith to all that believe; even as the miracle of his becoming a father is a pattern of the power by which men are made righteous. ABRAHAM, along with the promise of the Messiah, got this miracle intimated to him as a present pledge of the future fulfilment of the promise. And though every thing in nature stood against the hope of his being a father, yet *he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.* PAUL, declaring that his faith was imputed to him for righteousness, adds, *Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our Justification.*—All ABRAHAM’S true children, in a manner answerable to the pattern of his faith, perceiving nothing about themselves that can in the least promote their justification, yea nothing but what, on the contrary, serves to condemn them, do yet find all that is needful to justify them in the divine word, testifying of Christ as delivered for the offences of finners, and raised again for their justification.—And all such find strict truth and propriety in the words of PAUL, when he says, *As by one man’s disobedience many*  
*were*



*were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

The gospel is called *the preaching of peace to them that are afar off, and to them that are near.* All who partake of this peace, obtain it by creating power, and not by the ordinary power that upholds, assists, or forwards the course and progress of nature. So runs the divine word by ISAIAH: *I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord, and I will heal him.* The Messiah, by a striking sign, shewed himself able to speak peace to the most troubled conscience, when he relieved his disciples from imminent danger, by rebuking the wind, and saying to the sea, *Peace, be still: and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.*

Where creating power interposes, it is evident, that all consideration of fitness in any creature to concur with it, or forward its operation, must be utterly superseded. The Jews were in many respects near to the Messiah; and the Gentiles, in respect of them, were afar off: yet that the divine salvation might bear the same aspect to all who partook of it, matters were so ordered, that the Jews, through their unbelief and religious spite, were removed to full as great a distance as the remotest of the Gentiles. So PAUL, addressing the latter concerning the former, says, *Even so have these also now not believed, that, through your mercy, they also may obtain mercy; that is, that such of the Jews as were saved might*



be brought nigh, merely, so to speak, on the footing of Gentile-mercy. That this is his meaning, is evident from the next verse: *For God hath concluded all in unbelief, (or disobedience) that he might have mercy upon all.* On this occasion PAUL exclaims in the verse following: *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* — PAUL beheld the majesty of the divine character chiefly there, where the wise and prudent find their chief handle to scoff and sneer, and where the men of first repute for piety chiefly point their solemn contempt and disdain.

Of all the Jews, none could be reckoned nearer to the Messiah than the citizens of Nazareth, where he grew up from a child to the age of thirty. Yet they, by their mortal spite, manifested in a resolute attempt to destroy him, for no other reason than his declaring before them the divine grace in its genuine simplicity, evidently forfeited all claim of nearness to him beyond the remotest Heathen — PAUL was once a zealous Jew, and had a first-rate character among his countrymen; yet, writing to TIMOTHY, in order to shew that the grace which saved him was exceeding abundant, he first gives a list of the most infamous characters among the Heathen, then draws his own, and concludes thus: *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the FOREMOST.* And the inference he draws amounts to this, that, after him, no one needs to despair.

Though



Though the doctrine I have been insisting on shines clear as the light of the sun throughout the whole scripture, though all the principal facts and reasonings recorded there evidently center here; yet if any one shall take the liberty, to affirm it confidently in the face of the public, the most moderate censure he can expect from fashionable Christians is, that of being destitute of the spirit of Christianity; while the more zealous and devout will not hesitate to declare him eminently influenced by Satan. Nor can it be imagined the case will be otherwise, while the words of the Messiah stand true. His warning to his disciples is thus recorded, Matt. x. *Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake.—The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.—If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household?* Jesus Christ, careful to prevent his disciples forgetting these words, reminds them in this manner, John xv. *Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than the lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you: if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.* The truth of the gospel then stands or falls with the foretold opposition to it. However much then the seed of the serpent may frown or sneer, or even in their rage resume the old cry, *He hath a devil, and is mad, why hear ye him?* yet the united spite of the whole generation of vipers ought to have no other effect on them who love the sacred truth, than to confirm their persuasion



of it, and consequently animate them to a more hearty and zealous contention for it.

As the gospel stands opposed to the *wisdom* of the Greek, as well as the devout *zeal* of the Jew, it may be proper now to take some particular notice of the philosophers.

In my fourth Letter, under the head of REASON, I have at some length considered a noted book, called, *Essays on the Principles of Morality and Natural Religion*. Since my Letters were first published, that book has undergone a Second Edition, in 1758, with alterations and additions. Though the alterations are indeed very considerable, I do not here intend to insinuate that they have been caused by my animadversions. No; for if I should, the nature of them would shew the contrary.

But the Second Edition naturally suggests this reflection, That the nearer philosophy approaches to truth, and the philosopher to the grave, the less comfort can the latter draw from the former: Philosophy then loses her captivating bloom of wisdom, and the chief support of the philosopher's confidence fails him.

In the First Edition we beheld the throne of Virtue highly elevated, upon a nice and artificial set of feelings, a peculiar sort of glory thrown around her, and a sort of extraordinary machinery introduced for her sake. But what was most extraordinary of all, and most comfortable for such as were in hazard of leaving the world with a bad conscience, was, that all the operations of conscience,



science, respecting praise or blame, rested upon an illusive foundation, which, when human nature, by mellowing in the grave, attained its full maturity, was wholly to vanish in the light of philosophic truth.

In the Second Edition the main wheel in this machinery, or rather its principal spring and mover, is withdrawn, being found unworthy to exist even on this side the grave; unworthy, even in the condition of an illusion or phantom: so it is banished, even from the airy regions of ideas. The operations of conscience are now settled upon a firm foundation: he who acts contrary to his duty, has now no resource for the ease of his mind, in leaving the world, but the old reply against the Deity, *Why doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will?* — Yet the privilege of supererogating still remains. And though the chief prospect of wisdom in the constitution of man, and of the glory thrown around Virtue, has vanished; yet our author is very loth to abate the former loftiness of his stile on that head: he has found it necessary to retrench it a little; yet he still endeavours to support the general strain of it, though his principal fund has failed him. This he does by making the most of what remains. The sense of *contingency* in events, which formerly meant no more than our ignorance of, or uncertainty about future events, is now erected into something more positive, and pronounced to be an original law in human nature, as necessary to move man to action; since without it he could have no sense of power to direct and control events.



events. It was formerly indeed made to answer the same end, but now more advantageously.

This sense of contingency in events, together with the sense of *power* to direct and control them, is declared to be delusive, and contrary to the truth of things. And this delusive sense, now set in a more advantageous light, is thought worthy, nearly, to fill not only its own former place, but also that of the other delusive sense now discarded. This alone is admired as the grand contrivance of the author of nature to make man appear with an air of independence, or being something more than a creature; as if there were no midst between independence and involuntary agency; or as if it were inconsistent that man should be a voluntary agent, yet always sensible of his dependence. — An apostle, setting aside his authority, appears to me to reason much more intelligibly, as well as more respectfully of the Deity, when he infers our dependence from our ignorance of to-morrow; saying, *Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow,—ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that*; declaring, at the same time, that all confidence about to-morrow, that carries in it any air of independence, is evil. — If further evidence shall convince our author, that his delusive sense of contingency, with that of power to control events, and his boasted privilege of supererogating, are indeed no less unprofitable delusions than he has already found his principal delusion to be, even that which gave the chief brilliancy to his former scheme; then, perhaps,



perhaps, he may come to find, that the gospel preached by the fishers of Galilee contains a more solid and satisfactory scheme, at once more beneficial to men, and more respectful to the Deity.

Let us now observe with what a good grace our author parts with the delusion he was formerly so fond of, as a most wise contrivance to serve the grandest purposes.

“ I acknowledge it to have been once my opi-  
 “ nion, that we have a delusive sense of power  
 “ to act against motives, or to act against our  
 “ own inclination and choice, commonly termed  
 “ *liberty of indifference*. I was carried along by  
 “ the current of popular opinion ; and I could  
 “ not dream this sense to be a pure imagination,  
 “ when I found it vouched by so many grave  
 “ writers. I had at the same time a thorough  
 “ conviction, from the clearest evidence, that  
 “ man is a necessary agent ; and therefore I justly  
 “ concluded, that the sense of liberty of indiffe-  
 “ rence, like that of contingency, must be delu-  
 “ sive. I yielded to another popular opinion,  
 “ That the perceptions of the moral sense, praise  
 “ and blame, merit and demerit, guilt and re-  
 “ morse, are inconsistent with necessity, and must  
 “ be founded upon the delusive sense of liberty of  
 “ indifference. From these premises, I was  
 “ obliged, though reluctantly, to admit, that  
 “ some of the most noted perceptions and emo-  
 “ tions of the moral sense, are entirely built upon  
 “ this delusive sense of liberty. The subject be-  
 “ ing handled after that manner in the First Edi-  
 “ tion of this book, I was sensible of the odium  
 “ of



“ of a doctrine that rests virtue in any measure  
 “ upon a delusion ; and I stated this as the first  
 “ objection, in order to remove it the best way  
 “ I could. Candour I shall always esteem essen-  
 “ tial in speaking to the public, not less than in  
 “ private dealings ; and my opinion of the wis-  
 “ dom of Providence in the government of this  
 “ world, is so firmly established, that I never  
 “ can be apprehensive of harm in adhering to  
 “ truth, however singular it may appear upon  
 “ some occasions. I now cheerfully acknow-  
 “ ledge my errors ; and am happy in thinking,  
 “ that I have at last got into the right track. It  
 “ appears to me at present a harsh doctrine, that  
 “ virtue in any part should be founded on a de-  
 “ lusion, though formerly the supposed truth of  
 “ the doctrine reconciled me to it. It gives me  
 “ solid satisfaction, to find the moral sense en-  
 “ tirely consistent with voluntary necessity, which  
 “ I must pronounce to be the system of nature.  
 “ The moral sense makes a chief branch of the  
 “ original constitution of man, and it can never  
 “ lose its authority, while we have any feeling of  
 “ pleasure and pain. According to this plan of  
 “ morality, the objection, That it is partly  
 “ founded on a delusion, vanisheth ; and the ob-  
 “ jection, for that reason, is dropt in the present  
 “ Edition.”

But then the reader will perceive, that the  
 most enticing wisdom of our author's former  
 scheme is at the same time dropt, and its chief  
 glory faded. In considering the final cause of  
 the delusion now discarded, in answering objec-  
 tions



tions to it, and in his endeavours to relieve the minds of men from uneasy apprehensions about the divine benevolence, he had found it most advantageously adapted to serve the most glorious ends. Where he began to consider it with regard to its final cause, even in his very entry on the subject, he shewed the greatest fondness for it, saying expressly, (First Edit. p. 204.) “ And “ in this branch of our nature are displayed the “ greatest wisdom, and the greatest goodness.” Now, it must be acknowledged to be no small stretch of candour in a philosopher, to give up peaceably, not to say with solid satisfaction, his brightest view of divine wisdom and goodness. It is natural to think, that one’s highest idea of divine perfection, should rather lead him to conclude that the fact, contrivance, or design whence it arose, must needs be something very stable, certain, and true, so far more solid than any delusion. No maxim can be more self-evident than, “ That which is greatest must be God ;” and nothing more absurd than to suppose, “ That “ aught greater than God can any how be ima- “ gined.” It would be setting the love of truth in a very romantic point of light, to suppose one influenced by it, to give up his belief of a Deity ; yet nearly in the same light must we consider, that love of truth which leads one to lower his apprehensions of divine wisdom and goodness. That our author has been led to do this, will appear by the alteration now made in the latter branch of his last *Essay*, where he treats of the benevolence of the Deity.

Nothing



Nothing can be more interesting to the mind of man, than to know how matters stand betwixt him and the Deity. Our author, sensible of the importance of the subject, had said in his First Edition, "As we cannot say too much upon a subject which is of all the most interesting, I shall add some other considerations to justify our belief of the pure benevolence of the Deity." And he says further in both Editions, "At the same time, as the utmost labour of thought is well bestowed upon a subject in which mankind is so much interested, I shall proceed to suggest some reflections, which may tend to satisfy us, that the instances commonly given of natural and moral evil, are not so inconsistent with pure benevolence, as at first sight may be imagined."

Undeniable tokens of divine goodness are, indeed, every where manifest; yet natural and moral evil, every where obscure the lustre of that goodness to the eye of man; or, to say the same thing in other words, throw a cloud over the mind of guilty man, damping his comfort and hope in reflecting on that goodness. None but the guilty can ever be affected with the least shadow of an objection to the pure benevolence of the Deity. All our author's labour then to shew, "that there is not a single instance to be met with, which can be justly ascribed to malevolence, or bad intention" in the Deity, is altogether wide of the point, or foreign to the great concern of the human heart. Men daily see proofs of ill intention in one another, but no mortal



mortal could ever shew the least token of ill intention in the Deity. For, if none but the guilty suffer, nothing can thence be inferred in the least inconsistent with the purest benevolence. Yet the guilty can find no comfort in reflecting on the purest benevolence. -- If one is led forth to execution, as an ungrateful traitor to the most wise and beneficent prince, he may indeed be persuaded, that his misery affords no just imputation on the benevolence of his prince; yet that benevolence can yield him no comfort in his present condition, but must rather serve to imbitter his last moments, as a high aggravation of his crime.

Our author's reasoning about the Deity's regarding *the* WHOLE *more than* PARTICULARS, which is his last resort for an answer to the objection arising from natural evil, is so trite, so whimsical, and has already become so generally ridiculous, that I am almost ashamed to offer any confutation of it. Yet so long as men gravely reason in this manner, it may with equal gravity be inquired, "What, or where, is the Whole?" For if death puts a period to all the happiness of human life, and if all the parts which make up the whole of every generation since the world began, have successively arrived at that period; then we, the present generation, for whose benefit all our predecessors have been destroyed, are, for the time being, the whole; and in a few years we must give place to another whole, and so forward. I insist therefore on the question, "What, or where, is the Whole?" or, how  
many



many thousand ages must yet revolve, before a permanent and happy Whole shall begin to exist?

We must see then, what our author has to say of natural evil, for the satisfaction of individuals. In a general view of the subject, he says, “It can afford no argument against the benevolence of the Deity, that created beings, from their nature and condition, are capable of pain, supposing, in the main, their life to be comfortable.” And afterward, in order to shew that pain and distress are productive of manifold good ends,” he says, “In the first place, pain is necessary as a monitor of what is hurtful and dangerous to life.” In short, the sum of all that he, or any other philosopher, has to say on this head, amounts to this, That divine goodness bears a benevolent aspect toward us, only so far as it appears in any respect providing for the preservation and comfort of our life : for it must still be held a necessary supposition, even according to our author, that our life be in the main comfortable. But where shall we find a philosopher, who can comfort us at the approach of that event, which naturally extorts from our hearts the following reflection concerning the Deity? *Thou turnest man to destruction, and sayest, Return, ye children of men.* Yea, do not all the tokens of goodness, with which the world is replenished, the air we breathe, the food we eat, &c. at last conspire to put an end to that life, which, for a few years, they preserved and cherished? Besides, is there not something in man that denies him happiness, even while he



is most advantageously situated? A late writer, who would be considered rather as a philosopher than as a poet, shewing the vanity of expecting happiness on earth, concludes his argument thus :

How oft the scene that gives delight  
 At morn, offends the eye at night?  
 'Tis not the want of that or this ;  
 Possession is the bane of bliss :  
 And hence, of happiness, we see  
 On earth th' impossibility.

*Epist. philos. & moral.*

But our author, inclining to view things in a more pleasant light, makes a vigorous effort, to open a hopeful prospect to men. I shall here quote a few of his words, where, in his general view of the subject, he introduces a consideration, which is the more worthy of our notice, as, says he, “it hath always afforded me great  
 “ satisfaction. Did natural evil prevail in reality,  
 “ as much as it doth in appearance, we must  
 “ expect, that the enlargement of natural know-  
 “ ledge should daily discover new instances of  
 “ bad, as well as of good intention. But the  
 “ fact is directly otherwise. Our discoveries as-  
 “ certain us more and more of the benevolence  
 “ of the Deity, by unfolding beautiful final  
 “ causes without number ; while the appearances  
 “ of ill intention gradually vanish, like a mist  
 “ after the sun breaks out. Many things are now  
 “ found to be curious in their contrivance, and  
 “ productive of good effects, which formerly  
 “ appeared useless, or perhaps of ill tendency.

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And,



“ And, in the gradual progress of learning, we  
 “ have the strongest reason to expect, that many  
 “ more discoveries of the like kind will be made  
 “ hereafter. This very consideration, had we  
 “ nothing else to rely on, ought to make us rest  
 “ with assurance upon the intuitive conviction  
 “ we have of the benevolence of the Deity;  
 “ without giving way to the perplexity of a few  
 “ cross appearances, which, in matters so far be-  
 “ yond our comprehension, ought rationally to  
 “ be ascribed to our own ignorance, and, by no  
 “ means to any malevolence in the Deity.” Our  
 author is so fond of the hopeful thought here  
 suggested, that, in the Second Edition, though  
 his doubts and perplexities still remain uncleared  
 up, he has chosen to add, immediately after the  
 words last quoted, a fresh and more sanguine  
 profession of his hope, in the following words:  
 “ In the progress of learning the time may come,  
 “ we have great reason to hope it will come,  
 “ when all doubts and perplexities of this kind  
 “ shall be fully cleared up.”

It were to be wished, that our author had  
 been so kind to his readers as to inform them,  
 for their comfort, what are those modern disco-  
 veries which have so much comforted himself.  
 Has he found out any method of doubling the  
 length and joy of man's life? If that were the  
 case, men of genius, at least, might yet, by the  
 gradual progress of learning, be encouraged to  
 make a bold push for immortality.—Have the  
 discoveries made by the telescope, or the mi-  
 croscope, rendered the curious happier or better  
 men



men than those who never saw but with the naked eye? Have the modern improvements in luxury promoted either the strength of the body, or tranquillity of the mind? Have the united wisdom and power of the philosopher and legislator, in civilized nations, abated the corruption of human nature, and improved the heart of man in real goodness \*? And as to the course of providence,

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\* Hardly so; if we may credit such as may be allowed a pretty general acquaintance with books. The authors of the *Critical Review*, though not very fond of the writers who dwell much on the corruption of human nature, yet, remarking on the *Frederician Code*, in their *Review* for January, 1762, take occasion to make the following general observation. "Politicians have attributed the necessity of multiplying laws to the extension of commerce, and the refinements in luxury, arts, and sciences; they ought to include the growing depravity of human nature, and increase of vice. Almost every nation in Europe is oppressed with those very ordinances which were designed for their relief." In the *Elements of Criticism*, a late work of our Essay writer, we find a more hopeful way of thinking, vol. II. p. 456. "Taste in the fine arts, as well as in morals, improves daily; and makes a progress, slowly indeed, but uniformly, towards perfection." In the same volume, p. 38. we find a bolder sentiment still. "The excellency of man is chiefly discernible in the great improvements he is susceptible of in society. These, by perseverance, may be carried on progressively to higher and higher degrees of perfection, above any assignable limits; and, even abstracting from Revelation, there is great probability, that the progress begun in this life, will be completed in some future state." Mr SHERIDAN, in his *British Education*, leads us to hope, that a revival of the art of speaking, and the study of our own language, might contribute, in a great measure, to the cure of the greatest evils observable about human nature in this island; while he laments the neglect of that art as the great source of irreligion. And the renowned Chevalier TAYLOR would assure us, that dancing, if we are fond of it, will contribute not a little to our well-being in a future state; as witness the *Critical Reviewers*, who cite his *History of himself*, and remark on it, in their *Review* for February,



vidence, have earthquakes, wars, and other public calamities, been less frequent in our own than in former ages? In fine, has our author discovered any remedy of sufficient efficacy, either to ward off death, or to restore life to the dead? In that case, indeed, he might, with a graceful assurance, hope that the time of clearing up all doubts and perplexities, was nigh at hand.—But this leads us to take a view of our author's reflection at the close of this branch of his subject.

Having

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bruary, 1762.—On the other hand, ROUSSEAU, a modern philosopher of great note, exerts the strength of his genius in proving, that, under all the advantages of civil government, and the improvement of the arts of life, the depravity of human nature, instead of diminishing, greatly increases, and that the savage state is the most perfect state of mankind. Though the authors of the last mentioned *Review* disapprove the whole strain of his reasoning, yet they think it would be no easy matter to write a refutation of it. Their concluding remark runs thus: “In a word, we see a  
 “ performance, every paragraph of which contradicts the plainest  
 “ maxims of common sense, which nevertheless it would be difficult to refute in writing; and we conclude with regarding the  
 “ author as a prodigy of genius, misled and infatuated by caprice,  
 “ and the affectation of peculiarity.”

From all which it would seem, that, whatever polish the exterior of man may receive in civilized life, it still remains a problem hard to be solved, “Whether the heart of man, under all the wise  
 “ prescriptions that have been invented for its improvement, be  
 “ really, after all, growing better or worse, since the first day  
 “ that the depravity of it was observed.” One thing however seems pretty evident, that the bulk of philosophers, notwithstanding a long train of disappointments, still incline toward the hopeful side, and would lead us fondly, though not very confidently, to expect, that, when *their instructions* shall be duly attended to, a well-ordered, wise, and beautiful world will at last appear. Even as the bulk of the clergy, in their way, have been leading us to hope, that the interest of religion, or, in other words, *their kingdom*, shall, in process of time, flourish, and prevail over a devout world of Jews and Gentiles.—So needful is it to the comfort of man's life, that he be animated with hope of some kind: And happy is he whose hope is founded in truth.



Having rummaged all nature for some glimpse of comfort, he at last, like one suspended between hope and despair, takes an anxious look at the grave, as if he would fain look beyond it, could he only perceive the least opening. He boldly attempts to use the language of *hope*, while yet he is obliged to confess, he has no solid foundation for it, and that it cannot be supported by fair reasoning. "I have," says he, "avoided  
 "urging any argument from our future existence;  
 "though it affords a fruitful field of comfort,  
 "greatly overbalancing the transitory evils of this  
 "life. But I should scarce think it fair reason-  
 "ing, to urge such topics upon this subject;  
 "which would be arguing in a circle," &c.

Here is an honest acknowledgment. But the question remains, Whence the air of confidence in our author's hope? If it has no real, it must have at least some imaginary foundation. We have a hint of it in the close of his *Essay on Liberty and Necessity*. While the philosopher is solacing himself, in his closet, with the review of some ingenious discovery he has made, by which he is greatly exalted above the vulgar, he is apt to wonder at his being admitted to such intimate acquaintance with nature, and his elevated thoughts are then ready to suggest, that it was  
 "perhaps that some *augurium*, some intimation  
 "may be given, of his being designed for a fu-  
 "ture more exalted state of being," &c. — Here it may be proper to observe, that the great defect of philosophy lies in this, that its fondest hopes are founded on a slippery *perhaps*.



Now, since our author acknowledges upon one occasion, to wit, when treating of Liberty and Necessity, that whatever peculiar speculations a philosopher may have on that subject, his common train of thought, in the ordinary occurrences of life, is the same with that of other men, it is natural for us to inquire, what shall comfort a philosopher, or any other man, at the time when his body comes to be filled with pain, and his mind with sad foreboding; when the blameable and foolish part of his conduct presses so hard on his thoughts as to overbalance all his wisdom and virtue, and natural evil is found to prevail as much in reality, as philosophers acknowledge it does in appearance? Or what *augurium*, what intimation has he then concerning a future state?

Our author, sensible of the great and important difficulty arising from this quarter, exerts himself at the close of his *Essays* to remove it. Moral evil is indeed the universal gall that imbitters all the afflictions of human life: and that is the evil which chiefly clouds the divine character to the eye of man. Now, it is in obviating the weighty objection hence arising, that the great difference between the two Editions of the *Essays* is chiefly manifest. In the former Edition it was obviated in this manner.

The author, after referring to his *Essay on Liberty and Necessity*, proceeds thus. “It is  
 “there made out, it is hoped to the satisfaction  
 “of the reader, — that the feeling which we  
 “have of liberty, does not correspond to the  
 “truth



“ truth of things ; and that our peculiar manner  
 “ of conceiving human actions, as right or wrong,  
 “ and as praise or blame-worthy, is wholly  
 “ founded on this deceitful feeling. The final  
 “ cause of this singular feeling, is also there laid  
 “ open ; that it is happily adjusted to the nature  
 “ of man, as an imperfect being, and tends to  
 “ promote virtue in an eminent degree. *This*  
 “ *discovery affords a solid answer to an objection,*  
 “ *which, so far as I know, has not hitherto re-*  
 “ *ceived any good answer.* And it is, that the  
 “ objection rests entirely upon a false supposition,  
 “ as if human actions were seen in the same light  
 “ by the Deity, in which they are seen by men.”

In the Second Edition, the notable sentence I have marked with Italics, as well as the argument in which it stands, is entirely dropped. And guilty men have nothing now to comfort them but the following reflection. “ We have  
 “ a just ground of conviction, that all matters  
 “ are by Providence ordered in the best manner,  
 “ and therefore that even human vices and frail-  
 “ ties are made to answer wise and benevolent  
 “ purposes. Every thing possesses its proper  
 “ place in the divine plan. All our actions con-  
 “ tribute equally to carry on the great and good  
 “ designs of our Maker ; and, therefore, there is  
 “ nothing which in his sight is ill ; at least, no-  
 “ thing which is ill upon the whole.”

What we have now seen, gives us a very unpromising view of the gradual progress of learning. What was newly found, in 1751, to be the only solid answer to the weightiest objection against human happiness, is since found, in 1758,



unworthy to exist even in the rank of delusions; and that even by the inventor himself. Here I cannot help expressing my agreement with those who declare it unbecoming a wise man, to remove any support of human happiness, be it real or imaginary, unless he can substitute something more solid and beneficial in its place. For if the condition of men, with regard to their Maker, be in reality desperate, or if Heaven has provided no solid ground of hope for them, why should any man seek to deprive his neighbour of any dream or fancy that may contribute to his present amusement?

Our author has left nothing now for guilty men to reflect on for their comfort, but that all their actions contribute equally to carry on the great and good designs of their Maker; and that even their vices and frailties are made to answer wise and benevolent purposes. And, with our author's leave, I will add, so also are their punishments and miseries. For he has warranted us to say, that "pain is the great sanction of laws, both human and divine." But what comfort can it give to one who is doomed to misery, and has no solid ground to expect he shall ever be delivered from it, to reflect, that his guilt and misery are subservient to some wise and benevolent purpose? Yet I agree with our author in maintaining, that both the vices and miseries of men are made to answer wise and benevolent purposes. Who sees not how greatly the triumph of Israel was heightened by the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea? and  
 who



who sees not the grandeur of the contrast, which, according to sacred writ, will take place at last between two great divisions of mankind? *And again they said, Hallelujah; and her smoke rose up for ever and ever.*

I chose, when writing my Letters, to remark on the *Essays*, as containing the most ingenious scheme of philosophic religion I had seen. And the Second Edition of the *Essays*, however much varying from the first, has not served to change my opinion. For the *peculiar sort of glory* which shone in the first, has confessedly departed from the second. Therefore, in this new Edition of my Letters, I have thought it best to let my animadversions on the *Essays* remain in the same form as at first.

Our author appears to me the more worthy of attention, as he has, in my view, traced the main lines of our natural knowledge of the Deity, and of our duty, in a simple, easy, and satisfactory manner. It gives me pleasure, to see so eminent and serious a Theist, who, I think, cannot justly be charged with any bias in favour of Christianity, clearly evincing an universal determining Providence. One would think indeed, that a very short process of reasoning might serve in this case. For if once it be admitted, that any event can happen otherwise than the Deity intended, we are at Atheism immediately. — Again, where our author gropes in the dark, pleasing himself with delusive perceptions, he does it in company with all other philosophers, who have sought, by the aid of philosophy, to  
open



open a prospect of *hope* beyond the grave. Here they are all like so many hounds *at fault*, who have entirely lost their scent. Accordingly, after they have laboured now for many centuries, availing themselves of each others inventions, we find them at this day as unsettled in their notions as ever, even in the most interesting and important matters.

Our author has, in his Second Edition, settled *remorse* on a firm bottom ; but then he has removed the main pillar of *hope*. And thus it is always found, that the nearer philosophy approaches to truth, the sense of law, obligation, duty, and remorse, weighs the heavier, while the ground of comfort and hope gradually becomes lighter in the opposite scale, till at last it quite vanishes away. As the course of nature is the province of philosophy, so death, the dissolution of nature, is its *ne plus ultra*, its impassable limit. Yet philosophers have access to view, and consider the solemn and interesting approach of man to that limit. And, if they could read the lesson it naturally exhibits, perhaps they might come to find something worthy of their attention in that gospel, which gives the only account that ever yet could bear being twice told, of a comfortable opening beyond that limit. But why should I urge this reflection, since nothing less than the evidence of the gospel can embolden one to give due attention to the last stage of man's life? Accordingly, we find, that philosophers, who examine every other appearance in nature with the most prying look, seldom or never in-  
cline



cline to give any proportional attention to the last and most important one.

However, it may give those who love the scripture some satisfaction, to find, that the further progress philosophy makes, the more plainly appears its insufficiency to help man in his most interesting concern, and the more evidently shines forth the excellency of the gospel to answer that end: which, without amusing us, either by delusive perceptions, or cunningly-devised fables, but by the most solid truth, built on the surest facts, clears up all difficulties about the condition of man, with regard to the Deity; which not only consults the happiness of man, and the honour of the Deity, to the best advantage, but also opening to view a grander character of the Deity than could be learned any where else, at the same time clears that character, in the most satisfactory manner, from every objection arising from the dark side of things. And thus we behold great propriety in the words, wherein is delivered the message which the apostles received from the glorified Messiah: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, THAT GOD IS LIGHT, AND IN HIM IS NO DARKNESS AT ALL."

By an *Appendix*, now subjoined to the *Essay on Liberty and Necessity*, it appears, that our author, on an occasion sufficiently there pointed at, has, in order to screen himself from the imputation of heresy, thought it expedient, to shelter himself among such great orthodox names, as CALVIN, TURRETINE, PICTET, and the  
late



late Mr JONATHAN EDWARDS of New-England. The last of these, who was then alive, thought fit to reject the offered alliance; as appears by a small pamphlet bearing his name, published at Edinburgh 1758, called, *Remarks on the Essays, &c. in a Letter to a Minister of the Church of Scotland.* This Letter I read with much satisfaction, it appearing to me to have been wrote by one thoroughly master of his subject. It is enough for my purpose at present, to quote a few words from the first page, where he says, "I think it  
 " must be evident to every one that has read both  
 " his *Essays* and my *Enquiry*, that our schemes  
 " are exceeding reverse from each other \*."

This Letter led me to read his octavo book just now referred to, intitled, *A careful and strict Inquiry into the modern prevailing Notions of that freedom of Will, which is supposed to be essential to moral Agency, Virtue and Vice, Reward and Punishment, Praise and Blame.* It appeared to me not only answerable to its title, but also to exhibit a more full and clear view, than I had any where else seen, of the controversy between the doctrines commonly distinguished by the epithets, *Calvinist* and *Arminian.* As this book, which was published in 1754, (Boston, New-England) is acknowledged to be a masterly performance in its kind, one would think, that writers who are of the latter persuasion, should find

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\* To the above-mentioned *Letter* and *Enquiry*, I refer for a proper answer to the reasonings in the *Essays*, on the delusive sense of *contingency* in events.



find themselves concerned to provide a pertinent answer to it. The author, in the conclusion, has sufficiently hinted his challenge. After taking notice of the boldness of writers on the other side, he adds, “ Indeed such is the case, that we  
 “ might, if so disposed, speak as big words as  
 “ they, and on far better grounds ; and really all  
 “ the Arminians on earth might be challenged,  
 “ without arrogance or vanity, to make these  
 “ principles of theirs, wherein they mainly differ  
 “ from their fathers, whom they so much despise,  
 “ consistent with common sense ; yea, and per-  
 “ haps to produce any doctrine ever embraced  
 “ by the blindest bigot of the church of *Rome*,  
 “ or the most ignorant *Mussulman*, or extrava-  
 “ gant Enthusiast, that might be reduced to more  
 “ and more demonstrable inconsistencies and re-  
 “ pugnancies to common sense and to themselves ;  
 “ though their inconsistencies may not lie so deep,  
 “ or be so artfully veiled by a deceitful ambiguity  
 “ of words, and an indeterminate signification of  
 “ phrases.”

Though this writer’s professed design is to support the doctrine of the gospel, I am sorry I cannot commend him as giving us any just view of the grand point of a sinner’s acceptance with God ; especially as, in my view, the whole controversy is of very little consequence, but in so far as that grand point is concerned. Though he has much occasion to speak of the influence of commands, invitations, &c. yet, so far as I could perceive, he takes no notice of any difference between the gracious command that freely communicates



communicates life and hope to the guilty, and any other command requiring the performance of some duty or good action in order to acceptance with God. Or, to express myself in fewer words, it does not appear to me from that book, that he has duly attended to the grand opposition stated in the New Testament, between the *law of faith* and the *law of works*. He rather seems, in agreement with the bulk of the reputed orthodox, (p. 169.) to speak of *exerting faith in Christ*, as on a footing with *performing other spiritual gospel duties*.

Now, before I close this *Appendix*, it may be expected I should take some notice of the pamphlets that have been writ on occasion of my Letters.

If any one would see, *A sufficient Answer to the Author of the Letters on Theron and Aspasio*, he may find a pamphlet so called, writ by no less a man than Mr JOHN WESLEY, and to be purchased at no greater price than a penny. It appears from this pamphlet, that the writer is very angry: and it must be owned, that in my Letters I had said nothing to please him; for near the close of the last of them, I had, as I still think was but reasonable, apologized to the popular preachers for ranking him among them.—As I cannot say that this writer has treated me with worse language than he had formerly done the God I profess to worship, I cannot decently have any personal quarrel with him. We have heard of an old royal mandate, which, however dissimilar



dissimilar the cases, I consider as a rule proper to be observed on the present occasion: *The king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.*

However, a reply has been given him, called, *Remarks on the Reverend Mr John Wesley's sufficient Answer, &c.* Though this remarker is abundantly keen in my defence, so far as he thinks me defensible, yet I apprehend the attentive reader will be at no loss to perceive, that his zeal and mine do not run altogether in the same channel. It will be perceived, I presume, that the peculiar complexion of his zeal must appear no less exceptionable to me, than mine does to him, where he finds himself obliged to deliver me up defenceless into Mr WESLEY's hands.

Two other pamphlets have appeared; of which the one is called, *Animadversions on the Letters on Theron, &c.* and the other, *A plain account of Faith in Jesus Christ. In Remarks on several Passages in the Letters, &c.* The author of the former charges me as an advocate for *Works* to the prejudice of *Faith*; and the author of the latter charges me as an advocate for *Faith* to the prejudice *Works*. If these two gentlemen would read each the other's performance, and then take another glance of the book they have been remarking on, though they should not come to like the book any better, they might learn to oppose it more pertinently. Yet, to deal impartially between the two, the latter appears to me to understand better what he is doing than the former. However, as it was my purpose to contend for such faith and such works as are  
equally



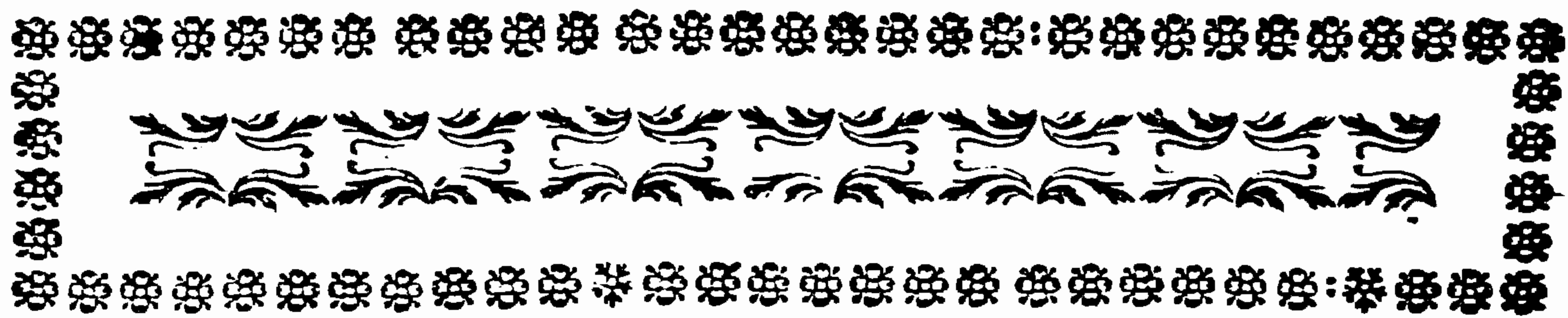
equally obnoxious to the dislike of the religious world, I have no reason to be disconcerted at seeing my book disapproved by men of very different sentiments in religious matters.

Perhaps it may be expected I should likewise take some notice of a book published last year, and advertised in the Scotch papers, as containing, among other things, “A detection of some ignorant and rash notions about *faith* and *conscience*, thrown out in a late book, intitled, “*Letters on Theron and Aspasio.*” But as the author, in a Letter to his publisher, which I have seen, has declared he disapproves that advertisement, that part of it now quoted, I mean, and as the public is not now sufficiently authorised to apply any strictures in his book to mine, I apprehend I have no occasion to trouble the public with any particular notice of them.

I have only to add, that as several of the books and pamphlets remarked on in these Letters, may have undergone alterations in new Editions, I have thought it proper, to prevent mistakes, to subjoin the date of the first publication of the Letters at the close of the last of them.

*March, 1759.*





# A P P E N D I X

T O T H E

## T H I R D E D I T I O N .

**I** T now remains to give the reader some view of the progress of the controversy since the publication of the Second Edition.

In consequence of these Letters, two pamphlets have appeared :

One of them intitled,

*An Epistolary Correspondence between S. P. and R. S. relating to the Letters on THERON and ASPASIO. Printed at London, 1759.*

The other,

*The Law of Nature defended by Scripture, against a learned Class of Moderns, who think it needful, in order to support the credit of Revealed Religion against Deists, to deny the existence of that Law. Printed at Edinburgh, 1760.*

In the first of these, PALÆMON'S account of Faith, with its influence on the heart and life, is illustrated and enforced. By the other, it is hoped the reader will see, how vain the pretence



of serving the cause of revealed Religion, by denying the law of Nature.

IN opposition to the doctrine maintained in the Letters, Mr CUDWORTH, dissenting minister in London, published two pieces. The first a pocket-volume of 224 pages, besides the preface, called,

*A defence of Theron and Aspasio against the objections contained in a late treatise, intitled, Letters on THERON and ASPASIO.* Printed in London, 1760.

The other a shilling pamphlet, called,  
*The Polyglot, or Hope of eternal Life, according to the various sentiments of the present day, &c.* Printed in London, 1761.

This author maintains such an universal grant of Christ, as warrants every hearer to appropriate; and it must be owned, he does it, in some respects, with more consistency than many others; for he maintains, that Christ gave himself a ransom even for all those of mankind who shall never be saved by him. See *Polyglot*, p. 35, &c.

Those who follow BOSTON and ERSKINE, will not go so far as to say, that Christ died for any but *his* people, whom he came to save, and will assuredly bring to everlasting happiness. They content themselves with saying, what is indeed equally foreign to, and subversive of the grace of the gospel, to wit, that Christ, by his taking on the human nature, stands in an equal or undistinguished relation of a kinsman-redeemer to mankind-sinners as such; so lead us to conclude, that  
Christ



Christ took part in flesh and blood no less with the seed of the serpent, than with the children God gave him, even “the many sons whom he brings to glory.” Whereas the scripture, far from countenancing their way of speaking, as if Christ took hold of the whole human race, in contradistinction from fallen angels, speaks expressly thus, *Verily he taketh not hold of angels, but of the SEED OF ABRAHAM he taketh hold.* It is also evident from the scripture, that Christ died for the sanctification of all with whom he took part in flesh and blood. And as *he who sanctifies, and they who are sanctified by his death, are all of one Father, he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; and again, Behold I, and the children whom God hath given me.* Forasmuch then (says the apostle, *Heb. ii.*) *as the children were partakers in flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*

From all which it is plain, that Christ’s brethren, the seed of ABRAHAM, or the many sons he brings to glory, are no other than the children God gave him, even the children with whom he took part in flesh and blood to die for them. It is likewise evident from *Romans viii. 29, 30.* that all the many brethren, among whom Christ is the first-born, shall be justified and glorified.

Now, while the followers of BOSTON and ERSKINE profanely maintain, that Christ took part in flesh and blood with many who shall



reap no benefit in the world to come by that connection; Mr CUDWORTH and his associates only go a step further in the same profaneness of mind, while they say that Christ died for many who shall never be justified by his blood, nor saved from wrath through him. The former class likewise maintain, that Christ is by his office a Saviour to many besides the elect; and would persuade us, that he is an official Saviour to many who shall be effectually damned. And further, to persuade their countrymen that they have all some common interest in Christ, they remind them of their relation to God by the Scotch covenant; and would assure them, that hereby their land is married to God; not forgetting to add, that the people have likewise been dedicated to God in baptism. The latter class have a shorter way of persuading every one to say, *Christ died for me*, because they maintain, that Christ died for every one of mankind. The former maintain, that Christ became related by his birth, to many who shall reap no eternal benefit by that connection; the latter, with like reason, say the same of his death; and both classes agree in maintaining, that God hath made a deed of gift or grant of Christ and eternal life, to every hearer of the gospel, yet so as that multitudes of those to whom God is said to have given eternal life, may perish eternally, through their incapacity or aversion to receive; or, in other words, to obey the command to believe; even as multitudes come short of the life offered in the law, through their incapacity or aversion  
to



to obey its precepts. Thus we see how thin are the partitions which divide the enemies of the gospel among themselves, and what pitiful perversions of scripture they have recourse to, while they go about to overthrow the doctrine of the true grace of God.

The inseparable eternal connection which God himself, of his sovereign grace and good pleasure, hath made between Christ and those for whom he was born and died, is set at nought, as a thing that may be frustrated as to many, through some defect in their ability or will; and all this, that the stress of our salvation may be laid on a connection we are called to make between Christ and us; and then the province of what is falsely called *grace*, is to enable us to make this connection. This assisting grace, according to many, is commonly bestowed on those who *ask* it, or are some way *desirous* of it; while yet, to avoid too flatly clashing with the scriptures, exceptions are allowed. And here take place all the hocus-pocus tricks about grace alternately prompting, or seconding our efforts to make this connection, with suitable directions for discerning, in some corner of our averse will, some hopeful disposition arising to meet that grace, or produced by it.

SOME notice may now be taken of a small piece against the Letters, introduced by a Sermon, the title running thus:

*The true Comer; being the substance of some Sermons preached in July and August last, upon John vi. 45.—To which is annexed, A Detection*



*of the spurious Faith in the Letters on THERON and ASPASIO, &c. By Colin Mackie, Minister of the Gospel in the Associate Congregation at Montrose. Printed in Dundee, 176 .*

This author pleads for the appropriation, rebukes PALÆMON, as maintaining only the faith of devils; and points out the danger PALÆMON's friends, and other Dissenters are exposed to, for want of presbyterial government. The reason of this publication, is given in a short prefatory address to the reader, which begins thus: "The  
 " errors contained in the *Letters on THERON and*  
 " *ASPASIO, &c.* being so dangerous, specious,  
 " and deceiving, I was therefore in hopes some  
 " proper hand in Scotland would have detected  
 " the same; but as there was no appearance of  
 " this, and the delusion taking too well with  
 " many in different places, and even throwing  
 " some professors into a jumble in the corner;  
 " I judged it proper, for the vindication of truth,  
 " to essay a detection of the Letter-author's spu-  
 " rious faith, with which he is deceiving the  
 " public, &c." At the conclusion, after point-  
 ing out the advantages of Presbyterial govern-  
 ment faithfully exercised, he says, "And how  
 " happy would the Dissenters in the neighbouring  
 " land be, if such church-order were among  
 " them? Errors then of this kind would not find  
 " such favourable reception among them, as it  
 " seems this Letters-author's faith has obtained;  
 " at least they would not be put into such con-  
 " fusion thereby, as it seems they presently are."

Next



NEXT comes a pamphlet of fifty-four pages, in the title-page of which the Letter-writer is said to be *refuted by an old woman*. The following part of the title runs thus: *or, Thoughts on his Letters to the author of THERON and ASPASIO. In a letter from a friend in the country, to a friend in town.* Printed in London, 1761.— Scarce inferior to any of the answers I have got from the men, young or old.

This serious old woman contents herself with evincing, as she can, throughout her pamphlet, a tenfold charge against PALÆMON, which I shall lay before the reader, by copying her first page. “ Dear Sir, I dislike too many things in  
 “ Mr S——N’s Letters to notice, without being  
 “ to you extremely tedious ; and shall therefore  
 “ give you my thoughts only of some as briefly  
 “ as I can, with respect to, 1. His omission of  
 “ the great work of regeneration, as previous to  
 “ any act of faith in us for salvation. 2. Defi-  
 “ ciency in definition of justifying faith. 3. De-  
 “ riding the scripture-doctrine of faith, in its di-  
 “ rect and reflex acts. 4. Reproaching the Holy  
 “ Spirit’s witness in the word of promise. 5. De-  
 “ nyng the influence of gospel-grace on the  
 “ heart unto gospel-holiness. 6. Turning the  
 “ acts of pure faith in the soul’s flight unto Christ  
 “ for life, into acts of love, in obedience to his  
 “ command. 7. Placing believers when they sin  
 “ under the curse of God, and in danger of the  
 “ wrath that is to come. 8. Making our love to  
 “ Christ in continued obedience of life, the con-  
 “ dition of our salvation. 9. False accusation of



“ all those that assert the necessity of direct acts  
 “ of faith in order to justification, as making  
 “ faith our justifying righteousness. And, 10.  
 “ Dismissing all the Descriptions of faith, which  
 “ he is pleased to call *modern*, to the *regions of*  
 “ *darkness*, from whence (he impiously says)  
 “ they come.” I shall only add, that it concerns  
 the reader, as much as the disputants, to judge  
 for himself; for if his faith is not warranted by  
 the apostles, it is a matter of no great moment,  
 whether he hearken to PALÆMON, or to *an old*  
*woman*, either of whose authority, after all, is  
 just as good as that of a General Council, in the  
 concerns of the next world.

TOWARD the end of last year was published  
 in Edinburgh, a treatise of 181 pages, called,  
*An Inquiry into the spirit and tendency of Letters*  
 ON THERON and ASPASIO, *with a View of the*  
*Law of Nature, and an Inquiry into Letters on*  
*the Law of Nature.* By the last words is meant  
 the above-mentioned pamphlet, called, *The Law*  
*of Nature defended by Scripture, &c.* The *In-*  
*quiry* is said, in the Editor's preface, to be  
 “ wrote by an eminent minister of the church of  
 “ Scotland,” and “ published with an intention  
 “ to obviate the many gross mistakes of the Letter-  
 “ writer, and to prevent the influence that his  
 “ subtle abuse of the sacred writings may have  
 “ on some of those into whose hands his books  
 “ may have fallen.”

The shortest account I can give my readers of  
 this performance is, that it exhibits an effort to  
 overthrow



overthrow the law of nature, and the doctrine of supernatural grace preventing man's will, in imputing righteousness without works.

As to our author's opposition to the law of nature, even PALÆMON's adversaries, who are very willing to understand what makes against him, confess that their understandings fail them here. If the Hutchinsonians have any men of sensibility remaining among them, who are capable of feeling regret at seeing their main fortress lying in ruins in this inquiry, they must find themselves concerned to provide something liker an answer to the above mentioned defence of the law of nature. It would be hard to suppose, that all of this class are so blinded with rage against the defenders, as to suffer such loose talk to pass for the best answer they can give. Some perhaps, however much diverted at seeing the obstinate defenders pelted with such a profusion of rhetorical nosegays of the coarser sort, will reflect, that such diversion would have been somewhat more seasonable, after seeing their strength taken down with more substantial weapons.

Our author's way of opposing supernatural grace, is more intelligible, better suited to the capacities of his readers, and has accordingly proved much more generally acceptable. The force of what he says, is far from being new indeed, having been much hackneyed for many ages, till it is now grown quite threadbare. But then, its want of the advantage often attending novelty, may seem to be in a good measure compensated by its antiquity; for truth itself is justly venerable



venerable on that account. His chief topic of reproach, however much he seems to plume himself upon it, as if he had newly opened a rich vein of fresh wit, is evidently coeval with the first preaching of the gospel. When PAUL displayed his doctrine of supernatural grace, his enemies charged him as saying, *Let us do evil that good may come; let us continue in sin, that grace may abound*; in a word, they charged him as making void our duty to God, by his doctrine of faith. CELSUS, as we find in ORIGEN'S third book against him, brought the like charge against the Christians of the second century. — “ But let  
 “ us hear now whom these call: whoever, they  
 “ say, is a sinner, whoever is without under-  
 “ standing, whoever is childish, and, to say  
 “ plainly, whoever is wretched, the kingdom  
 “ of God will receive him. — They say, that God  
 “ is sent to sinners; but why was he not sent to  
 “ them that are without sin? What evil is there  
 “ in not having sinned? They dictate, that God  
 “ will receive an unjust man, if he humble him-  
 “ self under his wretchedness; but the just, if he  
 “ look up to him with virtue from the beginning,  
 “ him he will not receive. — They commonly  
 “ say, that God can do all things; but he will  
 “ not do any thing unjust. So then, like unto  
 “ them that are subject to compassion, God,  
 “ being subject to commiseration of them that  
 “ plead pity, relieves the bad; and the good,  
 “ doing no such thing, he rejects! — I indeed  
 “ blame these, and such like, that I may not  
 “ enumerate all; and I say they trespass wickedly,  
 “ being



“ being contumelious to God, that they may  
 “ allure evil men with vain hopes, and persuade  
 “ to despise the better things, as if, should they  
 “ abstain from them. it would be better for  
 “ them.” How common it has been in later  
 ages, particularly the present, to load the doctrine  
 of supernatural grace with like imputations, needs  
 not be insisted on.

Our Inquirer’s account of the natural conse-  
 quence of PALÆMON’s doctrine runs thus: “ The  
 “ only safe way, and the only way to be easy on  
 “ this plan, is to run as fast and as far from God  
 “ as we can, and boldly presume, that *The Lord*  
 “ *have mercy on a miserable sinner*, will in the end  
 “ do the business at once. PALÆMON dare not  
 “ avow this natural consequence of his new di-  
 “ vinity, which, it is to be feared, has deluded  
 “ many into everlasting destruction.” This is  
 only a sample of the reproach copiously poured  
 forth, in a number of pages, by the Inquirer  
 against supernatural grace.

The more we observe the aspect of the Clergy  
 towards that grace, the less cause of wonder shall  
 we find, at seeing eminent men among them  
 highly provoked at the doctrine of it; for, so  
 far as that doctrine is clearly understood, down  
 comes their eminence by the lump. On their  
 principles (if those of the Inquirer be taken for a  
 sample till a better be produced) they do indeed  
 owe a very deadly grudge to that doctrine, as  
 nothing rubs harder on their high pretensions,  
 nothing serves more effectually to evince their  
 hypocrisy.

Mean



Mean time the acceptance which the Inquirer's reproach has found with the religious, affords PALÆMON an additional Proof of what he has frequently had occasion to observe, that people may have the character of devout Christians, and yet be filled with great aversion to the grace of the gospel. And this aversion holds pace with their aversion to the Christian labour of love, which is likewise treated with great contempt in the Inquiry. — Hence arises a presumption, that PALÆMON's notion of grace, both in respect of its nature and effect, is the same with PAUL's, seeing it provokes the same sort of reproach as PAUL's did from the beginning.

As an *Extract of a Letter* of December 16, 1761, sent me by one of the readers of the *Inquiry*, may be of some service to the rest; in comparing their thoughts on the matter in hand, I shall here offer it to their perusal. “ This nameless antagonist cannot be the author of the famous *Sober Inquiry*, as has been given out, nor any other popular minister of the church of Scotland. He rather forts himself as an answerer with WESLEY; and indeed he appears abundantly in his spirit and temper, though he would show more of the philosopher, and less of the theologian, than he. It is true, he would reason you out of the law of nature, in order to maintain his philosophical divinity: but he has acquired much moral philosophy, from which he gives you manifold sage moral instructions and reprehensions.

“ If



“ If you had reason to find fault with ASPASIO for making too light, first of the comfort that is in the belief of the truth, and next of the comfort of the Spirit witnessing with our spirits, to maintain his groundless appropriation; you have much more reason to say, *The Lord rebuke thee*, to this author, who, without ASPASIO’s serious concern, spitefully reproaches both. His last resort for defence of the appropriation, or believing what is not true till it be believed, is an old argument used by the marrow men, (p. 28.) which was long ago fully answered in a treatise lately printed, Vol. III. p. 402—406. of GLAS’s Works.

“ The great outcry against what you say from EZEKIEL, chapter xviii and xxxiii. is full as strong against *Lev. xviii. 5. Rom. x. 5. Luke x. 25—28. Matth. xix. 16—19. with Gal. iii. 21.* He saw this, but waved it; and all that he alleges against the childrens bearing the iniquities of their fathers, he saw confuted in that seventh number of notes, (GLAS’s Works, p. 245.) which is quoted by him; for whom therefore it will be to no purpose to write any thing.

“ He holds no law common to mankind sinners, but the law of faith; no natural law, but supernatural revelation. And his law of faith may possibly be that lately discovered in revelation, *viz.* a law introducing Christ to the inheritance, not by his fulfilling the law, or redeeming from its curse, but, in opposition to that, by a promise to him, and by a faith of his that stands in the same connection with that promise, as works do stand in with the law. This law



law of faith has been sufficiently exposed in a letter now printed, Vol. IV. p. 371—379. of GLAS's Works.

“ He would still maintain his most ridiculous gloss on Romans, chap. i. without removing your just objections, and so would he maintain the two most opposite and ridiculous glosses on Romans, chap. ii. but he supports these glosses, and, as a philosopher, reasons you out of your law of nature by this demonstration. It is impossible even for you to deny the fact, (which you forget) that you was an infant, and that then you had not, by reason of use, your senses exercised to discern good and evil: therefore, now when you discern them, it is most manifest you do it not by nature. Even so you must remember, that we were all infants, and were not then capable of generating our species; and thus must you know for certain, that when we grow to do that, we do it not by nature.

“ But if he has got the better of you in any one point, it must be in what he calls judging and speaking evil, which he doth with great spirit and alacrity with respect to you, your friends, and adherents.”

Follows an *Extract of a Letter* wrote by another reader.

“ The Inquirer hath observed a contention, in which a greater personage than either of these disputers, durst not bring a railing accusation; I wish his own remark had produced an imitation of this moderation in himself. If misrepresentation and ill names may be called railing accusations,



tions, I cannot help thinking you may see some of it in p. 28. "PALÆMON insists—there is no such thing as—commands to unbelievers—to believe, &c." Here I suppose you will not say the charge is literally true; nor that representation of his sentiments from p. 36—40. that the grayheaded sinner, especially if he be very obdurate, &c.—stands infinitely fairer for salvation, than, &c. or that (p. 45.) he (PALÆMON) is ready to curse to the pit of hell—them who say, that any divine assistance is necessary to make the word effectual; unless by divine *assistance* he means, that the new creation is accomplished by divine power coming in to aid and assist the efforts of nature; which representation I grant, PALÆMON would think as ridiculous as to say, that God *assisted* the chaos to produce a world. Or, when he insinuates that PALÆMON says, that "Christ hath done all, and left us nothing to do" to the exclusion of the obedience of faith.

"These, and some other things, appear to me no better than railing accusations, which are altogether unworthy the Inquirer. We all know it hath been found necessary for disputers of the lower class, when they could not confute what their opponents had really said, to make them say what they could confute; but the Inquirer could need no such low artifice. There is certainly difference enough between these two authors, if they would condescend to state what they affirm, and what they deny, plainly, that the opposition might be perceived by men not very skilful in the  
use



use of words. As the Inquirer has entered the lists in defence of such addresses as I heartily detest, as they seem to me subversive of the gospel-proclamation; and as he seems defending an account of faith, which, as I understand him, I have some objection to; I shall give my thoughts on these two points, without being solicitous about the choice of words. — As I am conscious of deficiency in polemical divinity, I do not pretend to any formal, or orderly remarks on the Inquirer, only to say simply what I think I ought to believe and do, leaving to you the reconciling, or contrasting it, with whom you please.

“ If PALÆMON denies all exhortations to unbelievers, except *Be perfect*, (which you see I do not believe) he may as well deny that the *gospel* is to be preached *to every creature*, or that *now God commandeth all men every where to repent*; for certainly, *Be perfect*, is not the *gospel*.

“ I have no scruple to say, that all who labour in public doctrine, are bound to speak to the people *all the words of this life*; and to say to all, to whom the word of this salvation is sent, that it is God’s command that they “repent, and believe the gospel.” I take it, all scriptural addresses to the world, are only saying this in different ways. They cannot be vindicated if they do not, as they are able, point out the evidence of the things *which began to be spoken by our Lord, and were confirmed to us by them that heard him*; at the same time addressing themselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God, shewing them



them the breadth of the divine law, the guiltiness of human nature, “the wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness of men,” and the justice and mercy displayed in salvation; and add to all this, with the strongest confidence, *He that believes, shall be saved; and he that believes not, shall be damned.*

“If these truths get access to the conscience of any, they are not at liberty to encourage the hope of such, by lowering the divine claim of perfect righteousness to commend them to God’s favour, but are bound to shew them, where alone that righteousness is found, in which they can be accepted. I do not see any thing should induce them to consider men as believers, while they are neither comforted by the revealed righteousness, nor influenced by the gospel: nor have I any conception of an unbeliever desiring to believe; however, it is natural enough to desire ease of mind. Ignorance and enmity, which still remain in the children of disobedience, seem to make such a character impossible to be found. *He is enmity against God, and understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, &c.* It is absurd to suppose a person desiring to believe what he hates should be true, or what he sees no evidence of, or importance in. He that doth perceive the evidence and importance of the gospel, as the Lord hath spoken it, is doubtless a believer; for what else is believing, but receiving the evidence, and perceiving the true meaning and importance of a doctrine? You see I have nothing to say to any



supposed equivocal character, or person making advances toward that righteousness which God brings near to the stout-hearted, who are far from it; for I do not suppose that there are, indeed, any such characters.

“ I can easily see, how such as believe may be said to hunger and thirst after more knowledge of the truth, which brings a righteousness to their view, on which all their safety and happiness depends, and so hunger and thirst after the enjoyment of that righteousness: but I cannot see how any person can be said to hunger and thirst after Christ’s righteousness, who doth not with the heart believe, *that by him all that believe are justified, which is with the heart believing to righteousness*: I cannot see how he can thus hunger, unless we may suppose him longing for that which he hath no knowledge of, or value for! Yet it will be owned to be natural enough for men to desire some kind of righteousness, real or imaginary, seeing the present peace of a thinking mind, greatly depends on having some reason of hope at hand, to fortify them against the fears of wrath to come.

“ Taking this to be the view the gospel considers all men in, (as believers or unbelievers) I see no danger in supposing, that all its exhortations may be addressed *to believers*, who are to walk in the Lord Jesus Christ as they received him. Nor do I see any danger in all the exhortations being addressed *to unbelievers*, supposing the command, to believe on the Son of God, be understood as inseparably connected with, and  
essential



essential to every act of obedience to such exhortations. Thus we may say to men promiscuously, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and love, obey, &c.* but I cannot think any encouragements to believe for justification, should be taken from such dispositions of mind, as we may observe about the serious and inquiring; for such encouragements would be so many impeachments of the freedom and suitableness of that grace, which reigns through righteousness by Jesus Christ.

“ Any such encouragement to believe, would be turning the attention from the abundant grace and *gift* of righteousness, to the token for good which is observed to embolden our confidence. He that thinks he may believe, *because* he hath these good symptoms, must needs think, if he could see no good about himself, the gospel would not be suited to give him joy and peace in believing it. Now, whatever such a man believes, I should not think, that *he believes on him that justifies the ungodly*. You cannot but know, the *art* of religion greatly consists in soothing the minds of men, and promoting their peace without the painful conviction, that all their labour after distinctions and precedence, are aggravations of their guilt and rebellion; for the last thing a man parts with, is a good conceit of himself. And I must still say, I think this has been greatly promoted, by the kind of address for which the Inquirer is a most ingenious and resolute champion.

“ I suppose every man hath good authority to urge on as many as will hear him, the full im-



port of such words as these, *Repent, and believe the gospel.* And on such as profess the faith, (as they must be careful to maintain good works) he also must urge, that “they shew, out of a good conversation, their works with meekness of wisdom;” for they cannot shew their faith but by their works. But I see not what obedience can be paid to the special precepts of the gospel, by such as are not under the law to Christ. Nor do I conceive, that exhortations can receive any additional weight from the importance and solemnity of what they call ministerial authority, without detracting as much from the reverence due to God alone.

“If you do but understand my way of expression on this head of exhortation, it is all I have aimed at; and I proceed to a remark or two on the grant or deed of conveyance, by which the Inquirer seems to think Christ, and all his benefits, are made over to all mankind.

“I readily admit, that the gift of the Son of God, the gift of righteousness, and the gift of God, which is eternal life, are inseparably connected, so that *he who hath the Son, hath life*; but what I demur upon is, How doth it appear that this is made over to all mankind? The Inquirer freely owns, it is no benefit to any but them that believe; and he also admits, that perfect sovereignty is exercised in the actual application and reception of this gift. If this is so, I cannot see the necessity of introducing the difficult business of proving, that is given which is never received, or that God hath, by a deed of conveyance,



conveyance, given eternal life to them that suffer eternal death. If this be not to suspend our actual participation, upon some condition to be performed by us, I confess I cannot see why he should make the grant more extensive than the actual conveyance. If this grant comes limited by the absolute sovereignty of God, as he says, *p. 31.* how then is it more than a universal proclamation, *that whosoever believeth on the Son of God shall not perish, but have everlasting life?* Does not this way of expressing it look like saying, A grant made to all mankind is limited to a certain number, or small remnant of them?

“ I cannot think of the Son of God being given for such to whom the inheritance of sons will never be given, because I suppose these gifts to be equally extensive; and as little can I think of Christ being given *to* such whom he was never given *for*. For this is the account Christ gives of it, *viz.* that he laid down his life *for his sheep*; and of others he saith, *Ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep.* For this end he tells us, he had power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life *to as many as the Father had given him*; and accordingly, *as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed.* But is the gospel a grant of eternal life to such as he did not lay down his life for? to such as were not given *to* Christ, nor *ordained* to eternal life?

“ It is plain enough, that the general declarations of the gospel of God to *whosoever will, whosoever believes, &c.* afford sufficient encouragement for all the ends of the earth to look to



him for salvation ; and as these declarations are not limited, by being addressed to men of such qualifications as naturally lead them to glory over one another, they leave no room for any desire of distinctions *in order to justification*, nor yet for any suspicion lest this grace be not extensive enough to reach the most guilty character. Thus it is equally calculated to oppose both pride and despair.

“ As here the divine faithfulness is security, that *whosoever believes shall not perish, but have everlasting life*, I see nothing to hinder their *rejoicing in hope of the glory of God*. Yet I do not see that this rejoicing will exclude a fear of coming short of the promised rest, of being a castaway, or of drawing back unto perdition ; for I apprehend this may be maintained in perfect consistence with the record, that *God hath given to us eternal life in his Son*. It will yet admit of a jealousy, lest we have deceived ourselves, mistaken the truth, or believed in vain, notwithstanding we have been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, &c. For the apostle will warrant me to say, there are yet *better things which accompany salvation*. Therefore I do not perceive how a man is emboldened to say, He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*, before his calling and election is made sure by faith working with his works, and being made perfect by them ; for his faith must be justified by its fruits, (as I apprehend) before he can say with confidence, I believe, therefore I shall not come into condemnation.

“ I also



“ I also see, that as faith grows, so love will abound till it is perfected ; and that *there is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment ; he that feareth is not made perfect in love.* But I have no other conception of faith growing, than increasing in the knowledge of God, or in acquaintance with his good-will to men, whence comes that love to him, from which obedience is inseparable.

“ But if we speak about that peace with God which is enjoyed as soon as a man knows the truth, and is inseparable from being justified by faith, I know no other reason of this beginning of his confidence, and rejoicing of hope, but the general and free declarations of the gospel to sinners, under no other character than as ungodly and without strength. Nor can I think of the most advanced believer, who certainly keeps in mind, that nothing commends men to God but a perfect righteousness, (if he keeps not this in view, he is not the person we speak of ;) I cannot think of such an one who keeps in mind, that our God is a consuming fire, who can extract joy from any thing but that righteousness in which God is well pleased ? This is that which his faith works by love to, and is thereby proved to be the faith of God’s elect.

“ But as we were speaking of what that is in the record of God, in which men rejoice as soon as they know it is true, you may take my thoughts thereon in a familiar simile. If, in a time of famine, a person who had store should cause to be proclaimed, Whosoever will, let him



come and take corn at my granary freely; in this case, a starving person who believed the proclamation, would need no particular invitation, describing him by any thing but his wants, to encourage him to say, Then I shall not starve or want, seeing *he is faithful that promised*. I conceive the joy of this person would arise from, and be proportioned to the confidence he had in the truth of the proclamation; and he would have *personal* hope and joy, because it is a general invitation of whosoever will. Yet all this generosity would pass for nothing to him who did not believe it, or was in hope of doing well without it, and too proud to live on mere alms. If any one questioned his own personal welcome to the gift, seeing it was of mere grace, it is obvious he would mistake, and so not believe the proclamation; as he would who should put an impertinent emphasis on the word *will*, and inquire, Am I truly willing? &c. thus limiting it to the better disposed sort of people.

“ The *whosoever will*, would be sufficient to maintain the joy of him that believed it, although it was said, this bounteous person foreknows who will believe him and accept his kindness, and for such only he intends it: for he would say, Such a general invitation leaves me no occasion to make out my personal election, for I am not invited under any descriptive name, but that of a wretch that is perishing with hunger; therefore I am as freely invited, as though there was no other in my case, or as any of them who have already received it. I own my similitude  
halts,



halts, in that no man can exercise sovereignty in disposing the mind to acceptance, consistent [with the supposed declaration ; nor is bodily food actually enjoyed when the report of it is believed, which is the case of the bread of God, for men live *by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*

“ I admit, that joy and peace in believing would be very faint, if it had no more to rest upon, or rise from, than saying and believing. Some few will be saved; peradventure I may be among them. For I do not take this to be believing the whole record of God concerning his Son, seeing this declaration would leave us to imagine some qualification in those few which partook of it. I take it, the joy of faith is greatly proportioned to the clearness and extent of that view which the person has of the grace of God which bringeth salvation. Yet this doth never banish such a fear as is not tormenting, but like the apprehension of danger which a manslayer would have, keeping him in the city of refuge till the death of the high priest, knowing he would be safe from the avenger of blood no where but there.

“ The Inquirer’s account of faith seems to suppose it to consist in more than a belief of the facts which God hath testified concerning his Son. But if we include in that account of faith the belief of what God hath told us as the *meaning* of those facts, I cannot see how faith can consist in any thing more, unless it consists in believing more than God hath spoken: for if I can de-  
termine



termine *what* men ought to believe, I will leave it to critics to tell them *how* to believe. Introducing the devils as believing, to shew that we must believe more than they, or in another manner, is nothing to the purpose; for we cannot say to them as we may to men, *To you is the word of this salvation sent.* If by assurance of personal welcome he means no more than believing, that *him that cometh, he will in no wise cast out,* I heartily approve its full meaning."

Those who would see the Inquiry considered more particularly, may peruse a sixpenny pamphlet lately published at Edinburgh, called *Considerations on an Inquiry, &c.*

Toward the end of the last year (1761) was published in London, though not in Edinburgh till March 1762, a book intitled,

*PALÆMON'S creed reviewed and examined; wherein several gross and dangerous errors advanced by the author of the LETTERS ON THERON AND ASPASIO are detected and refuted, and the Protestant doctrine concerning the covenant of works and the covenant of grace, conviction of sin, regeneration, faith, justification, inherent grace, &c. vindicated from the cavils and exceptions of that author, and shewn to be entirely conformable to the apostolic doctrine concerning the several points aforementioned. In Two Volumes. By David Wilson.*

This book may be considered as the best answer to PALÆMON that has yet appeared, and that in three respects. 1. It is the most copious and particular one. 2. As it espouses most points of  
of



of the popular doctrine censured by PALÆMON, so it gives the fullest view of the temper of mind which that doctrine inspires, as how it operates when roused by opposition, and what low arts it must use to hide the shame of its favourite doctrine, when freely exposed in its proper hatefulness by the scriptures. 3. The favourable reception it hath obtained among those whom PALÆMON obviously intended to point forth as the most zealous enemies of the gospel, clearly evinces the inattention or insincerity of those who affect to insinuate, that there is little or no difference between the truth PALÆMON contends for, and the popular doctrine; yea, it serves to shew, that there must be an irreconcilable aversion between the two. This book, then, may be considered as the best answer PALÆMON has got; as being, in the most respects, subservient to his views, and affording the fullest confirmation of his censures.

As the author is known to be a preacher of the Scotch covenant in London, and of that faith which consists in believing what cannot be called *true* till it be believed, his doctrine is not like to have much weight with those who hope to be saved by the truth already ascertained in the scripture, and who have thence learned to hold in just abomination every attempt to revive the horrid principles of extirpation, which become doubly hateful when introduced under the impious pretence of their being patronized by the sacred name of Jesus, than which it will be difficult to find a more base, impudent falsehood.

It



It may seem at first view no small condescension in the sons of the solemn League to take such pains in convicting heretics whom they cannot extirpate. But then it must be remembered, that the old tyrant their father is dead, having experienced the truth of that ancient saying, *All they that take the sword, shall perish with the sword*; and that he was solemnly buried (firm may the turf lie on his head) by consent of the three Estates of the kingdom at the Revolution, having left behind him only some weakly posthumous children, who frequently, with sad countenances, point at his grave, lamenting his untimely fate. As his memory is very dear to them, they have contrived to make an image \* of him, which is thought by some to be as like him as a dead thing can well be to a living. Being desirous that the memory of their father should be preserved as lively as possible by means of this image, they have resolved, demanded, and solicited, that the same homage should be paid to the image as seems due to the original, at least so long as the latter remains under ground. For however strange it may seem, they still entertain hopes, as well as fervent wishes, that such a favourable concurrence of circumstances may happen, as that the old tyrant himself may yet be raised from the dead,

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\* That is, a bond framed, not twenty years ago, by the leaders of the *secession*, as much after the form of the old League and Covenant as the difference of the times would, in their view, admit.



and once more blefs his children, and terrify their foes by a fight of his awful face. Meanwhile, however, the homage demanded for the image goes but heavily forward; for many, even of the acknowledged children, scruple to pay it. Nor is this to be wondered at; for it is difficult to supply the place even of one graven image by another, without the risk of greatly diminishing the wonted homage; as may appear from the following passage of MAITLAND'S *history of Edinburgh*, relating an event that happened there in 1558.

“ The reformation of religion in Scotland be-  
 “ ing greatly encouraged by people of all ranks,  
 “ the populace, out of a furious zeal, destroyed  
 “ the monasteries and images in all parts; and  
 “ the first of September which was approaching,  
 “ being St GILES'S day, the tutelar saint of Edin-  
 “ burgh, the Popish priests and monks, accord-  
 “ ing to custom, made great preparations to  
 “ celebrate that anniversary in honour of their  
 “ patron; and lest the new converts should  
 “ disturb the procession, they humbly intreated  
 “ the Queen-regent to honour the solemnity with  
 “ her presence, which they imagined would pre-  
 “ vent the insults of the populace; which MARY  
 “ agreeing to, they prepared a magnificent pageant  
 “ whereon the statue of St GILES, was to be  
 “ placed, and carried in triumph through the  
 “ city. All things being ready for the sumptuous  
 “ procession, both regulars and seculars repaired  
 “ in great state to the shrine of St GILES, to  
 “ fetch his statue to be carried in triumph; but,  
 “ as



“ as ill-luck would have it, it was carried off the  
 “ the night before by some mischievous enemy  
 “ which had like to have put an end to the whole  
 “ affair. But that St GILES might not lose the  
 “ honour of a triumph, a small statue was bor-  
 “ rowed from the Grayfriars, which the people  
 “ in derision called *young St Giles*; which being  
 “ attended by a great number both of priests and  
 “ monks, and fine bands of music, marched in  
 “ great pomp through the chief streets of Edin-  
 “ burgh. But the Regent withdrawing a little  
 “ before the procession was over, the mob dis-  
 “ mounted *young St Giles* from his throne, and  
 “ and tore him in pieces; which so intimidated his  
 “ attendants, that happy was he that could se-  
 “ cure himself from the fury of the enraged mul-  
 “ titude. But, by the prudent management of  
 “ the magistrates, none suffered but *young St*  
 “ *Giles*, who was entirely demolished.”

This story may likewise serve to remind us of  
 several other useful, though obvious reflections;  
 as, that all idols set up by the clergy triumph or  
 sink into contempt, according as princes and those  
 in power give or withdraw their countenance;  
 that the popular clergy will fall upon strange  
 shifts rather than suffer a displaced idol to want  
 some kind of substitute; that the triumphant  
 idols, which formerly made Christendom trem-  
 ble, and the modern substitutes, differ in reality  
 no more than an *old* and a *young St GILES*; and  
 that when the magistrates are prudent, even the  
 more formidable idols may slide easily into con-  
 tempt, without damage to any living soul.

The



The retainers of the young solemn League, not having the countenance of a prince to command respect, have hitherto declined the attempt of honouring him with a public triumph, lest they should provoke the greater insult both against him and themselves. They content themselves at present with doing him homage within doors, by solemnly swearing fealty to him with uplifted hands, and confirming the same by subscribing their names; yet, as it is highly convenient that his followers and well-wishers should be as numerous as possible, the most tender indulgence is shown to such of them as scruple to pay the full homage, or, as the phrase is, *want light* about it. For these are admitted to the highest privileges of brethren, provided they are found lying open to light, and using the means of instruction, that is, if they seriously peruse the writings, and reverently attend the proclamations of the young League's heralds. And perhaps the heralds themselves are sensible, that it is not easy to paint a dead image in so lively colours as to strike the eyes of the beholders with that same evidence of majesty, which would shine so naturally from the awful presence of the living original. For if the old tyrant himself should yet arise from the dead, and, having the sword carried before him, step forward in his wonted fierceness, holding in his right hand the bible open at *Curse ye Meroz*, and with his left shaking his parchments, enacting all pains, civil and ecclesiastic; who can doubt but he would soon  
dispel



dispel the darkness from the eyes of many, who now excuse the deficiency of their homage by their want of light?

However much the sons of the solemn League, who subsist by the generous indulgence of the present government, have shewn themselves unworthy of that blessing, by their unnatural murmuring against the legal Toleration, not to say Establishment, enjoyed by others; yet I would be far from grudging them the benefit of that Toleration, which they so much grudge to see bestowed on their neighbours: yea, I ought rather to wish the continuance of that benefit to them, not only from principles of humanity toward those, who, however disposed, are unable to hurt the public tranquillity, but also in regard that the continuance of such a religious body, enjoying the protection of the government, is, in several respects, an useful and instructive sight.

They serve, like the impotent remains of Jacobitism, as a standing proof of the generosity and easy security of our government, which is no more affected by their murmuring than the well-mounted horseman is by the little barking creatures of the villages through which he passes, whose hoarse notes he considers rather as an enlivening salute, than a cause of serious resentment. They serve also, like the Jews, for a standing proof of the truth of the scriptures, while they bear witness to those writings as divinely inspired, which afford the clearest documents of the absurdness and hypocrisy of their conduct.



conduct. Moreover, they serve the same end in the present age, as did their ancestors the Jews and judaizing Christians in the apostolic age, who, by their opposition, kept alive the controversy about the faith, and furnished occasion to the apostles and their adherents to make the evidence of the truth concerning Christ's person and kingdom to shine forth the more clearly in its beautiful simplicity and consistency. Further, it might be difficult to persuade some Christians, who have little opportunity of reading history, that the gospel has already been corrupted as much as the apostles foretold, if such living proofs were wanting.

Now, when one beholds such men teaching us to hope for salvation, by believing what appears not true till it be believed, and abusing the sacred name of Jesus to patronize the same corrupt worldly views, on account of which the Reformers censured the church of Rome, must he not think it very diverting to see these same sons of the solemn League setting up for champions of the Protestant doctrine against Popish tenets, unless he considers their serious aim to be to persuade us to be true *Scotch* instead of *Roman Catholics*?

When we observe how deeply our reviewer has been afflicted by PALÆMON's censure of his doctrine, and his worthies who patronize it; and at the same time reflect that he is a son of the solemn League, we must own, that he bears his chastisement as well as could be expected. The virtue of patience is always most con-



spicuous when it sustains properly the greatest trials. So well is the reviewer armed with this virtue, that, even after the fatigue of advancing to the middle of his second volume, he says, *p.* 159. "I would not choose to render railing for railing," which plainly indicates a very sober-minded choice. Nor must we too hastily conclude that he had no idea of the propriety of such a choice, though we find him, from beginning to end of his two Volumes, frequently discharging his heart in such noisy explosions as these noted below\* ; for even ships of war sometimes discharge guns that have no tendency to annoy the enemy, but serve merely as signals of distress. How averse he is to give the least offence

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\* For shortness, and to prevent mistakes, his book may be cited under the name of *Review*; vol. i. this impious writer, *p.* 127 —agents for hell, and factors for the devil, 207.—a malignant opposition to the true doctrine of the gospel— with a malicious attempt to defame, 213 —And there is no reason to doubt but God will seasonably vindicate the honour of his own name —by stopping the mouths of such liars and blasphemers, 187. Again, vol. ii —reveries of a distempered imagination. occasioned by a rooted disaffection and malicious opposition— scoffing libertine and stubborn sectary, 159 —such brainfick writers as he, 163.—such a *farrago* of crude, senseless, and contradictory notions, 187.—an impudent ranting sectary, 197 — by many degrees exceeded the grossest Pelagians in heresy and blasphemy. 210.— his impious assertions, and blasphemous insinuations, 226.—scurrilous reproaches, 227 —wicked prevarication, and scandalous disingenuity—blasphemous insinuating. 228 — makes every appearance or semblance of practical religion and godliness a subject of ridicule, and treats all Christian exercise and experience with the most profane contempt, 231.—such an amazing height of impiety—such an instance of daring impiety and blasphemy—that scheme of principles, or rather hodge-podge of error, nonsense, and blasphemy—for impiety and blasphemy few of them [the doctrines of devils] have exceeded, or even equalled, 241.



fence to PALÆMON, may appear, from his modestly withdrawing from his worthies the title of *Reverend*, which he is satisfied well becomes them. “I have,” says he omitted the title of *Reverend*, lest it should offend our author\*.” Since the reviewer then is so inoffensively disposed, have we not some reason to conclude, that if he could have found relief to his mind otherwise, he would have fired fewer guns of distress?

His distress may further appear, both by the charges he brings, and his manner of evincing them. The general charge, which is several times repeated in nearly the same words, may be seen in vol. ii. p. 297. where speaking of that creed which PALÆMON has the assurance to call the *ancient apostolic gospel*, he adds, “And I  
“hope the intelligent and impartial reader, by  
“this time, will easily perceive, that, far from  
“meriting that honourable appellation, it is no-  
“thing else but a confused jumble of Pelagian,  
“Popish, Socinian, and Antinomian errors,  
“blended together with a little art, and inter-  
“persed now and then with some fantastical no-  
“tions peculiar to that new society of sectaries  
“in Scotland,” &c. To evince this charge, which is distributed into twenty articles, is the task he undertakes; and what distresses him is, that he can find so little evidence. Hence we find him so often complaining of PALÆMON’s obscurity, as *preface*, p. 42. “It would be a  
C c 2 “very

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\* Review, vol. i. p. 117.



“ very unpleasant task to follow this extraordi-  
 “ nary writer through all the mazes of obscurity,  
 “ mysticism, ambiguity, and inconsistency, in  
 “ which he endeavours to entangle the ignorant  
 “ and the unwary.—It must indeed be acknow-  
 “ ledged, that this writer has thrown such a mist  
 “ of ambiguity and obscurity upon almost every  
 “ subject he treats of, as makes it very dif-  
 “ ficult to know what are his real sentiments.—  
 “ He has buried almost every subject he touches  
 “ upon in such ambiguity and obscurity, that it  
 “ is often very difficult to know whether his  
 “ words have this or that meaning, any mean-  
 “ ing, or no meaning.”

Moreover, it distresses him to find any one  
 pretending to receive the least instruction from  
 such a trifling writer. “ What pity is it that men  
 “ should suffer themselves thus to be bantered out  
 “ of their religion and reason too, by the scorn-  
 “ ful and senseless reflections of one of the most  
 “ trifling, though one of the most arrogant writers  
 “ that this, or perhaps any age, has produc-  
 “ ed \* ?” Now, reader, is it not somewhat  
 strange, that an obscure, trifling, and withal ar-  
 rogant writer, should put together a confused  
 jumble of senseless notions, in words to which  
 it is often difficult to affix any meaning, and yet  
 in composing this jumble, to lay down a plan for  
 deceiving, not only the simple, but also those of  
 whom other things might have been expected,  
 and that even in the most important matters? yet  
 it seems “ thus he endeavours to deceive the  
 “ simple, and has actually imposed upon some,  
 “ of

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\* Review, pref. p. 52.



“ of whom other things might have been ex-  
 “ pected ; but it is hoped the more judicious  
 “ will easily perceive the *artifice*, and escape  
 “ the snare which he has laid for the inattentive  
 “ and unwary \*.”

Now to what shall we compare the strange obscurity of PALÆMON'S creed ? It seems to resemble the blackness of an impending storm, dark and dreadful at once ; and it would seem, that, in the one case, as in the other, a gleam of lightning now and then darts through the gloom, adding increase of trouble to the beholder's mind. That our reviewer is both troubled at that creed, and at the same time straitened to account for the design or artifice manifest in it, may appear from his own words ; for he says, “ It is not  
 “ easy to conceive what the writer could intend  
 “ by troubling the world with such a *farrago* of  
 “ crude, senseless, and contradictory notions, as  
 “ he hath thrown together on this subject †” of faith. Now, why should a foolish book about religion trouble the world so well accustomed to such productions ? But if PALÆMON'S creed be supposed the same with that of the Apostles, and accordingly to have something divine about it, then the wonder will cease : for it was said long ago, *These men do exceedingly trouble our city*. And when the author of the Christian creed was born, though his earthly condition was very obscure, yet that event being attended

C c 3

with

\* Review, pref. p. 47.

† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 187.



with an apprehension that God was there, we find that "Herod and all Jerusalem with him were troubled" on that occasion.

It may likewise be remarked, that as the doctrine of the apostles about faith is very closely connected with their account of the heavenly nature of Christ's kingdom, which is *not of this world*; so nothing serves more effectually to fill the Clergy's kingdom with darkness, and defeat their attempts to restore it, than a free display of the scripture-doctrine on the connection of these two important points. And the New Testament forbids us to be surprised, when on that event we find the clergy, instead of repenting of their deeds, gnawing their tongues for pain, and to ease their hearts, opening their mouths in strange expressions against that doctrine, and all who maintain it. How much the reviewer is galled by that doctrine, which neither he nor his fellows, though long since loudly called upon, have yet dared to answer; and what strange things the anguish of his heart compels him to utter, (while he looks back with wishful eyes toward that period which appears so glorious to him, when his forefathers, the covenanters, with a high hand, wielded the persecuting sword) may be seen in many pages of his book, particularly toward the end of his preface, and toward the end of each volume, and in page 159 of the last. But however great the anguish of such men may be, Christians are not allowed to sympathize with them; because it is said of the great Redeemer, that in recovering his people from  
from



from the Anti-christian kingdom, or spiritual Babylon, *he shall thoroughly plead their cause*, not only to give rest to his land or his people, but also with this express intention, *to disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon*, as we now see abundantly verified at this day. Therefore let Babylon, with those who lament her decay, bear her judgment, and let Christians join with the honourable company mentioned in the heavenly proclamation, *Rejoice over her, thou heaven; and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her.*

If we attend the reviewer a little further, we may find him no less troubled with the light than with the darkness of PALÆMON'S creed. The case seems to stand thus. PALÆMON'S scheme, *at first view, would seem to be a defence of the Christian doctrine; this one would take to be the genuine and obvious signification of his words: but this can by no means be admitted; for if he had honestly intended to vindicate the Christian doctrine, he would never have discovered such a warm opposition to such eminent preachers of the gospel* \*. “We do allow that there are some  
“valuable truths which he sometimes appears to  
“to set in a very clear and strong light †,”  
though never with a good intention. His constant opposition to the orthodox, plainly proves that he must have an heterodox or heretical intention in all that he says. But the

C c 4

great

\* Review, pref. p. 12.

† vol. ii. p. 297.



great difficulty is, how to convict him of this wicked intention, so as to make it plainly appear to others from his own words. This difficulty is the greater, that the cunning heretic hath carefully studied so to choose and arrange his words, that at first view they would seem to present a good and sound meaning, and this sound meaning one would take to be their genuine and obvious signification. Yet by these same words his wicked intention must be proved. A hard task, it must be owned ! Who would not in this case complain aloud of the obscure prospect before him ? And had not the reviewer reason to say, “ It would be a very unpleasant task “ to follow this extraordinary writer through all “ the mazes of obscurity,” &c. and accordingly to take the best method he could to abridge his labour ?

The task of detecting the heretic, however, is undertaken. The prying reviewer, by carefully poring on P'ALÆMON'S words, at last obtained something like the faculty of the *second sight* in regard to them, which made them wear quite another aspect than they obviously do *at first view* ; and accordingly found, that, “ by the “ help of a little art, they may be so explained as “ to admit of a sense quite opposite to that which “ one would take to be their genuine and obvious “ signification ; and the whole scheme may be “ turned into almost as many different shapes “ as you please. For though at first view it “ would seem to be laid in opposition to some “ dangerous corruptions of the Christian doctrine, “ especially



“ especially concerning justification through the  
 “ imputed righteousness, it may be so explained  
 “ as to favour either Pelagianism, or Antino-  
 “ mianism, Socinianism, or Popery ; yea, one  
 “ might easily form a creed out of it, containing  
 “ the substance of all the heresies just now men-  
 “ tioned, in so far as they relate to *faith, justifica-*  
 “ *tion, regeneration, conversion, sanctification,*  
 “ &c. \* ”

When PALÆMON’S words and sentiments are once thoroughly ground to powder in the reviewer’s mill, and then wrought up into a new paste, or digested into his *summary*, and then carefully reviewed and examined, then the reader may *easily form* a very different judgment, concerning the scope and tendency of his whole scheme from what he could at first view. So after intimating how unpleasant it would be to follow PALÆMON’S mazes step by step, as he had at first intended, he adds, “ Upon second  
 “ thoughts I changed my resolution, apprehend-  
 “ ing it would be more for the benefit of the  
 “ reader, and less trouble to myself, to collect  
 “ some of the principal heads of his new  
 “ doctrine into one *summary*, which being care-  
 “ fully reviewed and examined, one may easily  
 “ form a judgment concerning the scope and  
 “ tendency of his whole scheme †.”

It is proper likewise to observe, that though it was PALÆMON’S design to catch the simple, and  
 make

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\* Review, pref. p. 44.

† Ibid. p. 42.



make his errors take hold even of the inattentive, yet so wretchedly and obscurely hath he executed his design, that even his “ more palpable absurdities and gross abominations lie concealed in his writings ; so as frequently to elude the observation of the simple and inattentive ;” and perhaps might have remained concealed from their view, if they had not been aided by some such sagacious pointer as our reviewer. Take his own words. “ As it would be needless to pursue this author through all the tiresome and intricate paths of error, in which he endeavours to entangle his unwary reader, we must content ourselves with giving only a few hints, that perhaps may be of use for detecting some of the more palpable absurdities, and gross abominations, which lie concealed in his writings, so as frequently to elude the observation of the simple and inattentive \*.”

Though the reviewer is at great pains to lay open PALÆMON'S heresy, yet by some strange accident so it happens, that the sentiments of the latter are so closely wrapt up in the disguise of truth and sound meaning, that the former, after writing more than 200 pages of his review, is greatly perplexed how to tear off that disguise ; while yet he would have his reader take his honest word for it, that, were the disguise once fairly stripped off, the wickedness of the heretic's sentiments *would instantly be obvious to*  
*the*

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\* Review, vol. i. p. 119..



*the meanest capacity.* Take his own words again.  
 “ Were this gentleman’s peculiar tenets stripped  
 “ of all disguise, cleared of all ambiguity, and  
 “ set forth in a plain simple dress, their con-  
 “ trariety to the scriptures, and all true Christian  
 “ experience, would instantly be obvious to the  
 “ meanest capacity ; and a malignant opposition  
 “ to the true doctrine of the gospel, and the  
 “ power of godliness, with a malicious attempt  
 “ to defame the memory and character of a  
 “ number of worthy men, who shewed a laud-  
 “ able zeal, and hearty concern for the purity of  
 “ the gospel, found to be the special *character-*  
 “ *istics* of his strange performance \*.”

If what is here wished for could only be done, all matters would be easy ; but PALÆMON is such a cunning rogue, that the best pointer is in hazard of losing his scent in following him ; so the reviewer immediately subjoins to the words last cited : “ But he is remarkable for a peculiar dex-  
 “ terity in expressing himself, so as to reserve a  
 “ number of little subterfuges, to which he may  
 “ have recourse when attacked, and avoid the  
 “ dint of any argument that may be offered in  
 “ confutation of his darling sentiments. If he  
 “ should be beaten out of one, he has another to  
 “ fly to ; and to pursue him through all the  
 “ dreary paths of *ambiguity, mysticism* and *ob-*  
 “ *scurity*, and the several *refuges of lies*, in which  
 “ he endeavours to secure himself from the blows  
 “ of

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\* Review, vol. i. p. 213.



“ of any adversary that may think fit to attack  
 “ him, must be acknowledged to be no pleasant  
 “ nor easy task.”

Nor is it easy for the reviewer to compose his mind so much as to be able to affix any certain character to PALÆMON, whose book sometimes appears a master-piece of deceitful artifice, at other times such a confused jumble of senseless contradictory notions, that the reviewer is obliged to say at the close of his 17th article, “ But it is to no  
 “ purpose to reason with one who either knows  
 “ not or cares not what he says.” At another time PALÆMON is scarce inferior to the devil himself for contrivance: “ Perhaps the devil  
 “ himself could never have invented an engine  
 “ more effectual for supporting and promoting all  
 “ the interests of his kingdom in the world, and  
 “ in the hearts of men, than this [scheme of  
 “ justification,] especially as it is improved by  
 “ the Letter-writer, must be acknowledged to  
 “ be †.”

Yea, so distressed is the reviewer with the light or clear evidence of design shining through the dark choas of PALÆMON'S book, that one would think his own mind was somewhat disordered or jumbled by it, like the good people in his brother Mr MACKIE'S neighbourhood, who, as we have heard above, were thrown into a jumble by the same means. For he sometimes, even in the same sentence, calls what is contained  
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† Ibid. p. 122.



in said book a medley, or confused jumble of things put together with art, imagining perhaps to soften the contradiction by saying, *a little art*. That strange book then is a fortuitous concourse of atoms enveloped in thick darkness, or “ a confused jumble of many different things put together without any order or connection \* ;” yet by some strange chance arranging themselves in such order, as every where to shew evidence of intention, yea unity of design through the whole ; and that so clearly, that even our reviewer, notwithstanding the mist of obscurity he has to look through, is obliged to confess that all this could scarcely happen without some little art.

Though the reviewer hath taken no small pains to undeceive the simple, yet he is scarce willing to risk his discoveries on the verdict of such readers ; but by frequent courtesies he hath contracted a very intimate acquaintance with the judicious, intelligent, and impartial reader, who, after so many instructions, would be very unworthy of the pains taken with him, if he did not acknowledge, as his instructor kindly hopes, that he easily perceives, at least the more gross and palpable heresies which lie concealed in PALÆMON’S writings.

As for PALÆMON, since he is allowed to have some faculty, or to have endeavoured with some success, to persuade the simple, it would ill become him to despise such readers ; yea, it is only from such  
readers

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\* The reviewer’s explication of *farrago*, vol. ii p. 187.



readers as are so simple as to entertain a friendly bias toward his creed, that he can expect a favourable ear to his defence of it ; as for the judicious, intelligent, impartial, or unbiaſed readers, as he has not the honour of being acquainted with them, ſo he deſpairs of writing much to their ſatisfaction, till they receive ſome bias in favour of his creed, and ſo take their rank with the ſimple.

For answer then to the review, ſimple reader, be adviſed by your friend PALÆMON, to take his meaning as it appears to you at firſt view, or according to the genuine and obvious ſignification of his words ; and if there be any groſs palpable hereſies that lie concealed in his writings, he wiſhes, for your ſake and his own, that they may remain for ever concealed from your ſight. As to the reviewer's account of PALÆMON's tenets, you are in no great hazard of being impoſed upon by it, becauſe you ſee it wants even the requiſite character of tolerable fiction, to wit, probability. So you find he reſembles the loweſt claſs of painters, who take care to inform the ſpectator by what name he ſhall call the picture. Hence you find what he gives you for PALÆMON's tenets, ſo often marked with ſome of the worſt-ſounding names he can find in his catalogue of heretics.

Obſerve now what rule he lays down for convicting the heretic. “ We muſt not take an  
 “ eſtimate of his principles from any aſſertions  
 “ which we find occaſionally dropt in his Let-  
 “ ters, but from the general ſcope and purport  
 of



“ of them, and especially from the doctrines  
 “ he shews the strongest inclination to oppose  
 “ and vilify \*.” This agrees with what was said  
 in preface, p. 12. “ Had this gentleman honest-  
 “ ly intended to vindicate the doctrine of justifi-  
 “ cation through the imputed righteousness,—  
 “ he would never have discovered such a warm op-  
 “ position to those eminent preachers of the gospel,  
 “ who made it their business, and whose leading  
 “ aim it was, in all their discourses and writings,  
 “ to teach, improve, illustrate, and vindicate the  
 “ same doctrine,” &c. How far PALÆMON’S  
 doctrine is from being the same with theirs, is  
 sufficiently evident, by the wide difference be-  
 tween him and the reviewer, who, it seems, is  
 sustained as their advocate by the people who  
 adhere both to him and them. Now, PALÆMON  
 must be a vile heretic, because he opposes so  
 many worthy men ; and therefore it is vain for  
 him to pretend to clear himself by any assertions  
 found in his book, on however many occasions  
 they have dropped from his pen : for if he had  
 been a man of sound principles, he would never  
 have opened his mouth against the solemn  
 League, the appropriation, direct and reflex acts  
 of faith, and all the worthy men who have  
 taught us to reverence these things. He often  
 asserts justification by faith without works ; but  
 what signify his assertions ? his meaning can  
 never be right, so long as he opposes those good  
 men,

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\* Review, vol. ii. p. 273



men, who, having given us many directions how to perform a right act of faith, or to essay stretching out the withered hand, enforce all with the earnest exhortation, *Up therefore, and be doing*. He can be no friend to the interest of religion, because he despises the zealous and prudent methods taken by good men to make Christianity the religion of whole nations, so to free that religion from the imperfections of its infant state, when it stood closely connected with that inconvenient thing the cross: for no wise man can doubt but it is much more convenient for Christians to be in a condition to chastise unbelievers, than to run the risk of receiving chastisement from them. Besides, he must have a very profane turn of mind, because he laughs at the serious labours of unbelievers to attain to justification by faith without works; and what shews his profaneness to be quite extravagant, is his maintaining, that any church committing that fornication with the kings of the earth, spoke of in JOHN'S Revelation, may fitly be called *an harlot*, and can have no more resemblance to the *virgin daughter of Zion*, or New-Testament church, than a persecutor has to a Christian.

An instance or two may serve for a specimen of the reviewer's account of PALÆMON'S tenets.

“ What shall we think of PALÆMON, who—  
 “ reproaches and blasphemes the whole work of  
 “ his Holy Spirit in the regeneration, conversion,  
 “ and sanctification of believers \* ?” Again, “ If  
 “ it

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\* Review, vol. i. p. 136.



“ it can be said, that PALÆMON—has any lead-  
 “ ing sentiment, it is the following, namely, that  
 “ the divine righteousness, or the work finished  
 “ by Christ on the cross, is so all-sufficient for  
 “ the justification and salvation of the most guilty,  
 “ as to supersede all necessity of any inward and  
 “ supernatural work of the divine Spirit upon the  
 “ minds and hearts of men.” † Yet PALÆ-  
 MON is afterward charged as maintaining the  
 connection between the agency of the Holy  
 Spirit and the knowledge of the truth rather too  
 closely for the reviewer, who is accordingly at  
 pains to confute him. “ And this, by the way,  
 “ may serve to confute the strange notion ad-  
 “ vanced by PALÆMON in the following words,  
 “ *There is no separating the agency of the Holy*  
 “ *Spirit from the knowledge of the truth ‡.*”—  
 But how much PALÆMON hath insisted on the  
 necessity of the Holy Spirit’s work in the whole  
 matter of man’s salvation, needs not be told to  
 those who have read him. As for those who  
 incline to take his reviewer’s account of him,  
 they may do as suits them best.

For another instance, take his 19th article.

“ A believer has no occasion to consider him-  
 “ self as being under any obligation to yield obe-  
 “ dience to the divine law, nor can it be of any  
 “ advantage to him in regulating his practice and  
 “ conversation.” To evince this he begins thus :

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† Ibid. p. 137.

‡ vol. ii. p. 66.



“ I do not remember that PALÆMON has any  
 “ where, in express terms, denied the obligation  
 “ of the divine law with regard to believers ;  
 “ that would have been too plain dealing ; but  
 “ I do not find that in any passage of his Letters  
 “ he has clearly asserted it :” yet he cites PALÆ-  
 MON saying, “ The gospel was never intended  
 “ to make void the law in any respect ; yea, it  
 “ establishes the law on all sides in the strongest  
 “ manner.” He cites him again, saying, “ I  
 “ consider the perfect law, the law that requires  
 “ godliness and humanity in perfection, as the  
 “ sacred and invariable rule of correspondence  
 “ with God.” And in his 8th article, which  
 states a charge of equal truth with the present,  
 he cites him saying, “ The obligation of the law  
 “ is eternal, so can never be loosed.” But what  
 signify such assertions as these ? they can give us  
 no right information about PALÆMON’S tenets ;  
 for, says the reviewer, “ We must not take an  
 “ estimate of his principles from any assertions  
 “ we find occasionally dropped in his Letters,”  
 &c.—If ever the old tyrant, the solemn  
 League, should arise from the dead, and his in-  
 quisitors set up their tribunal, we should find  
 curious rules established for convicting heretics.  
 They would find room for conviction, not only  
 on what a man says, but also on what he says  
 not ; yea, they would find him guilty of mean-  
 ing the very contrary of what he says ; for sup-  
 pose they could not find him guilty of a wrong  
 word, they would hear him thinking amiss.—  
 Notwithstanding the great obscurity of PALÆ-  
 MON’S



MON'S book, the reviewer frequently finds him *plainly insinuating* the reverse of his repeated assertions; and expresses no small confidence, that the intelligent unprejudiced reader must *easily* see this.

But the reviewer's account of PALÆMON'S tenets is very harmless and excusable, when compared with his treatment of the scripture. He allows not the persuasion of the truth already ascertained in the gospel to be justifying faith, but along with MARSHALL, HERVEY, and others, makes it essential to that faith, that one believe what cannot be called true till it be believed. What indignity is hereby done to the great scope of all the scriptures, must be evident to those who hope to be saved by the truth already certified there. But then the scripture, insists on the *receiving* of Christ, and receiving must mean more than persuasion, even accepting, embracing, relying, &c. be it so, still the apostle's argument is good, however the expression be varied, *How shall they receive him on whom they have not believed?* The privilege of sons is bestowed on them that receive Christ, *even them that believe on his name.* So salvation is bestowed on them that call on the name of the Lord, even them that believe; for the argument runs thus, *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?*

So then they who advert to this argument of the apostle, can be at no loss to understand why it is sometimes said, *He that believeth, shall be saved* and at others, *Whosoever shall call on the name of the*



*Lord, shall be saved.*—Again, Christ is said to be the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. But how shall they obey till they believe? So PAUL again argues, *But they have not all obeyed;—for ESAIAS saith, Lord, who hath believed?*—Again, as men feed upon a happy event they have been assured of, by often calling it to remembrance; so PAUL, speaking of his gospel, says, *By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.* And he says of himself, *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.* What he testified to others about Christ, he constantly kept in memory, as the spring of his daily comfort, or as the food he daily fed on, because he was well assured it was true; and by the effect it had on him, he knew, that *Christ loved him, and gave himself for him.*

In like manner we may easily understand all the expressions about coming, eating, drinking, &c.; for how shall men go to feed till they be persuaded where food is to be found, either by feeling the savour of it, or hearing credible testimony? Now, the savour of the knowledge of Christ is spread abroad by the apostolic report; that savour prevents men, and they are led to resort whither the savour directs; for *wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.* Now, the eagles are at first prevented either by the welcome savour or sight, and thereby led to find the carcase. The fathers of old embraced the promises; but how came this to pass? *Having seen them afar off, they were persuaded*



*suaded of them, and embraced them* — The two passages, *Mark ii. 23, 24.* and *James i. 5, 6, 7.* cited in the review, vol. ii. p. 27. cannot prove that the scripture requires me, or any other person, to believe what is not absolutely true in itself previous to our belief, and whether we shall be found among the faithful or not ; unless it shall be said, that because Christ makes promises of benefits to those who continue in the faith, which shall not be bestowed on those who draw back ; or because he promises seasonable help to those disciples who depend on him in their straits, and bids them be assured of receiving it on their praying for it, therefore he calls us to believe what shall not prove infallibly true, believe we or not ; or whether any of us who hear these words, shall be found among the faithful or the apostates ! Will this consequence hold ? Nay ; for PAUL plainly repels it, saying, *If we deny him, he also will deny us ; if we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.*

Let us now observe what account of the *gift* and *promise* of God is made by the reviewer and his worthies. From such texts as these, *John vi. 32.* and *1 John v. 11.* they would persuade us, that God hath given eternal life to all the hearers of the gospel ; yet so as, by that giving, he in reality bestows nothing upon them, or conveys no real benefit to them, since it is allowed, that, notwithstanding that giving, they may yet perish eternally ; and that accordingly multitudes, to whom God is said to have given eternal life, do in reality perish, through some defect in their



receiving, or their not performing aright the appropriating act of faith. And what a blind task, what a sad labyrinth he enters upon, who seriously essays to perform that act, needs not now be told to those who have read our reviewer and his worthies, at least by PALÆMON. Now, reader, what thinkest thou of the *giving* now mentioned? Is it possible that thy heart can reverence the scriptures, and not resent such abuse of them?

These writers treat the scriptures, speaking of God's gift and promise of eternal life, suitably enough to their notion of Christ's connection with the whole human race by his birth, and much in the same manner as the opposers of particular redemption do the universal expressions about the extent of Christ's death: but if we are desirous to hold the scripture consistent with itself, we may easily observe, that Christ has his world, and that Satan has his world, yea, each his *whole world*, as we find in the 2d and 5th chapters of JOHN's first Epistle. So Christ has his *all men*, and antichrist has his *all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond*. And as antichrist has his *all nations*, so Christ has his *nations of them that are saved*. Now, to those who love the scripture-account of God's grace, Christ's peculiar connection with his people, in his birth, death, resurrection, &c. will appear to be very naturally set forth in such expressions as these:

1. As to his birth,—*Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.—I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people: for unto you is born*

*born*



born this day a Saviour.—Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins.—They shall call his name IMMANUEL, which being interpreted, is, God with us. 2. His death and resurrection;—Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. 3. Intercession;—Who also maketh intercession for us.—I pray for them; I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.—Neither pray I for these (the apostles) alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

With God's gift of the elect to his Son well corresponds his gift of his Son for them, or to them —God so loved the world, that he gave his Son, that whosoever believeth, &c.—He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

The great blessings conveyed to men are said to be given both by the Father and the Son; so JOHN, chapter vi. Labour\* —for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you.—My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.—For the bread of God is he who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.—The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. Again, chapter x. The good shepherd

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\* They who laboured in following Christ, according to this text, upon the persuasion that he was the giver of eternal life, or the bread of life, were certainly influenced in all their labour by faith. So we find by what follows in this chapter, that those who understood him not in this character, went back, and walked no more with him.



*giveth his life for the sheep.—And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. And chapter xvii. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.—And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them. So 1 John v. 11. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life.*

These, and many such passages, clearly ascertain the peculiar and inseparable connection between Christ and his people, in his incarnation, and all that follows upon it ; unless, disregarding the connection of the scripture-doctrine, we would play fast and loose with the pronouns *you* and *us*, according to our own fancy. They also shew, that all to whom God gives eternal life, are in reality, by his giving, put in possession of it. The scripture affords no ground for that equivocal notion of giving, which confers no benefit, nor serves any purpose, except it be to lay a foundation for what is called the *ministeral offer*, and give some countenance to the little self-seeking views of many preachers. PAUL, speaking of the certain salvation of all the true Israel, adds, *For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance* ; so can never prove ineffectual, through any defect in the hearer or receiver, because the unchangeable God, who gives and calls, will not repent.

This leads us to think of God's *promise* and *call* ; see *Acts* ii. 37—39. PETER seeing God's power leading many to repentance by the truth he

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he had testified, encourages them to proceed, as he saw God leading them, thus, *Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise \* is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many—as any preacher shall call? nay, but—as the Lord our God shall call.* Who these are, PAUL tells us, *Rom. ix. 24.* when speaking of the vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory, he adds, *Even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles.* And *Rom. viii. 30.* he says, *Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, justified, and glorified.* If it be said that many appear to be saints, and faithful partakers of the heavenly calling, who yet fall away; so likewise it may be said, that the promise seems

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\* Even the promise of the gift he had just now mentioned, the gift of the Holy Ghost, which God is said to give to believers, *Acts xi. 17.* or to them that obey him, *Acts v. 32.* even the same gift which Christ promised, *John v. 39.* that believers should receive, as the Old-Testament scripture, to which he refers, had foretold. Accordingly we find it was written in ISAIAH, chapter xliv. *I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring;* the consequence of which is said to be, *One shall say, I am the Lord's, &c.* even as, in the close of the next chapter, the redeemed church, every tongue, or all the seed of Israel, are represented as saying at last, *In the Lord have I righteousness and strength;* there being no foundation in the text or context for the supplement *one* before the words *shall say.*—The blessing mentioned by ISAIAH, chapter xliv. is the same that is spoken of in *Acts iii. 26.* which is conveyed thus, *Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities;* or as our critics of first repute warrant us to render the last words, *in, or upon, each of you turning away from his iniquities.* Let the reader choose which of the two he finds most convenient.



to belong to many who yet come short of it. But still it must be said, that the promise is only *unto as many as the Lord our God shall call*; and none can appear to us to be the *called of God*, but such as appear to believe the gospel PETER preached, and to comply with his exhortation to repentance.—Those who have read the reviewer's 10th and 14th articles, may see how widely this doctrine differs from his, and it concerns them as much as the disputants to judge which of the two agrees best with the scripture.

The promise of the earthly inheritance to the nation of Israel, and the faith answering to that promise, are figures of the spiritual promise, and the faith answering to it. But this subject is fully handled in GLAS'S *Works*, vol. iii. p. 402—406. Those who read the passage now referred to, and what our reviewer says upon the same subject in his 10th article, may judge for themselves. Mean-time it is needless to enlarge further on that subject till the passage referred to be answered.

As to general calls, or invitations with promises annexed, such as, *Come unto me,—and I will give you rest*; it may suffice to say, that all who are led to understand who it is that calls and invites, and how well it becomes him to say, *I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save*, are so taught of the Father; they are his called and chosen, to whom the promise belongs\*. And  
 none

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\* Accordingly we read, *Isaiab lii 6. Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that*



none but those who understand who it is that calleth, will ever understand what it means *to come*, or *to whom*, or yet have a proper relish for the *rest* promised to those who come. So before it be disputed whether there be any blessings promised to unbelievers to encourage them to come to Christ, it may be proper, first, to inquire, whether an unbeliever can have a relish for the blessings Christ promises; for unless this point be first cleared, it is not manifest how they can bear the aspect of encouragements to come to him.—But the common doctrine about equivocal gifts, promises, offers, calls, and invitations, however insignificant or prejudicial to the hearer, is very convenient for the preacher or ambassador, who will

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*that doth speak; behold, it is I.* And chap. liv. 13. *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.* And Psalm ix. 10 *They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.*—If any preacher, by means of the scripture, shall lead his hearers to understand the character of Him who speaks there, addressing the consciences of all sorts of men, then such hearers may be said to be *called of God* by that preacher's ministry; for such hearers *have heard and learned of the Father*, and they have learned to distinguish the voice of the true Shepherd from that of all strangers, and they understand the propriety of these words, *This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.*—But what shall we hearers think of a sinful mortal like ourselves, having no new message from heaven, nor any pretence to inspiration, yet standing up with great assurance, endeavouring to possess our minds with a high notion of his own dignity and importance, and accordingly lifting up his voice, saying, “*I call, I offer, I invite; you may never get such a good offer again; up therefore, and be doing; divine power is at hand to assist you. I have a message from heaven to you, and wo to the man who hearkens not to me; for by slighting me and my message, he slights his Maker!*”



will not therefore easily part with that doctrine. The reviewer's account of this subject may be seen in this 9th article.

The reviewer \* corrects PALÆMON for ascribing our impotency to do good to our aversion to it, and our readiness to do evil to our love of it, in this manner: "The apostle PAUL would have taught him another lesson; for, says that inspired writer, *To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.*" PAUL's next words are, *For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do.* And JAMES says, *Every man is tempted (with evil) when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed.* Therefore, before PALÆMON receives a new lesson, he must first be taught how to reconcile PAUL and JAMES, and not only so but PAUL with himself; for PAUL says, *Gal. v. 17. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.* And he says of himself, *Rom. vii. 25. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.* If the one side of the contrast, by the word *lust*, intends to signify any notion of love, desire, or inclination, so must the other; and it may well be asked, how can a man have any conviction of the guilt of sin, if it be done in no sense by his will? If the reviewer's devoutest readers shall receive this new lesson, then they will have an additional defence against the conviction of sin, at least of any sin exposing them to wrath, or needing remission by the

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\* Review, vol. ii. p. 257.



the atonement; for no sins that men commit need remission by Christ's blood, but such as make the guilty obnoxious to the wrath to come. We may call this lesson new, not only as unknown to PAUL and JAMES, but also to our modern HENRY, and other Commentators of repute for orthodoxy, though our reviewer triumphs not a little upon it.

As the reviewer is no less displeas'd with PALÆMON's doctrine about works than with his doctrine about faith, he accordingly censures him \* as taking part with the Papists, because he frequently utters such assertions as these: "No  
 " man can enjoy that life which lies in God's  
 " favour, further than he loves God, and keeps  
 " his commandments; no man can be assured  
 " that his sins are forgiven him, but in as far as  
 " he is freed from the service of sin, and led to  
 " work righteousness." PALÆMON had used that noted text, *Heb. vi. 11.* *And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, (in the work and labour of love) to the full assurance of hope unto the end.* The reviewer having done his best to accommodate these words to his doctrine of assurance by the appropriation, is still sensible that they convey an unhappy sound for him; so he ventures to offer an amendment of the translation, which, so far as I can learn, is altogether new; for though I have looked into POOLE's *Synopsis* and WOLF's *Curæ*, I cannot find that

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\* Review, vol. ii. p. 185.



that ever it entered the mind of any critic before. Our critic, however, finding the Greek preposition for *to*, in some other phrases rendered *with*, and *according to*, proposes to read our text thus, — *with*, or *according to the full assurance of hope*. His intelligent reader may judge of this amendment at his leisure. But PALÆMON'S simple reader would do well not to pay much regard to it, till he be able to shew it to be as suitable to the context as the present version is, and till he get many other texts likewise amended, such as 2 Pet. i. 10. *Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.* 1 John ii. 4. *He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* Chap. iii. 14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death.*

By what temper and conduct the first believers made their calling sure, is plainly enough described in the New Testament; but what shall we think of that assurance of divine favour which is acquired at first by an appropriating act, and retained tenaciously to the last, by one who is all the while walking after the spirit of the solemn League and Covenant! and what strange notions must one have of the influence of the Holy Ghost, who imagines it coincides with the spirit of the solemn League! and who accordingly prays, that the purposes of the latter may be promoted by a plentiful effusion of the former!



mer! Say, my simple readers, is this the true Protestant doctrine that we ought to hold fast as our preservative against the errors and spirit of Popery?

Before we have done with the review, it may be proper to take some notice of one important topic, as to which it highly concerns the reader to be upon his guard.

PALÆMON is charged with laying a foundation for idolatry by his doctrine about worshipping HIM, who is with propriety called the *the man Christ Jesus*, and whom PALÆMON, after the apostles, constantly maintains to be no other than a divine person, and the IMAGE of the invisible God, even the person respected by the heavenly proclamation, *Let all the angels of God worship HIM*. The Jews said, John x. 33. *For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a MAN, makest THYSELF God*. That the man Jesus made this account of himself, was not disputed, but only how justly. The Jews charged this account with blasphemy. If the reviewer can find means to justify this accusation, the same means will serve him for condemning PALÆMON, who at present cannot see how his doctrine on this head is affected by any thing advanced in the review, unless it be meant in support of the Jewish accusation, or to convict the apostle PAUL of impropriety in calling Christ *the image of the invisible God*.

As the reviewer is not the only person who opposes PALÆMON's doctrine on this head, I shall



shall lay before the reader an extract of a letter sent me on the subject, dated May 10. 1762.

“ROMAINE, exclaiming from his pulpit against the worship of a glorified man displaying every divine perfection, acts very consistently with his believing that man to be a human person, so united with the Son of God, as to be disjoined and separated from him, and left to suffer death by himself for the sins of men, when he said, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* The worship of that man's person must be creature-worship and idolatry, in his account; and he can have nothing to do with the man Christ Jesus, when he would worship what he calls the Son of God in his revealed emblem, the light of this world, wherein he is no more visible to him than the Father is in the fire. To him, therefore, all who believe the Son of God to be the very person of that glorified man, and so worship that man's person, are infidels, (disbelievers of HUTCHINSON'S Hebrew revelation) creature-worshippers; and it behoved him to shew his Hutchinsonian zeal against them.

“But it is not so easy to reconcile what WILSON the Seceder writes on this subject, with his creed. He believes, that Christ the Son of God became man, taking to himself a true body and reasonable soul, and that he is both God and man, in two distinct natures and one person, for ever. This he maintains against all heresy about the person and natures of Christ; and so it is his creed, that this body and soul, which the Son of God took to himself, is no other person but



but that divine one. What then should make him exclaim so against the worship of that man? or what could move him to charge the presenting of the true object of worship to him in that man, with no less than a denial of the divinity of his person?

“ In his education he had learned something about this question, *An Christus qua mediator sit colendus* \*? agitated among the orthodox, and had been taught that the most orthodox denied that Christ should be worshipped *as Mediator*, or as *the Lamb that was slain*; for as such he was but a creature, and should only be worshipped as God, abstractly from his manhood and mediatorship, though therein he appears and acts as both God and man, in two distinct natures and one divine person. Thus, by his school-divinity, he has learned to know, that, in worshipping, he must carefully abstract the divinity of Christ's person from his human nature and from his office, so as to have no idea of him as man, or as representing either his Father to us or us to him.

“ What knows he then for the object of his worship? what thinks he of, or toward what are his prayers and praises directed? Has he no idea of what he worships? Why, he sets his mind upon a very abstract idea he supposes he has of an infinite, eternal, immutable, and immaterial substance, which he calls a spirit. In this pure object of his worship he beholds the Son of God,

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\* Is Christ, as mediator, to be worshipped?



not as the person of the man Jesus ; and his Father, not as manifested in him ; and the Holy Ghost, not as dwelling in him, and from him animating his body the church ; and from this immaterial substance he seeks a spirit to prepare him for conversion and faith, and so make him fitter for acceptance than other men, by convincing him of the sin of unbelief before he be persuaded to believe ; a spirit that may persuade him to believe what is not true till he believe it, and assure him in the hope of salvation, without any work of faith or labour of love. This is his God, with whom he has thus to do, who forbids us to worship toward the glorified man displaying every divine perfection.”

About the end of May 1761, was published in Edinburgh a small pamphlet, called *Nymphas to Sosipater*, containing, after a short Introduction by SOSIPATER, extracts of nine Letters wrote by NYMPHAS, remarking on the *Letters on THE- RON and ASPASIO*. Having mentioned the author of the last-mentioned letters, NYMPHAS says in his second sentence, “ I think I don’t “ understand him sufficiently, nor know exactly “ wherein we differ.” This may serve as an apology for PALÆMON in declining the trouble of particular animadversions on his remarks, though it be sufficiently evident, that he understands as much about PALÆMON’s doctrine as to dislike it. As the Introduction claims some attention, I shall transcribe it. “ SOSIPATER “ publishes the following extracts form nine “ Letters without the consent of NYMPHAS who “ wrote



“ wrote them. To those who shall read them  
 “ with a candid desire to know what is truth,  
 “ he persuades himself no apology will be ne-  
 “ cessary; sober reasoning will be acceptable to  
 “ such, though it want that polish which the  
 “ pen of NYMPHAS would undoubtedly have  
 “ given it, had he designed it for public view.  
 “ A moral certainty that NYMPHAS cannot be  
 “ hurt, and a probable prospect that many may  
 “ reap benefit from the publication, is all the  
 “ apology he can make to his friend. He  
 “ would not however be understood to adopt  
 “ every sentiment in these remarks. An assent  
 “ to the gospel, flowing from spiritual discove-  
 “ ries of its divine glory, is, in SOSIPATER’S  
 “ opinion, the whole of what the scripture  
 “ means by saving faith; and the *trust*, of  
 “ which NYMPHAS speaks in the Third Letter,  
 “ in so far as it contains any thing different from  
 “ assent, is not faith, but a fruit of it. But as  
 “ he intends, when he can command leisure, to  
 “ venture abroad his thoughts on that subject,  
 “ he chooses at this time to say no more of it.”

As SOSIPATER is supposed to be a minister of  
 some note in the church of Scotland, I should be  
 glad, on account of the hint now given, if  
 he could soon find leisure to publish his thoughts  
 on this important subject. I would fain hope  
 he will not keep us so long in expectation as Mr  
 WITHERSPOON has done, who, in his *Essay on*  
*Justification*, first published about half a dozen  
 years ago, near the close of his prefatory letter  
 to Mr HERVEY, says, “ The greatest part of



“ what follows was first delivered in two Ser-  
 “ mons ; but it is now thrown into the form of  
 “ an Essay, lest the despised title of a Sermon  
 “ should offend some, and that it might the bet-  
 “ ter admit of several additions, both in the body  
 “ of the piece and in the notes, which could not  
 “ have been properly delivered from a pulpit.  
 “ Some of these regard the philosophical princi-  
 “ ples, which have of late been published among  
 “ us ; of which I propose, in a short time, a  
 “ much fuller discussion, as there is no way in  
 “ which the truths of the gospel are more per-  
 “ verted than by what the apostle calls *philoso-*  
 “ *phy and vain deceit, and oppositions of science,*  
 “ *falsly so called.*”

As it is reasonable to suppose, that when men  
 of character endeavour to awaken the expecta-  
 tion of the public, they have then some prospect  
 of gratifying it in a short time, I would fain hope  
 that SOSIPATER will entertain a shorter idea of  
*a short time* than Mr WITHERSPOON has done.  
 However, as it is proper to give a good measure  
 of time to the consideration of an important sub-  
 ject, we have reason at least to say, that the more  
 time is allowed, the more ample and accurate  
 discussion of the subject may be expected, especi-  
 ally while it cannot be said that the subject is of  
 a nature foreign to their daily studies.—While  
 the one labours to illustrate the truth of the gos-  
 pel, by exposing the sophistry of philosophical  
 objectors, the other will be employed in shewing  
 how properly the truth, which we call the *gospel*,  
 answers to its designation, and proves in reality



to be *good tidings of great joy to all people* who are favoured with the knowledge of it; in opposition to all those preachers who darken the joyful aspect of the saving truth, by the gloomy task they propose to the hearer, as necessary to make the truth become gospel to him. And thus the labours of both our expected writers will happily coincide.

As PAUL is allowed to be an authentic teacher, and well-experienced pattern in this kind of labour, and as many mistakes have arisen through inattention to his great ministerial charge, it can be no loss to our writers to be reminded of that charge, as a proper pole-star to direct them in their studies, by one who wishes their labours may be both unexceptionable and successful.

PAUL speaking of the gospel-revelation, which he emphatically calls *the commandment*, and which he is very anxious that TIMOTHY should preserve in its greatest purity, says, *I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep the commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. The good confession, to which all Christian teachers are strictly bound to give heed, as they shall be answerable at Christ's appearing, is recorded in John xviii. 36, 37. Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world.—To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth, heareth my voice.*



By the stress PAUL lays on this *good confession*, and the solemn charge he gives every Christian teacher in regard to it, it plainly appears, that he no longer expected the gospel to be preserved in its purity than while sincere regard was paid to this good confession. And he seems to take pleasure in calling it a *good confession*, as foreseeing how universally it would be set at nought by Christian teachers. In how many respects Christianity has been corrupted among its professors, and exposed to the reproach of its avowed enemies, by the discarding of this good confession, needs not be enlarged on at present ; but one may see at first glance what a capital grievance it would be to the clergy, if they had none to support them, and none to submit to them, but those who are of the truth, and accordingly hear Christ's voice ; therefore it nearly concerns them to devise such a scheme for gospel, as may maintain their credit and influence among numbers who are strangers to the divine evidence of the truth ; and then it is easy for them to persuade themselves, that the credit of the gospel is inseparably connected with that of gospel-ministers. It must therefore be very hard for a popular parish-minister to understand what it means to preach PAUL's gospel ; for take every thing from him but that, and he must be greatly perplexed in what manner to address his people, unless he should become resolute, and taking PAUL's advice, become a partaker of the afflictions of the gospel.

But



But such ministers find, that numbers who cannot see the free mercy revealed in the saving truth, may yet be sensible of the divine favour displayed in sending them a zealous minister, to furnish them with good means and rules, in the diligent use of which they may yet hope to become a good and happy people; and though they cannot value the Bible for the good tidings it brings to the utterly undeserving, yet they may value it as the minister's text-book, or as a sacred collection of such good means and rules as, under the minister's direction, may be of the highest service to them. The Jewish multitude were once struck with an apprehension that Jesus was their expected prophet, and were accordingly disposed to depend on him as their director and assistant, in using the means by which they might become both good and happy; but Jesus, scorning the great object of the Clergy's attention, or to have a retinue of followers not drawn or taught of the Father, soon explained himself in such a manner, as that even *many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*, John vi.—Hence we may find the reason why NYMPHAS does not understand PALÆMON's doctrine sufficiently, while yet he seems to have a strong suspicion that truth stands on that side\* : for in

E e 4

his

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\* His strong suspicion may appear from the first paragraph of his second Letter, where speaking of PALÆMON's design, he says,

“ His grand design is to bring men off from self dependence to  
 “ an entire dependence on the naked bare truth, *i. e.* on Christ  
 “ and



his last Letter, where he gives us the substance of a Sermon on the use of means, he says, “ 1. It is  
 “ infinitely gracious and kind in the offended and  
 “ abused Majesty of heaven, to come out after  
 “ his rebellious creatures, and use means to re-  
 “ claim them. 2. God’s using means with us,  
 “ as he does, obliges us to use means ourselves;  
 “ nay, the very means God uses are of such a  
 “ nature as calls for activity on our part. Nay  
 “ further, the external means God uses can be  
 “ of no use without our activity. Does he put  
 “ the Bible in our hands? it will be to no purpose,  
 “ if we never read it. Does he send preachers?  
 “ it will profit us nothing if we will not go to  
 “ hear them.”

Mr SPEARMAN, in his *Letters concerning the Septuagint Translation*, p. 46. has been pleased to recommend to PALÆMON’S serious consideration a passage cited from Dr STUKELY’S *Palaographia Sacra*, setting forth Christianity as the truest support to government, and reciprocally requiring the protection of government. PALÆMON has considered the passage, but cannot admit the instruction offered, till he sees how it can be reconciled with the *good confession* Jesus made before the Roman governor. He  
 would

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“ and free grace, as held forth to view in the gospel. A good de-  
 “ sign! but unhappily, he has not taken the best method to accom-  
 “ plish it.” That is, if the reader will allow PALÆMON a word of  
 “ explication, What an unhappy case is it, that so good a design  
 “ could not be pursued saving the credit of the clergy! or, How  
 “ unhappy is it, that the New Testament cannot be so explained as  
 “ to make the kingdom of Christ and that of the clergy to coin-  
 “ cide!



would therefore, in return, with all due respect, recommend that good confession to the serious consideration of his discreet monitor; who, if he inclines to see that confession illustrated by its connection with many other passages of scripture, may peruse a treatise called *The Testimony of the King of Martyrs*, &c. lately published in GLAS'S *Works*, vol. i.

AS PALÆMON hath received great pleasure by Dr CAMPBELL'S late excellent *Dissertation on Miracles*, and as all the gospel-miracles were wrought to illustrate and confirm Christ's good confession, he apprehends he cannot better shew his gratitude than by expressing his earnest wish that the good confession may likewise draw the serious attention of the respectable author of the *Dissertation*. If that author, who is so able to persuade, that his every page carries conviction along with it, could be so happy as to persuade a few of his neighbours to enter along with him into the spirit of the good confession, to love one another on that bond of union, and, like the first Christians, boldly become partakers of the afflictions of the gospel, what a serious, what a weighty force would such an event give to the arguments already so well urged in the excellent *Dissertation*?—Cardinal DE RETZ, had reported a miracle said to have been wrought at Saragossa, which yet he himself appears not to believe. On this case our author has a very manifest and easy advantage against his opponent, who had urged the Cardinal's disbelief as adding mightily to the force of the evidence for the miracle.



miracle.—By the event now wished for, our author would stand clear of all suspicion of his own belief \*, and clear of all hazard of having his own solid reasoning retorted on himself.—It is true, such an event would partake much of the nature of a miracle; yet I cannot think it could, with any propriety, expose him to the ridicule insinuated in the poor sarcasm of his opponent, who alledges, that the Christian religion, even at this day, cannot be believed by any reasonable person without a miracle. I rather think it would have a natural tendency to occasion more serious reflection to his opponent, than even the very pertinent remarks by which he has already obviated the sarcasm now mentioned.

One thing is evident, that God hath chosen at all times to address the consciences of men by striking facts as well as arguments. The apostles preached, and their lives were a chain of facts enforcing what they said. Our author knows well

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\* The reader may perceive, that the mention of the Cardinal is not made to suggest a ridiculous parallel as to the belief of bare detached facts, but to enforce a grave reflection about the connection and import of the gospel-miracles, or the doctrine supported by them.—Bishop HOADLY was a serious defender of the Christian religion in his way, and even bestowed no small attention on the *good confession*, warmly maintaining as much of it as pleased the court, promoted his worldly interest, and secured his reputation among numbers who were strangers to the grace of the gospel; but what Christian would say, that he understood or loved the good confession in the same sense as PAUL and TIMOTHY did?—It is hoped our author understands more about the gospel than the Bishop did, and therefore it may be rather presumed that he will not think the hint above suggested altogether impertinent.



well how to illustrate the evidence arising from this connection. Moreover, as we find the apostles adducing the influence of the gospel on those who believed, as an evidence of its truth, so we find them on all occasions ascribing that influence to the special interposition of God, though they were well persuaded, at the same time, that the evidence of their gospel could not be resisted but by men unreasonable as well as wicked.

PAUL observes with pleasure, that *the testimony of Christ was confirmed* in the believing Corinthians, even as he calls them in the same view *Christ's epistle*, wrote in such a manner as plainly to discover the finger of God in the writing. And with fervent thanksgiving he ascribes it wholly to God, that his gospel was understood by the Thessalonians to be God's word, and that it had its proper effect on them, exposing them to the same injurious treatment from their countrymen, as the first believers in Judea were exposed to from theirs. The same apostle, reminding TIMOTHY of the treatment he met with from the world, assures him, that all who would live godly in Christ Jesus should meet with the like, while he forewarns him of *evil men and seducers, who should wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived*. It is worthy of remark likewise, that PAUL, summing up the proofs of his apostleship, signs, wonders, and mighty deeds, puts on the front of them *his patience*, 2 Cor. xii. 12.

Nor



Nor should it appear strange, that the evidence of the gospel should be supported in a constant way by something partaking of the nature of miracles, seeing the scripture assures us, that the *hard speeches* of unbelievers will be at last effectually confuted by the most astonishing miracle of all. These reflections would open a wide field; but why should I enlarge?—If our author can but enter into the spirit of Christ's *good confession*, he will soon perceive what a light it throws on all the scriptures, and how advantageous the maintaining of it is for enforcing the evidence of the gospel on the consciences of men. And what may give us some hope in this regard, is, that he has already, *p.* 116. given us a just and fair account of the apostolic tenets, so far as he has gone.—The natural desire one has, that an argument of such importance, already conducted so happily to such a length, may be carried to perfection, by receiving every advantage it is capable of, may serve as an apology for these few hints in regard to a writer highly entitled to our thanks.

The following is PALÆMON's answer, given February 1760, to two questions proposed by one of his readers. The first question respects a difficulty the querist found in describing the character of a Pharisee under the Christian form, so as to prevent its being mistaken for that of a sincere Christian. The second respects the strange notions of those, who, talking in a high strain about some sort of union with Christ, and justification,



cation, before faith, or before the beginning of the world, at the same time speak slightly of justification by faith.

“ I am not surpris'd at the difficulty you find in drawing a striking picture of the Pharisee under the Christian form. The gospel is best illustrated by facts, and without the proper facts the skill of the best teacher will go but a short way. Here you may recollect a hint in my Third Letter to HERVEY, importing, that the hypocrisy of the Pharisees could never have been effectually demonstrated to the conviction of any, if a righteousness exceeding theirs had not appeared in the world. Their character was undoubtedly the likest thing to the divine law that was to be seen in the world ; therefore every attempt to depreciate it must have appeared invidious, and of profane tendency, had not an excelling righteousness appeared. It was their superlative enmity to Christ, the purity of his doctrine, and the perfection of his character, that laid their hypocrisy fully open, yet only to such as had learned of the Father to understand the excellency of Christ's person, doctrine, and character. Now that Christ hath left the world, the proper representation of what provoked the Pharisees, and drew the affection of such as were taught of God, is continued in the world by the union of Christ's disciples holding forth his doctrine, united by, and glorying only in the excellency of his person and character. Christ himself refers to this, when praying for the unity of his disciples, he adds, *That the world may believe that*



*that thou hast sent me.* The appearance of this union will be found to provoke the world, and to draw the affection to those who have no hope but in the divine mercy, in the very same manner as Christ's personal appearance in the earth did. Without this, the ablest and soundest Christian teacher will only appear, either as an unintelligible, whimsical refiner of Pharisaical righteousness, or as invidiously depreciating the best idea men have of real worth and excellence. In general, if he is an acceptable affecting preacher, yet without proper zeal for the Christian union and separation, the most zealous Pharisaical professors will still consider him as at bottom their friend; for such men will always be ready to construe the best in their own favour, till they see all room for such construction utterly cut off by the most plain, striking, and demonstrative facts, that is, till they see the Christian union fairly take place without them, and themselves rejected, and boldly excluded. Then you will have no occasion for laboured descriptions to characterise Pharisees; for you will clearly see their enmity to Christ manifesting itself by the most striking facts in its ancient form. It appears to be God's design, that all the great contrasts established by the gospel should be evinced in such a manner as sensibly to strike the minds of the meanest believers, and not depend for their evidence on the abilities of men skilful in the use of words.

“As to your next question about the strange ways of speaking, fondly used by some professors about the *time* of justification, &c. I persuade myself,

myself,



myself, that a little reflection will soon convince you, not only of their gross nonsense and absurdity, but also that they are to be ranked among the notable devices of Satan for depriving the plainest words of the gospel of all meaning in the minds of men, and therefore to be rejected with the utmost scorn and indignation. When we think of God, we must consider him as the first and the last, the ETERNAL. Here all notion of time utterly evanishes. We cannot measure the duration of God, as we do that of creatures, by the gradual succession of thoughts, works, or facts; which way of measuring is our only notion of time. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.* But when we think of the manifestation of God to his creatures, his acting toward them, dealing or corresponding with them, in any respect, (which is the only way we can either think distinctly or talk intelligibly about him) we must attend to the gradual, successive progress of his working, and accordingly rank his works in their proper order of time; as it is thus only that we can see the works of God illustrating each other, and all conspiring to enlarge our knowledge and happiness: yea, it is thus only that the knowledge and happiness of angels are enlarged. By not attending to this, some have imagined, in express contradiction to scripture, that the *new* covenant was made before the *old*, or even before the world; that men are justified, not only before they are sinners, but before they have being; and, by misconstruing JOHN's words, that the Lamb *was slain*



*plain before the foundation of the world.* And with equal propriety they might say, that the hills were united to the valleys before the earth was created; that the eclipses of the sun and moon, calculated in our almanacks for the present year, happened before either sun or moon was framed; in a word, that the world ended before it began; and all for the same reason, because all these were fixed points with the Deity before the world was, or time began. The Hutchinsonian reasoning about nature serves likewise to unhinge and confound the order of the divine works.

“ Let us now attend a little to the clear and plain simplicity of the scripture-way of speaking about God’s works. PAUL, speaking of the present and future constitution of those who are redeemed from among men, says, *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body: there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.* Then after pointing out the difference between the *first* and *second* ADAM, he adds, *Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual.* Hence we see, that the spiritual or supernatural state of things, is all along posterior to the natural in the order of the divine working.

“ The Jewish kingdom (in a good measure similar to the excellency of ADAM’s state in paradise) was an improved state of nature, by a providence, extraordinary indeed, but not in the highest sense supernatural; yet giving peculiar evidence,



evidence, that the God of Israel was the author of nature, and at the same time affording a shadow of the truly supernatural and spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, which did not properly take place till the latter period of the former, or till the former waxed old, and was ready to vanish away. God is unchangeably all that at any time, in the progress of his working, he appears to be; yet God did not clearly appear by his works to be *just in justifying the ungodly*, till the reign of TIBERIUS, when Christ died and rose again; nor then to any but such as were enabled by divine teaching to understand the meaning of what was then transacted. And to such as are enabled to understand it only to-day, it is in effect much the same as if the great event had been accomplished only yesterday; since the great benefit of God's saving work is conveyed to men only by the divine revelation concerning it, and in proportion to the clearness of that revelation.

“The benefit of Christ's sacrifice extended backward through the ages preceding his appearance, but still in a manner suitable to the clearness of the promise, and its attendant illustrations. Though the Lamb of God did not take away the sin of the world till the reign of TIBERIUS, yet the faithful of old were comforted, believing this, *God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering*. They longed thus, *O that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!* And they said, *As for our iniquities, thou wilt purge them away*. I shall here give a short paraphrase on a few of PAUL's words, *Rom. iii. 24*. Having declared,



clared, that all who find favour with God are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, he adds, “ Whom  
 “ God formerly exhibited (in the promises and  
 “ types) a propitiation through faith in his  
 “ blood, for the manifestation of his righteous-  
 “ ness, in regard to his *passing over* the sins that  
 “ happened before in the (time of the) forbear-  
 “ ance of God, unto (until, toward, or in re-  
 “ ference to the further expected) manifestation  
 “ of his righteousness (which has now taken  
 “ place) in the present time, that he might be  
 “ just, and the *justifier* of him that believed in  
 “ Jesus.”

“ The ancient sacrifices had, in the minds of the faithful, an aspect toward the accomplishment of the promise ; and though they could not shew God just in justifying sinners, their repetition ever proclaiming aloud their insufficiency, yet they shewed God just in passing over, or delaying the punishment of sin, till the appearance of the true sacrifice, by which alone it was to be expiated ; and in respect to which God said, he would *remember iniquity no more*, as he had still continued to do in the case of all the foregoing sacrifices. The sufficiency of the future atonement revealed to God’s chosen of old, was the ground of their comfort and hope ; that sufficiency which they believed, thus becoming their faith, was accordingly *imputed to them for righteousness* ; yet their comfort lay under great disadvantages from the manner in which that sufficiency was revealed to them. You will find  
 this



this topic handled at length in a treatise you have seen, called, *The Testimony of the King of Martyrs.*

“ Since it is evident from the New Testament, that sinners are justified by faith without works, nothing can be plainer, than that the precise time of any man’s justification before God, is when the sufficiency of the atonement first appears to his hearty conviction, so becomes his faith. In PAUL’S time many of the Heathen were thus justified. This event was ordained of God before the world was, and many ages before it happened was notified to ABRAHAM. PAUL, taking notice of the ancient scripture-testimony of this, expresses himself in this manner, *The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Heathen through faith, &c.*

“ When Christ became exceeding sorrowful unto death, he bare the punishment of all his peoples sins ; and when he rose, he rose in the name of his people, or as their head and representative. As their head he was justified, sanctified, blessed, glorified, and admitted into fulness of joy in a heavenly eternal life on the other side of death ; so that his being thus made happy, effectually secured the like happiness to all his people : *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits, afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming.* Christ’s people, then, who are raised at his coming, are not delivered from death till many ages after his resurrection,



resurrection, though, when he rose, their resurrection was ascertained and secured.

“ In like manner must we speak of Christ’s sanctification and justification. PAUL declares, that Christ’s people *are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once*; and, *By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified*. Yet none of them experience perfection as pertaining to the conscience, till taught to know the all-sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice. They all continue to come into the world according to the course of nature, defiled with ADAM’s transgression, and liable to death; under the dominion of sin, and the power of Satan, and exposed to the curse, till God sends his word, and heals them. Christ says concerning his apostles, *For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth*; and he immediately adds, with an eye to all his people, *Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one, &c.* Thus Christ intercedes, agreeably to the divine constitution by which he was glorified. He was glorified, receiving power over all flesh, that he might bestow *eternal life* on as many as the Father had given him; and this life eternal he distributes in his proper times, when he prevents the dead in trespasses and sins by the word of his grace. PAUL, speaking of Christ as a ransom for all, immediately adds, *a testimony in his own times*.

“ At whatever time Christ sends his gospel to any nation, and opens the hearts of men to admit it,



it, then he raises them from their death in trespasses and sins; then, and not till then, they are *raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus*, and all this only by faith. For while, being at home in the body, they are absent from the Lord, they can have fellowship with him in his joy, only in being persuaded that he is raised from the dead; and that, having finished his work, he doth not *stand ministering*, like the priests who could not bring a perfect atonement, but hath for ever *sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*. Accordingly PAUL describes the believing Ephesians in his time as thus raised and sitting with Christ, while he declares, that *in time past they were by nature children of wrath, even as others*. When Christ sent PAUL to the Gentiles, he said, *Unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith that is in me*.

“ By faith then men are justified, sanctified, obtain forgiveness, and freedom from the curse, &c. For though it be true that *Christ hath redeemed his people from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them*; yet it is no less true, that *as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse*. In like manner must we say, that men are united to Christ, as you see clearly evinced in the same chapter now referred to, *Gal. iii*. Yet no man can be assured that he is justified, sanctified, or united to Christ, but according to



the scripture, which states the matter thus, *Rom. viii. 1. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* And as to those who walk otherwise, whatever their pretensions may be, we must still apply what PAUL says downward in the same chapter, *Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

“ I have chosen the rather to be particular on this subject, because not a few who talk in a high strain about grace, atonement, and union with Christ, have changed the gospel into a most pernicious and ungodly scheme, blunting the conviction of sin, and the impression of the fear of God, loosing the obligation to attend to the perfect law, and serving to lead professors to consider their sins as less displeasing to God, and exposing to the curse, than those of other men; encouraging them all the while in some vain confidence of their being united to Christ; whereas God preserves his people whom he hath chosen in a very different manner, while he follows them with reproofs from his word, enforced by afflictions from his providence, compelling them to see their iniquity in its proper hateful-ness; that their sins are no less displeasing to him, no less obnoxious to his wrath than those of others; in a word, shutting up their every source of hope, but in that sovereign mercy alone which shines in Christ's death, for the encouragement of the worst of mankind. Thus God deals with those whom he hath not ap-  
pointed



pointed to wrath, but to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ their Lord. To this end are all his fatherly chastisements; to the effect now mentioned he chastens them, that they may not be condemned with the world. The opposite pernicious doctrine therefore must be opposed with all confidence, without respect of persons.”

Though the doctrine of justification by faith without works has been opposed in all ages from much the same principles, yet it is thought rude in PALÆMON to compare the conduct of the Christian with that of the Jewish doctors, in their opposition to that doctrine, and methods of undermining it. However, as a little of the history of that opposition may be both useful and entertaining to my readers, I shall here give it them in the words of a Christian doctor of no small repute for piety. See Dr HEYLYN'S *Theological Lectures*, part i, p. 138, &c.

“ *Abraham believed* \*, *i. e.* had faith in the  
 F f 4 “ *Lord,*

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“ \* *Gen. xv. 6.* The full explanation of this text must be reserved for its proper place: yet besides what you find in the following quotation from PHILO, I would briefly shew here, that *faith* is therefore *counted for justice*, because by faith man does his part towards acquiring it. It has been often said already, that all duty is comprehended under the name of *justice*; and very lately I observed, that this justice is rightly distinguished into three principal parts, as it relates to ourselves, our neighbour, and our Creator. The last of these, *viz.* the duty we owe to God immediately, and as distinguished from the other two, is called *faith*. Now, it is universally agreed, that men in their natural state are greatly defective in all these three branches of  
 “ justice,



“ *Lord, and be counted it to him for justice.*  
 “ From this passage the name *faith*, as a term  
 “ of theology, bears date: it was delivered down  
 “ from the Jewish church to the Christian; and  
 “ Christ with his apostles used it in the same sense  
 “ they found it.

“ How the word was then understood, ap-  
 “ pears very clearly from the Jewish writers  
 “ themselves, as you will find by the following  
 “ quotation from a cotemporary author, I mean  
 “ PHILO the Jew, who, speaking of ABRAHAM,  
 “ says, “ That being born of a father who was  
 “ an idolater, he forsook his family, kindred,  
 “ and native country, left, by the superstitions  
 “ there practised he should be diverted from his  
 “ studious search after the only God, Creator of  
 “ all things; that he was greatly encouraged in  
 “ this search by divine inspirations; and that he  
 “ incessantly persevered in it, till he had attain-  
 “ ed a satisfactory notion, not of the essence of  
 “ God, for that cannot be known, but of his ex-  
 “ istence and over-ruling providence; for which  
 reason

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“ justice, and the scriptures declare, that faith is the only means  
 “ by which we can acquire it: the reason is, because by faith we  
 “ have access to God, we come under his powerful influence, and  
 “ receive his gracious communications. Our devout attention to  
 “ him obtains his favourable regard to us, which operates power-  
 “ fully upon the soul, to excite its latent abilities, and to infuse new  
 “ ones, which will gradually dispose it for the performance of all  
 “ justice. As there are different degrees of faith, so there are dif-  
 “ ferent kinds of justice; but they lie beyond our present design,  
 “ which is only to treat of faith in general, and give so radical a  
 “ notion of it, as may hereafter be branched out to its various  
 “ effects and operations.”



“ reason he is first recorded for having *faith* in  
 “ God, because he *first* [of those who had not  
 “ been taught it by tradition] held a firm and  
 “ unshaken persuasion, that there was one su-  
 “ preme Author of all things, by whose provi-  
 “ dence the world, and all things contained in it,  
 “ are disposed and governed. ABRAHAM having  
 “ attained this *knowledge*, the most fundamental  
 “ of the virtues, he at the same time acquired all  
 “ the rest.” And again \*,

“ It is said to the praise of ABRAHAM, that  
 “ *he believed God*, [or *had faith in God*, both are  
 “ expressed by the same word in the original.]  
 “ Some one perhaps may say, Do you judge this  
 “ worthy of praise? What man is there so bad  
 “ who would not give attention to God when  
 “ he speaks or promises any thing? To such an  
 “ one we answer, Beware, O Sir, beware, that  
 “ you do not rashly refuse this wise man the  
 “ praise due to him, nor ascribe to unworthy  
 “ persons *faith*, which is the most perfect of the  
 “ virtues, nor censure our doctrine upon this sub-  
 “ ject; for if you consider this matter, not su-  
 “ perficially, but search it to the bottom, you shall  
 “ plainly see, that it is no easy thing to have faith  
 “ in God only, without any other pledge: this, I  
 “ say, is no easy thing, by reason of the close re-  
 “ lation we bear to what is *mortal*, with which  
 “ we

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\* Vol. i p. 485 A large collection of quotations to the same purpose from other Jewish writers may be found in *Christiani Schoettgeni Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ*, tom. 2. edit. Dreslæ, 1742, p. 682—687.



“ we are yoked, and which forcibly persuades  
 “ us to have faith in riches, glory, power,  
 “ friends, health, and strength of body, with  
 “ many other things. Now, to efface each of  
 “ these, and put no faith in the creature, which  
 “ is never to be trusted in, and to have faith in  
 “ God alone, who alone can be securely relied  
 “ on ; to do this, I say, is the act of a great and  
 “ heavenly mind, a mind that can no more be  
 “ ensnared by the things of this world. And it  
 “ is well added, that *his faith was counted to*  
 “ *him for justice* ; for nothing is so *just* as to  
 “ carry ourselves toward God with a sincere and  
 “ and perfect faith in him alone : but this, which  
 “ is so *just* and agreeable to the nature of things,  
 “ is accounted a paradox ; because of the want of  
 “ faith in the most of us, to whom, by way of  
 “ reproof, the sacred text says, that firmly and  
 “ incessantly to rely upon him, HIM WHO ONLY  
 “ IS, seems a wonderful thing to men, who  
 “ possess no *real* good ; but is not wonderful to a  
 “ true discernment, for it is the proper work of  
 “ JUSTICE.”

“ So this Jew explains how the *faith of Abra-*  
 “ *ham was counted to him for justice* ; and if faith  
 “ had been considered in this light, when the  
 “ question of justification by faith only was so  
 “ warmly agitated, the controversy might soon  
 “ have been composed, and great scandals pre-  
 “ vented.—But I return to our author, who, in  
 “ all his writings, speaks of faith in the sense  
 “ here represented ; and several times finding  
 “ occasion to quote this 6th verse of *Genesis xv.*  
 “ upon



“ upon which the doctrine of justification is  
“ founded, explains it in such a manner, as  
“ shews, that it was then an established doctrine  
“ in the Jewish schools of divinity; and yet St  
“ PAUL’s insisting on it, as he does so copiously  
“ to the Jewish converts, was a reasonable and  
“ judicious application of a doctrine then com-  
“ monly understood and admitted.

“ But as nothing is more changeable than the  
“ meaning of words, and that especially when  
“ they come into vulgar use, this word *faith* got  
“ a new sense in the first age of the Christian  
“ church, and was transferred to signify a belief  
“ of the gospel-history. Many of the converts  
“ took *faith* in this cheap sense. And whereas  
“ St PAUL had in his writings retained the ori-  
“ ginal signification, which he had been ac-  
“ customed to in *the school of Gamaliel*, some  
“ mistook his expressions so far, as to assign those  
“ high advantages to a notional belief of Christi-  
“ anity, which he had ascribed only to a con-  
“ firmed habit of piety, even such as ABRAHAM  
“ had attained to, and whereby he had merited  
“ the title of the *father of the faithful*. When  
“ this error spread in the church, St JAMES  
“ zealously confuted it: and, not standing to  
“ dispute about words, which is needless, when  
“ we clearly see in what sense the opponents  
“ mean them, he used the term as *they* under-  
“ stood it, and severely censured the *nominal*  
“ *faith* with which they deceived themselves;  
“ yet, at the same time, by calling it a *dead*  
“ *faith* he sufficiently intimated, that the name  
“ of



“ of *faith* was as improperly applied by them, as  
 “ when the name *man* is given to a dead carcase,  
 “ or when a dry stick, resting in the earth, is  
 “ called a tree.

“ In the succeeding ages of the church, the  
 “ signification of the word *faith* degenerated still  
 “ more and more, and was adulterated to such  
 “ a degree, that every sect had its own *faith*, as  
 “ they called it ; so that instead of *an habit of*  
 “ *piety*, which is its genuine signification, men  
 “ came to understand by it some transient acts of  
 “ credulity to nonsense.”

The reader may observe, that this Christian doctor, who accords so well with PHILO and the rest of the Jewish teachers, at the same time falls in pretty well with the sentiments of most Christian teachers. It is true, he inclines to call faith a *habit* of piety ; whereas those of best repute for orthodoxy incline rather, along with Dr WATTS, to consider it as a little green *bud* containing the quintessence of piety, in due time to be unfolded and displayed to view. But this difference is not material.—Again, as it is likewise thought rude in PALÆMON to compare Christian teachers to the ancient philosophers, and the gracious assistance they would have unbelievers hope for to enable them to exert a right act of faith, to the divine aid spoke of by philosophers, the reader may take another quotation from one of Dr HEYLYN'S *select Discourses*, called, *The connection of Religion with Morality*.

“ In



“ In PLATO’s first Dialogue concerning human  
 “ nature, SOCRATES is introduced treating of  
 “ that necessary fundamental of all morality,  
 “ *Know thyself*; and he says, That we can know  
 “ ourselves only by contemplating the divine na-  
 “ ture, of which our soul is an image:”—And  
 “ he makes the knowledge of God as necessary  
 “ to the knowledge of ourselves as that is to  
 “ morality. He says further, “ But if you act  
 “ unjustly, and instead of regarding God and the  
 “ true light, you regard that which is without  
 “ God, and full of darkness, you cannot but  
 “ do works of darkness, *i. e.* works full of  
 “ iniquity, because you do not know yourself.”  
 “ This is a literal translation of his words, though  
 “ they sound so like phrases of scripture.

“ Again, SOCRATES not only teaches the  
 “ duty of prayer, but shews the necessity of  
 “ *divine assistance* for the right performance of  
 “ it; the same which, in Christian style, we call  
 “ *the Spirit’s helping our infirmities, because we*  
 “ *know not what to pray for as we ought*; and  
 “ he shews convincingly, that “ God only can  
 “ prepare our hearts to pray worthily, by dis-  
 “ pelling the darkness of the soul, and purifying  
 “ it, so that it may distinguish rightly between  
 “ good and evil.”

“ From these, and many other passages, it  
 “ appears, that this pious philosopher was fully  
 “ apprised of the connection there is between re-  
 “ ligion and morality; that they are one and the  
 “ same in their origin, and will ever thrive or  
 “ decay together. The same principle, doubt-  
 “ less



“ less a divine one, which so eminently reform-  
 “ ed the morals of this egregious man, did as  
 “ remarkably reform his notions of religion, and  
 “ inspired him with the sentiments of Christi-  
 “ anity near 400 years before the birth of Christ,  
 “ and that too in a place and age infamous for  
 “ the grossest superstitions and idolatries.”

Here this pious doctor fondly claims kindred in the faith with SOCRATES, even as he did before with GAMALIEL. It concerns the rest of our Christian teachers, who would seem to decline this alliance, to give some substantial reason. Till then, PALÆMON may be allowed at least to compare them all together, and to take it for granted, that there is no fundamental difference betwixt them. For whether we maintain a little green *bud*, an *act*, or a *habit* of piety necessary to acceptance, our doctrine must be equally discouraging to those who can produce neither, and we must be equally disaffected to the doctrine of justification by faith without works, or to that doctrine which exhibits God as considering those whom he justifies as no way differing from, or excelling others.

To conclude, PALÆMON ventures to turn the chace upon his adversaries, and to claim the precedence even in point of orthodoxy. It is affirmed in the subscribed standards of orthodoxy, that *justification is an act of God's free grace*. This affirmation is well supported by the New Testament, which likewise affirms, that God justifies the Heathen *through*, or *by faith*, even  
 as



as one illuminates a dark room by introducing a candle. If the reader doubts the propriety of this similitude, he may take a grander one from PAUL, who says, *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge, &c.* To the same purpose that apostle also says, *By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast: for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* And JAMES says, *Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, &c.—Of his own will begat he us by the word of truth.* These, with many like passages, clearly solve all questions about the instrumentality of faith in justification, or by whose agency men attain to that justification which is by faith.

Now Readers, after you have heard the orthodox so plainly affirming, that justification is an act of God's free grace, and the scripture so clearly supporting that affirmation, suffer them not to put the charge upon you: Beware of their circumlocutions. Whenever they begin to talk to you of any act you are to exert in order to acceptance, and to call it a justifying act, which you are to exert by the help of God's grace, be you ready to reply, *Avaunt; none of your tricks.* You have already asserted, and we hold you fast



fast by this assertion, that justification is an act of God's free grace.

Remember also, that the teachers of orthodoxy call themselves preachers of the gospel, and that the word *gospel* is allowed to signify *good news*, or *glad tidings*; which, you know, in every other case, gladden the heart so soon as they are understood and known to be true. Whenever then they begin to tell you of any pious act necessary in order to acceptance, you can immediately reply, This is no *news*, for MOSES long ago told us our duty, assuring us of happiness in our compliance; neither is it *glad tidings* to us in our present circumstances. If then you would preach gospel to us, you must tell us something fit to give us joy, as we at present stand unconscious of any distinguishing qualification.

*July 1762.*

F I N I S.





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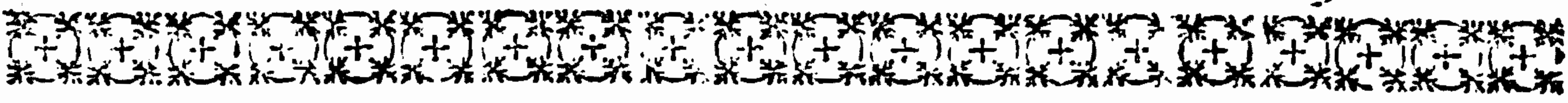
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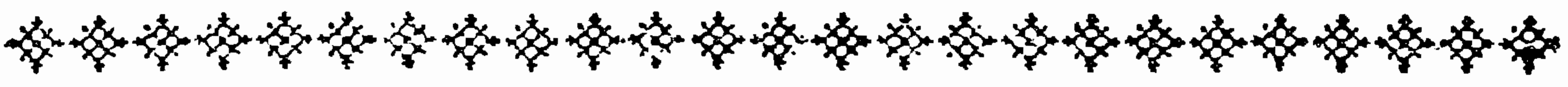


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